

*Michigan Department of State*

***Consumers  
Automotive  
Information &  
Complaint Kit***



# When You Have A Complaint. . .

There is something you can do about misrepresentation, unsatisfactory repairs and unnecessary delays by an automobile dealer or repair shop in Michigan.

This brochure, published by Michigan's Department of State, tells you how to register a complaint about a repair job or new or used vehicle sale.

Since 1974, the Department of State has been responsible for licensing and regulating car dealerships and repair shops, investigating complaints and providing consumer information.

This brochure may help you resolve a complaint directly with the business involved. If you cannot reach a satisfactory settlement, you may fill out the attached form to receive assistance from the Department of State.

For further explanation of your rights as a consumer, refer to other sources of information listed on the back of this brochure.

## The First Step: Talk To The Manager

When you have a problem, talk to the owner or business manager about it right away. By doing so, you may be able to work out a settlement.

Keep these five points in mind when you talk to the business owner or manager:

- 1) Be courteous and calm.
- 2) Explain the problem accurately. Provide dates, estimated or billed amounts and as many other facts as you can.
- 3) State what you think is a fair settlement or correction.
- 4) State whether you are willing to negotiate; in many disputes neither side is 100 percent correct.

- 5) If you cannot get a satisfactory settlement, you may wish to tell the business that you will file a complaint with the state.

## The Second Step: Contact The State

If you have talked to the owner or manager and have not reached a satisfactory settlement, contact the Department of State.

Use the attached form to briefly state your complaint. Attach **copies** of documents to the signed complaint and mail to the address on the bottom of the complaint form or fax to the telephone number indicated.

In some instances your complaint may be outside the department's authority to investigate. If so, you may be directed to another agency or to the court system. Additional sources of assistance and information are listed in this brochure.

If your complaint is within its authority, the department will investigate. A copy of your complaint may be forwarded to the business for its response.

The business may contact you to try to resolve your complaint. You may negotiate a settlement or wait for investigation. Please advise the department of any settlement you reach.

The department's goal is to give prompt, quality service. Complaints are usually investigated in the order in which they are received. An investigator will contact you by telephone, e-mail, mail, or in person to follow up.

Some complaints involve failure by a dealer to provide title in the purchaser's name or a dispute of a garage keeper's lien. In such cases, the department will attempt to contact you within a few days after receiving your complaint. Other issues may take longer to resolve.

## Automotive Repair Tips

Under Michigan law, when you have repairs done to your vehicle or trailer, you have the right to:

- An itemized written estimate **before** any repairs are started that will cost \$20 or more.
- Know about and approve (or refuse) any work done beyond the estimate.
- Have repairs made by a Michigan-certified mechanic.
- An itemized final bill.
- Receive or inspect all replaced parts. Be sure to ask for them when you pick up your vehicle.

If you believe that a shop is pressuring you into unnecessary repairs, insist on a written explanation of the problem. If the repair shop will not return your vehicle immediately when you refuse its recommended service, telephone the toll-free complaint line at (888) SOS-MICH (767-6424).

## Buying A Vehicle

When buying a vehicle from a dealer, consider the purchase price as well as the terms of finance, warranty, and the cost of a service contract and credit insurance.

Every used vehicle offered for sale by a dealership must have a "Buyers Guide" on a side window indicating if the vehicle is covered by a warranty. If you leave a deposit on a vehicle, you may not receive a refund if the purchase is not completed.

Dealers are required to apply for your title, purchase or transfer plates, collect 6 percent Michigan tax, provide mileage disclosure and give you copies of all documents at the time you sign them.

# AUTOMOTIVE COMPLAINT

**Important! Copies of all invoices, receipts, and related documents must be attached. Remove credit card and personal account references on supporting documents. Please do not send original documents.**

*OFFICE USE ONLY*

Business License #	Class Code	License Name	Open Date	Case #
Office Close Date	Investigator	Field Close Date	Investigator	
\$ Recovered	Violations	Misc.		
Mechanic #	Violations	Mechanic #	Violations	

Your name and address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # 8a-5p:

Home/Cell:

( )

Work Telephone:

( )

E-mail Address:

Name and address of the business or person you wish to file a complaint about:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Business Telephone:

( )

Persons you dealt with at the business:

Is your complaint regarding vehicle repairs or vehicle sales? (circle one) please complete proper section.

VEHICLE REPAIRS				VEHICLE SALES				
Transaction Date:				Transaction Date:				
Vehicle Year:	Make:	Model:		Vehicle Year:	Make:	Model:		
Vehicle Number: (VIN)				Vehicle Number: (VIN)				
Circle all answers that apply to your repair transaction:				Circle all answers that apply to your sales transaction:				
Did you receive a written estimate prior to repairs?	Yes	No		Type of Sales Transaction:				
Did the facility only perform the repairs you authorized?	Yes	No		Sale New	Sale Used	Odometer Rollback	Salvage Vehicle	Lease Vehicle
Did the facility provide you with a final invoice?	Yes	No		Did you get copies of the documents you signed? Yes No				
Do you have the parts the facility replaced?	Yes	No		Did you get more than one temporary registration? Yes No				

**Briefly describe your complaint below or attach your letter of complaint:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Use back side if more space is needed.)

**Please suggest a fair settlement:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Signature:**

**Date:**



## Other Sources for Answers to Auto-related Questions

Subject	Agency to Contact
Auto design and equipment (unsafe or defective), recalls	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Washington, D.C. 20590 Auto Safety Toll-free Telephone: (888) 327-4236 <a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov">www.nhtsa.gov</a>
Driver's license, vehicle title and registration	Contact the Department of State at (888) SOS-MICH (767-6424) or at <a href="http://www.Michigan.gov/sos">www.Michigan.gov/sos</a> or visit a Secretary of State office
Auto insurance coverage problems and sales contract disputes	Department of Insurance and Financial Services P.O. Box 30220 Lansing, MI 48909-7720 Telephone: (877) 999-6442 <a href="http://www.Michigan.gov/difs">www.Michigan.gov/difs</a>
"Lemon Law" and unresolved warranty issues	Michigan Attorney General Consumer Protection Division P.O. Box 30213 Lansing, MI 48909-7713 Telephone: (877) 765-8388 <a href="http://www.Michigan.gov/ag">www.Michigan.gov/ag</a>
New vehicle warranties, questions on warranty coverage, claims	If your dealer cannot help, contact the manufacturer's regional office. (See owners manual or ask dealer.) Better Business Bureaus can also handle some warranty complaints.

### Additional automotive brochures available online from the Department of State:

*Auto Repair Rights & Repair Tips*

*Consumers Guide to Automatic  
Transmission Service*

*Consumers Guide to Brake Repair  
Service*

*Consumers Guide to Buying a Vehicle  
from a Dealership*

*Consumers Guide to Collision Repairs*

*Consumers Guide to Engine  
Replacement*

*Consumers Guide to Vehicle Leasing*

*Consumers Guide to Vehicle Restoration*

Visit the Secretary of State website,  
[www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos), for complete  
information.

**Bureau of Information Security  
Michigan Department of State  
P.O. Box 30046  
Lansing, MI 48909-7546  
Telephone: (888) SOS-MICH  
or (767-6424)  
Fax: 517-373-7419  
[www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos)  
Click on "Owning a Vehicle"**



**Secretary of State  
Ruth Johnson**