



Vehicle History Reports: An Overview

Dealers have an obligation to disclose a vehicle's history to meet the legal requirement of clear and transparent selling. According to the [2013 Public Confidence Survey](#), BC dealers are on their way to doing just that, with over 50% of consumers receiving a vehicle history report without asking. Not only does this protect consumers, but dealers are reducing business risk through this best practice.

There are a number of vehicle history reports available. Some are very limited in scope and others are very comprehensive. Depending on the report, it may show where the vehicle originated, its status, past registration records and any previous accidents and damages. To help choose the best one or ones to use during intake and during a sale, here's a quick overview:

[ICBC Vehicle Status Inquiry](#) provides only the vehicle's status (whether it is normal, rebuilt, salvage or altered) for vehicles already registered in BC.

[ICBC Vehicle Claims History Reports](#) provide the history of the vehicle only while in BC, including damages claimed through ICBC (along with the primary areas of damage), unpaid claims and whether the vehicle has been imported. "No Details" may be displayed if ICBC does not have an estimate of the vehicle's damage and repairs have not been paid for. In this case, an **ICBC Detail Report** is available for an added fee.

U.S. reports are also available, but can have limited Canadian data. [AutoCheck](#) provides information on odometer rollbacks, lemon vehicles and branded titles. [CarFax](#) offers full details on vehicle history as well as recall information. However, it doesn't include all provinces and collision data is limited. The [National Motor Vehicle Title System \(NMVTIS\)](#) provides brand, total loss, and salvage history on US vehicles only.

[CarProof Verified BC](#) is the most comprehensive vehicle history report available in Canada, though missing data is still possible. It contains ICBC records, including "no details" estimates from ICBC and some private repairs (even when no claims have been filed). A *Used Vehicle Disclosure Form* for use with buyers is also provided.

Offering consumers a vehicle history report is a best practice and keeping a copy in your dealer records that the buying consumer has signed or initialed may be a beneficial business practice. Unfortunately, none of these reports are 100% accurate so inspecting the vehicle before you sell it is very important.

Note: The VSA does not endorse nor is it affiliated with any particular vehicle history report.

\$137,000 Judgment a Reminder to Dealers

After a New York dealer charged consumers a "mandatory" \$499 admin fee on top of the negotiated price of his used vehicles, he was ordered to pay back \$86,826 to consumers, plus a \$50,000 penalty to the state. The dealer failed to disclose the admin fee to buyers until the end of the transaction and simply pre-printed the extra fee on all the sales agreements, next to the taxes. To consumers, it "appeared as if the administrative fee was mandatory and non-negotiable, when it was simply tacked onto the negotiated purchase price of the vehicle."

Under BC law, a similar outcome would result from this practice. If a dealer chooses to add a fee, the consumer needs to be aware of it before negotiating the final price of the vehicle. If documentation or other fees are not disclosed in advertising or during negotiation, they are presumed to be in the "total price." It would be a deceptive act if the buyer is surprised by the fees at the last moment and is led to believe that they are mandatory. This story highlights that laws may be different in every province and state, but they are very similar in their intent. A single consumer complaint can also lead to a larger investigation.