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## April is National Car Care Month

There are over 14 million registered vehicles in Florida, and those vehicles represent a significant investment for Florida consumers. Taking care of any vehicle-related issues is important for your safety and the longevity of your vehicle. However, it is equally important to ensure that service and repairs are provided by a properly licensed motor vehicle repair shop.

The Florida Motor Vehicle Repair Act requires anyone in Florida, who is paid to repair motor vehicles owned by other individuals, to register with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). Before engaging in services with a motor vehicle repair shop, use the "Business/Complaint Lookup" feature at FloridaConsumerHelp.com to ensure the business is properly licensed, to see if it has any complaints filed against it and, if so, to determine how they were resolved.

You want to start shopping for a repair shop before you actually need one. You will be more likely to make a better decision if you are not rushed or in a panic. When you do select a business, make sure they will honor your vehicle's warranty, if applicable. It's always a good idea to ask friends and associates for their recommendations.

Before you arrange to have any repairs made, ask how the shop prices are estimated. Some shops charge a flat rate for labor on repairs while others may charge for labor based on the type of work performed. If the repair work will cost more than \$100, the repair shop **MUST** give you the option to request a written estimate, to be notified by the shop if the repair exceeds an amount you specify, or to not require a written estimate at all.

Do not choose a motor vehicle repair shop just because they offer the least expensive repair. Saving a few dollars and not having your vehicle repaired properly may end up costing you more in the long run. If you are unsure that you actually need a specific repair, don't be afraid to get a second opinion.

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## Upselling

Have you ever taken your car in for an oil change, and the next thing you know the mechanic is telling you that you need new windshield wipers, a new air filter, and should consider using a more expensive synthetic oil? It's the exact same thing that happens when you buy a hamburger at a fast-food restaurant and the cashier asks if you would like fries with it.

This is commonly called an upsell. An upsell is a sales technique where the seller tries to get the customer to buy more expensive items, upgrades or additional items in an attempt to make more money off the sale. Upselling is not necessarily an illegal or shady business practice, but there are some sales tactics of which you should be aware.

1. **Premium or Synthetic Oil:** The mechanic may try to convince you that due to the age, mileage or type of your vehicle you should purchase a premium or synthetic oil. They may even tell you that they cannot use a lower a grade oil without your written permission. Check your owner's manual and use the manufacturer recommend oil for your vehicle.
  2. **Dirty Air Filter:** While your car is in for an oil change, the mechanic may show you a dirty air filter and recommend replacing it. Make sure the filter they show you is from your car. Some unethical mechanics will keep a dirty filter on hand just to convince you to buy an additional product. Most vehicles have two types of air filters: the engine air filter and the cabin air filter. The engine air filter is located under the hood and should be replaced once a year or at about 15,000 miles. The cabin air filter is located in the glovebox or under the dash of the passenger front seat and should be replaced every 15,000 to 20,000 miles. Both filter types can be found at auto parts stores and can be replaced by most car owners on their own.
  3. **Engine Flush:** Unless you neglect your engine and do not change the oil when you should, an engine flush is wasted money. An engine flush gets rid of sludge in an engine, which is something you won't have if you maintain your car properly.
  4. **Frequent Oil Changes:** Twenty year ago it was common practice to change the oil in your car every 3,000 miles. While the age and mileage of your vehicle may be a deciding factor, cars today run much more efficiently, and most manufacturers recommend oil changes every 5,000 miles. Always refer to your owner's manual for more detailed information.
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# Beware when Buying Cars Online

Buying cars online can be a bit risky. It is often hard to determine if you're getting a good deal or you're being scammed.

In some online scams, the seller pretends to be from another country or pretends to be in dire need of selling the vehicle quickly. In another scam, the buyer sends a check to the seller. The seller then deposits the check and waits a couple of days for the check to clear. Once the check "clears," the seller wires the shipping money to the person(s) the buyer has chosen. Only to find out later that after the seller shipped the car, the check bounced and the seller received no money for the sale.

Here are a few tips from [www.fraudguides.com](http://www.fraudguides.com) to help you identify suspicious buyers or sellers:

- Cars are priced far below current market value.
- The seller claims to be in the military and is stationed overseas.
- The posting does not include a phone number.
- The seller will demand that you use an online escrow service of their choice.
- The person receiving the call is referred to as a "pickup agent."
- Payment must be wired to or from another country. Western Union is often requested.
- The buyer or seller is very anxious to conclude the transaction.

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The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides consumer product recall information as part of the agency's mission to protect consumers and families from hazardous products.

wholesome and properly  
represented food products.

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*The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state's clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection, and information. Consumers who believe fraud has taken place can contact the department's consumer protection and information hotline by calling 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) or, for Spanish speakers, 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) or visit us online at [FloridaConsumerHelp.com](http://FloridaConsumerHelp.com).*

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**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**  
Nicole "Nikki" Fried, Commissioner

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