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Curber convicted: 31 counts of criminal fraud

Odometer rollbacks total over 2 million kilometres!

Coquitlam RCMP, with the assistance of VSA compliance officers, have successfully apprehended and convicted Mohammad Amin Mokhtarnameh, operating as Magic Light Enterprises Inc. in Coquitlam, of 31 counts of criminal fraud.

The investigation determined that Mokhtarnameh was buying vehicles wholesale from licensed dealers and then selling the same vehicles to the public. Evidence demonstrated odometer tampering. The rollbacks totalled more than two million kilometres.

New policy for vehicle ownership transfers

ICBC has implemented a new procedure for situations where an individual attends a broker's office and requests a replacement registration document for a vehicle owned by a dealer.

ICBC consulted its Broker Relations Group, the VSA, the Automotive Retailers Association (ARA) and the New Car Dealers Association (NCDA) in developing the new policy. This procedure was instituted after a dealer was defrauded through the theft of incomplete transfer documents (APV9Ts). The thief took the documents off-site to an Autoplan broker's office and transferred the vehicles into his own name.

Now, at an Autoplan broker's office, if a replacement registration document for a vehicle owned by a dealer is requested, the person asking must present:

- a valid Salesperson Licence issued by the Motor Vehicle Sales Authority of B.C.,
- a valid B.C. Driver's Licence or BC ID Card, and
- a Motor Dealer Employee Letter of Authorization.

Please note that the new procedure applies only at brokers' offices. It is business as usual when the replacement documents are being provided at the dealer's premises. The majority of replacement documents are issued by Mobile Road Service Operators directly at the dealer's premises and the procedure should not have a significant affect on dealers.

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Mokhtarnameh pleaded guilty in Provincial Court to the 31 counts on October 15, 2009. He was fined \$31,000, two vehicles with a combined value of \$20,000 were seized and he was put on probation for three years. The RCMP was grateful for the co-operation of all the licensed dealers involved in the investigation.

"There is a lesson here for licensed dealers who complain about curber competition on the one hand, but who also have their own private means of unloading unwanted inventory," said Denis Savidan, VSA's Manager of Compliance and Investigations. "They must be more conscientious of how and to whom they wholesale vehicles, because they eventually are sold to consumers."

The Mokhtarnameh conviction followed closely after a North Vancouver man with 61 prior convictions was sent to jail for nine months. Jonathan Allan Duck, 30, pleaded guilty to six fraud charges, dating back to 2007. In these cases he had rolled back odometers by an average of 100,000 kilometers per vehicle. The vehicles had been stolen in Maple Ridge and later sold in West Vancouver.

In both of these cases, the VSA provided the court a Victim Impact Statement.

<http://www.mvsabc.com/documents/VictimImpactStatement20090710.pdf>

Vehicle transfers (cont.)

The Motor Dealer Letter of Authorization is valid for 10 days from the date of issue, applies to a single vehicle only, and is intended for one-time use (it will be retained by the broker). In addition, it must be printed on the dealer's letterhead.

ICBC has prepared a template of the Motor Dealer Letter of Authorization. This is available upon request. It requires:

- authorizing motor dealer's company letterhead, name, address and the date
- a statement that the Letter is for obtaining a replacement registration document as the original was lost, stolen or destroyed
- year, make, model and VIN of the vehicle
- a statement that the motor dealer is the registered owner of the vehicle
- the name and signature of the employee authorized to obtain the replacement document and their Salesperson Licence number and B.C. Driver's Licence number or B.C. ID Card number
- the signature of the company officer or manager providing the authorization.