

Fast Facts 1

DMV Complaints



DMV Investigations Division

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Investigations Division protects and serves the public interest and maintains the integrity, security, and reliability of DMV's data, services, and products by providing consumer protection through the enforcement of laws, rules, and regulations applicable to licensees, business partners, the public and DMV employees.

DMV Investigators improve public safety through the protection of the programs and interests of DMV through active prevention/detection of fraud and counterfeit indicia. They enforce laws, rules, and regulations applying to new and used vehicles dealers, brokers, dismantlers, registration services, vehicle verifiers, driving and traffic violator schools, and other vehicle-related businesses. DMV Investigators also conduct disabled person parking placards/plate enforcement operations for misuse.

Typical Complaints

If you suspect or have witnessed any DMV violations or unlawful activities, you may file a complaint with the Investigations Division. Typical complaints focus on the following:

- **DMV Licensed Businesses Violations**

It is illegal for licensed businesses, such as vehicle dealers, brokers and their salespeople, dismantlers, registration services, and driving and traffic violator schools to violate DMV regulations. Examples include vehicle contract violations, overcharging DMV fees, and failing vehicle registration transfer requirements.

- **Unlicensed Businesses**

It is illegal for businesses or persons to provide vehicle-related services without a DMV-issued business license. This includes unlicensed vehicle dealers, brokers, and salespeople, also known as "curbstoners."

- **Unlicensed Vehicle Dismantlers**

It is illegal for any person to act as a vehicle dismantler without having an established place of business, meeting specific requirements, and having a current valid business license or temporary permit issued by DMV. Unlicensed dismantling happens when a vehicle is stripped for parts without the required environmental protections.

- **Odometer Fraud (Odometer Rollback)**

It is illegal for vehicle dealers, sellers, or brokers to change or alter odometer mileage readings to make a vehicle appear to have lower mileage.

- **DMV Document Fraud**

It is illegal for persons and businesses to alter, forge, falsify, or counterfeit DMV-issued documents (for example, driver license/identification cards, vehicle titles, registration cards, disabled person parking placards, etc.) that passed or attempted to pass as genuine. Fraud also includes false vehicle-related advertising.

- **Disabled Person Parking Placard Abuse**

It is illegal for persons to lend their placard to someone else, forge a medical professional's signature to obtain a disabled person parking placard, use someone else's placard, possess or display a counterfeit placard or license plates, provide false information to obtain a placard or license plates, and alter a placard or placard registration card.

How to File a Complaint

Complete the Record of Complaint Form (INV 172A), include supporting evidence/ photocopies of relevant documents (do not send originals), and submit the form and evidence in-person, by fax, or mail to your local DMV Investigations office (listed on the back).

Complaint forms are available at dmv.ca.gov, by mail from your nearest Investigations office, or at a DMV field office.

- **Report Complaints Online**

Visit DMV's website at dmv.ca.gov and click Report Fraud to report unlicensed vehicle dismantlers and disabled person parking placard abuse. You may also file complaints regarding disabled person parking placard abuse by calling a DMV Investigations office or sending an email to placard.misuse@dmv.ca.gov.

Other Important Information

Please be aware of the following information before filing your complaint:

- Attempt to resolve the problem with the business first.
- All complaints are reviewed but not all of them are investigated.
- Complaints that are investigated may result in criminal or administrative actions but not result in any monetary judgment or award to you and/or the victim(s).

DMV only has authority to assist and investigate activities within its jurisdiction; therefore, DMV **cannot**:

- Provide legal advice.
- Force the dealer to take back a vehicle after a contract is signed.
- Investigate verbal vehicle agreements or statements made by the dealer.
- Act as a go-between to settle contract terms for the buyer or dealer of the vehicle.
- Assist with issues regarding private party vehicle sales.

The following agencies may assist with your complaints:

- **New Motor Vehicle Board (nmvb.ca.gov)**

For vehicle contractual purchase or lease disputes, vehicle warranty and repair disputes, issues with used vehicles sold by a new or used dealer (Lemon Law), and issues with used vehicles with original warranties.

- **Department of Consumer Affairs (dca.ca.gov)**

For recreational vehicle chassis, chassis cab and drive train complaints.

- **California Courts (Small Claims Court) (courts.ca.gov)**

For legal advice, to recover money, property, reimbursement for damages or suffering, or resolve disputes over money owed to, or by another party.

- **Better Business Bureau (bbb.org)**

You may find it worthwhile to contact your local Better Business Bureau to register your complaint.