



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Carri Grube Lybarker, Administrator

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Vehicle Complaints Take Top Spot Again: Over \$1 Million to Consumers in 2015

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) received **3,903** consumer complaints from January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015, resulting in a total of **\$1,122,662** going back to consumers in the form of credits, refunds, and adjustments.

The number one category in 2015 was **Vehicle** complaints, totaling 16% (635) of SCDCA’s complaints. Rounding out the top five are **Utilities** at 14% (542), **Debt Collection** at 10% (386), **Contractors** at 6% (235), and **Finance** at 5% (189).

The top five consumer refunds were related to: (1) a disputed debt and removal of delinquency on credit reports, \$170,000; (2) payoff from the sale of a repossessed vehicle and removal of delinquency on credit reports, \$64,500; (3) buy back of defective vehicle under lemon law, \$51,689; (4) adjustment of mortgage contract, \$39,060; (5) buy back of defective vehicle under lemon law, \$38,653.

“As the economy continues to rebound, more consumers are becoming active in the marketplace, especially purchasing vehicles,” said SCDCA’s Administrator Carri Grube Lybarker. “As complaint data reflects, providing consumer guidance and ensuring industry compliance with applicable laws related to vehicles is as important as ever.”

In 2015, SCDCA updated its “Auto Guide for Consumers” and issued a joint brochure identifying tips for consumers to avoid purchasing a flood damaged vehicle. SCDCA also participated in “Operation Ruse Control” in 2015, a nationwide and cross-border crackdown to protect consumers when they buy a car. The sweep resulted in SCDCA issuing 78 enforcement letters addressing 105 violations of state and federal motor vehicle advertising laws, ultimately resulting in four fines.

This year’s data closely resembles the trends seen last year. Contractors edged out Credit for inclusion in this year’s top 5 complaint categories. Top refunds garnered in 2015 represent a diverse cross section of the types of complaints SCDCA receives, while complaint refunds in 2014 were all related to vehicle complaints.

SCDCA processes and mediates consumer complaints against businesses regulated by the DCA, refers complaints that fall within another agency’s jurisdiction, and mediates those complaints against businesses that are unregulated. To file a complaint, visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click FILE A COMPLAINT. To see if a business has complaints against it, consumers should take advantage of the Search Complaints tool on the Consumer Information page of SCDCA’s website.

About SCDCA

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-922-1594.

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