

# LAW & JUSTICE

## Local Residents Beware of 'Flood Cars'

Officials warn of concealed damage

More than half a million cars may have been ruined by flooding from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast, according to estimates by the National Automobile Dealers Association. Hurricane Wilma in Florida may add to those numbers.

The disasters may be thousands of miles away, but even Oregonians in the market for a used car need to beware, Oregon DMV warns.

"Moving totaled cars from state to state and concealing their histories is a national problem, even without hurricanes," said Chris Ratliff, manager of the DMV Business Regulation Unit. "Unscrupulous in-

dividuals may try to prey on consumers looking for a bargain. Any time a deal sounds too good to be true, it usually is. That's particularly true of cars."

The number of vehicles damaged by the recent hurricanes is so large that the National Insurance Crime Bureau has created a database of vehicles affected by Katrina and Rita. The NICB is allowing the public to check Vehicle Identification Numbers at [www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org).

Consumers often wonder why a

little water is such a big problem for vehicles. But submersion in water does severe damage, particularly when water enters the passenger compartment:

Water and electronics don't mix.

function could result in severe damage to the engine, for example.

No more new-car smell. Cleaning carpets and seats may improve the appearance of a flooded car's interior, but mold and residues may remain.

Salt is corrosive to metal. The breach of Lake Ponchartrain sent saltwater into New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The effects of salt corrosion may take time to show up as failures in electronic systems and engine components.

There is no guaranteed way to avoid buying a damaged car, yet Oregonians shopping for a used car during the next several months can reduce their risks by taking a few precautions:

Inspect the vehicle. Look for signs of water, mud, corrosion or residue in carpet, upholstery, the glove box, inside the dash if that's easy to examine, inside tail light fixtures, etc.



A car flooded to its rooftop is an example of the hundreds of thousands of automobiles ruined by flooding from hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast.

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—Chris Ratliff, manager of the Oregon DMV Business Regulation Unit

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Modern vehicles are full of electronics, controlling the engine, transmission, emission control devices, dash board, warning lights, external lights and entertainment systems. These chips may be located inside the dash or even under the seats. Failure of a single chip's

Hire a professional mechanic to inspect a vehicle before purchase.

Ask for the Vehicle Identification Number and check the VIN at [www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org) or against online services such as Carfax or Experian. Or ask your auto insurance agent to check a VIN.

Ask the seller to show you the title and check for title brands such as "salvage" or "flooded."

Shop for a used vehicle among licensed auto dealers, who are as eager to avoid damaged cars as consumers are. Oregonians can find out whether a dealer is licensed by visiting the Business section of [www.OregonDMV.com](http://www.OregonDMV.com).

## Elder Scam Case May Grow

A Multnomah County Grand Jury has indicted 35-year-old Troy Gallagher on 15 counts of theft in connection with a home improvement scam.

Portland Police Detectives initiated the criminal case after receiving information that Gallagher and his uncle, 56-year-old Gene Gallagher, had been contacting elderly and medically frail homeowners and convincing them that they needed repairs to their homes.

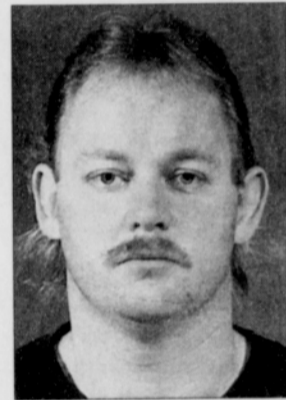
As least two victims agreed to the repairs and then paid Troy Gallagher more than \$10,000 for repairs that were

never done, police said. In 1998, both suspects were convicted of crimes in a similar scam involving an 85-year-old victim.

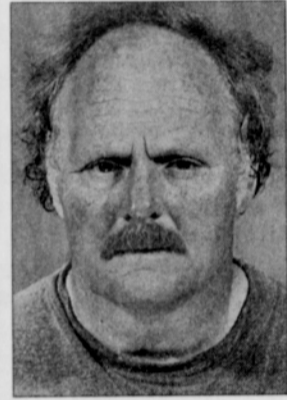
Investigators believe the suspects are using the business name "Handyman Yard Services."

Detectives believe there may be many victims in the

Portland area and are seeking information from anyone who may have had contact with the suspects. Any-



Troy Gallagher



Gene Gallagher

one with information is asked to call Detective Amber Lewis at 503-823-0272.

## Survey Finds Renewed Drive Against Poverty

Hurricane shook public confidence

Hurricane Katrina has forged a strong consensus among America's major racial and ethnic groups to eliminate poverty in America, according to a new multilingual poll. The storm and its aftermath also shook public confidence in the U.S. government's capacity to handle catastrophes, including a terrorist attack.

These are among the major findings of a national survey of 1035 Hispanics, Asians, African Americans and non-Hispanic whites on Katrina's impact.

The poll was conducted in six languages by Sergio Bendixen for New California Media.

Clear majorities of Asians, Hispanics, African Americans and whites believe that fighting poverty is now more important than fighting terrorism or establishing democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the poll found.

"This is the first time in decades I have seen poverty make it to the top of the agenda for the U.S. public," Bendixen notes. "The dramatic images of families abandoned at the Superdome and on I-10

brought home just how tough it is to be poor in America."

When asked what option they favored for repairing Katrina's damage, a majority of all four groups chose "getting U.S. troops out of Iraq as fast as possible."

Like the consensus on poverty, a majority of Hispanics, Asians and African Americans and a plurality of whites also agreed that climate change and weak environmental policies were likely to cause future natural disasters.

All four groups were united in their view that Katrina has eroded trust in the U.S. government's capacity to handle natural disasters, let alone protect Americans from a terrorist attack. Significant percentages of immigrants from Asia and Latin America believe their country of birth could have done a better job in responding to a similar disaster.

The one issue on which America's major ethnic and racial groups disagreed was the role of racism in the Katrina catastrophe. Most African Americans blamed racial discrimination but a majority of whites said it was not a factor. Hispanics and Asians were evenly divided.

## Cocaine, Ecstasy Seized

Police said they seized 1.5 pounds of cocaine and 4,500 pills of ecstasy, valued together at \$75,000, as well as \$15,000 in cash and a Winchester 20 gauge shotgun from an apartment at 255 S.W. Harrison St.

Paul Ji Hwan Song, 26 and Dustin Michale Richards, 25, were charged in connection with the Oct. 13 bust by members of the Portland Police Drugs and Vice Division, Washington County West Side Interagency Narcotics Team, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the FBI.

## Knock on Door Leads to Assault

Police said a man who possibly represented himself as a door-to-door salesman knocked on the door of a Sellwood area home, making contact with the female resident, and then physically and sexually assaulting her.

The alleged incident occurred in the vicinity of Southeast Milwaukie Avenue and Tacoma Street on Oct. 20 at about 5 p.m.

The suspect is described as about 21 to 25 years old and possibly East Indian, African American or another national-



Police released this sketch of a suspect in a sexual assault.

ity. He has a thin build and face, was clean-shaven, and was wearing a dark suit with a pink striped tie.

Prior to the assault, detectives believe he may have been seen walking through the Sellwood area carrying a notebook and may have had contact with other residents.

Anyone with information is asked to call Detective Liz Cruthers of the Portland Police Bureau Sexual Assault Detail at 503-823-0887.

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