

With the economy struggling, many consumers are purchasing used cars rather than splurging on the shiny new one they may have brought home five or six years ago. Several auto manufacturers have realized this trend and increased the number of certified pre-owned vehicles available in the market place in recent years.

If you happen to purchase one of these warranted certified pre-owned vehicles in California, and it turns out to be problematic, do not despair. California's lemon law not only covers new vehicles but also covers used vehicles which are sold with a written warranty.

When deciding whether to purchase a certified pre-owned car, it important to understand the process which the vehicle undergoes and the terms of the warranty accompanying the sale. Prior to being certified, a pre-owned vehicle will generally go through an extensive inspection process to make sure it is free from any major defects which may result in substantial warranty repairs. Most of the time this inspection process ferrets out the vehicles which may not be worthy of the manufacturer's stamp of approval. However, [there are times when a lemon slips through](#) the proverbial crack in the process. Understanding the terms of the certified warranty can help alleviate concerns about being stuck with a lemon vehicle years after the purchase.

All certified vehicle warranties have time and mileage limitations which are based on the vehicle's original in service date. For example, if a car is originally sold January 1, 2007, and then certified and resold with a six (6) year 60,000 mile pre-owned warranty, the certified warranty will expire on December 31, 2012. The same holds true for the certified pre-owned mileage limitations. If a car is certified with a 60,000 mile pre-owned warranty and is re-sold with 50,000 miles on the odometer then the warranty is effectively 10,000 miles.

If you purchase a certified pre-owned vehicle with a manufacturer's written warranty and experience problems be sure to take the car to an authorized dealer for repair as soon as possible. If you end up having repeat repairs to the vehicle and it turns out to be a lemon, your refund will be based on the number of miles you drove the car prior to returning it for repair of the problem which makes it a lemon.

The dealer may try to convince you that you do not need repair orders because the vehicle is covered by warranty. This is not true. [Lemon law cases](#) are based on proper documentation, even when the vehicle is certified pre-owned. This documentation should include the date the vehicle is delivered for repair, the complaint the customer has with the vehicle, the date the repairs are completed, and the nature of the repairs done by the dealership to fix the problem. Failing to obtain proper paper work for a repair performed under a certified pre-owned written warranty can be the difference between having a valid claim and being stuck with a lemon.

Here are some guidelines to consider when making a decision whether to purchase a certified pre-owned vehicle.

1. Make sure the certification comes from the manufacturer of the vehicle and not a third party company.
2. Know exactly what was done as part of the certified inspection process.

3. Ask the dealer if any repairs were performed on the vehicle to make it pass the certification. If there were any repairs performed request to see the repair order so you know exactly what work was done.
4. Find out the in service date of the vehicle before agreeing to buy it. While a six (6) year 60,000 mile warranty sounds great, if there is only one (1) year left on the warranty based on the original in service date you need calculate future repairs into the cost of ownership.
5. Read the terms of the warranty and know what is covered. While most certified pre-owned warranties are similar to the original factory warranty, others may have additional limitations.
6. If you have a problem with the vehicle during the warranty period be sure to delivery it to an authorized repair facility as soon as possible.
7. Always get paperwork showing the date the vehicle was delivered for repair, the date the repair was completed, and the nature of the repairs performed.

Sometimes a certified pre-owned vehicle may seem like it is as good as new. While that may be true in some cases, make sure to do your homework about the certification process and the written warranty which accompanies the vehicle before signing on the dotted line. The last thing you want is to be stuck with is a used car with no warranty and expensive repair bills.