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Don't get caught by latest car defect recall scam

Don't hand over your car keys to anyone offering to fetch your car to fix a defect. Ever. That's the warning from insurer King Price, who says there's been a sharp increase in cases in recent months of cybercrime syndicates trying to scam consumers out of their cars.

It's an old scam that's resurfaced: Someone claiming to be from your car manufacturer or dealership calls, and says there's been a safety recall for an issue like an airbag or a mechanical glitch. They then arrange for your car to be fetched by a tow truck or a flatbed – and that's the last you see of your precious wheels.

"What makes the scam believable is that the scammers know your registration number and personal info. It all seems legitimate and above board. Many people actually think they're getting great service, when in reality they're being robbed of their car," said Wynand van Vuuren, client experience partner at King Price.

What can you do to avoid being scammed? King Price's advice to consumers is simple:

If someone calls you about a car defect, contact the manufacturer or your nearest dealership immediately to verify if the caller is an employee, and if there's a genuine recall.
Under no circumstances should you hand over your car to a third party. It's highly unlikely that a manufacturer will fetch your car from you. They would generally ask you to take it in to a dealer yourself.
In the case of a genuine recall, the manufacturer will send you formal communication that describes the process in detail, the steps to follow, and how to verify what's happening at every stage.
Never give out your personal information, or make any kind of payment, to anyone claiming to be from a car dealership or manufacturer. End the call or delete the email, and call the nearest dealership. Or the police.

What if you become a victim of such scam?

If you're scammed in such a way that you honestly believe your car is on its way to a dealership or repairer, insurers like King Price will pay your claim.

"Most insurance policies include a requirement that their clients should always act with due care and precaution, and therefore consumers should always be careful not to hand over their car to anyone irresponsibly".

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