

Consumer complaint process

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Bureau of Automotive Repair

Overview

- BAR investigates thousands of consumer complaints each year.
 - 17,422 in FY 2024/25
 - 19,000 projected for FY 2025/26
- Primary goal is to address consumer concerns regarding repair transactions and seek a resolution acceptable to both parties.
- Complaint investigations will attempt to determine:
 - The exact nature of the consumer's complaint.
 - What took place during the repair transaction.
 - An appropriate resolution acceptable to both parties.

Complaint results FY 2024-25

- Restitution ordered – \$12,888
- Amount refunded – \$5,336,195
- Rework at no charge – \$1,789,653
- Adjustments to repair bill – \$2,209,673
- Total consumer savings – \$9,348,409

Complaint intake (1 of 2)

- Goal is to make the complaint submittal process as simple as possible for consumers.
 - Drop-down menus are provided to capture basic information about the complaint.
 - BAR will capture the details involving the complaint in a verbal discussion with the consumer.
- Consumers can file a complaint on BAR's website or call the Complaint Intake Unit.
 - www.bar.ca.gov/complaint
 - Complaint Intake Unit: (855) 837-7985
 - A printable form is in development

Complaint intake (2 of 2)

- The online complaint form captures basic tracking information that is transmitted directly to BAR staff who input the information into the BAR database.
- The complaint transmits overnight to the appropriate field office for assignment to an investigator.
 - Routing process is automated and takes place in a matter of minutes.

Complaint evidence and findings (1 of 3)

- All statements, evidence, documents, and other information secured during the complaint investigation are privileged information under California Evidence and Government Codes and not subject to public disclosure.
- BAR has received numerous Public Records Act requests that appear to be prepared with the assistance of artificial intelligence due to the same six pieces of information requested in nearly every records request.
- All six of the items requested—detailed on the next slide—are privileged information, and are not subject to disclosure.

Complaint evidence and findings (2 of 3)

- Investigative steps taken
- Evidence gathered during the investigation
- Internal BAR communications related to the investigation
- Violations identified during the investigation
- Outcome of the investigation
- Educational or disciplinary action under consideration

Complaint evidence and findings (3 of 3)

Although the information on the previous slide is privileged and not subject to public disclosure, BAR will provide disclosable items to both parties, including but not limited to:

- A closure letter advising the complaint has been closed.
- In some cases, a more detailed summary letter that discloses the factual elements of what took place during the repair transaction.
- A survey card to provide feedback on the complaint process and handling by the investigator.
- Information on seeking legal guidance for future action by either party.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) assisted complaints

- The circumstances and details of each complaint are unique.
- Consumers (and licensees) relying on AI to provide a likely outcome to a complaint should be aware that AI-generated responses may be inaccurate and/or incomplete.
- Therefore, each complaint investigation conducted by BAR requires human analysis, evaluation, and discussion.
- Complaint findings and other enforcement-related determinations are always made by the BAR investigator, with occasional input from a BAR lead or supervisor.

Thank you

For comments and questions, please contact:

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