

## Auto Salesman Allegedly Taps Credit Reports

Automotive News  
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A federal grand jury in Miami has charged a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., new-car salesman with using a dealership computer to obtain credit bureau information about consumers and selling it to thieves.

The Mazda salesman allegedly gained access to files on more than 130 consumers. He then sold the information to individuals who opened credit card accounts in the victims' names, according to the United States Attorney's Office in Miami. Potential losses could exceed \$1 million.

The investigation is pending.

While the car salesman did not prey upon dealership customers, he could have easily done so.

The salesman acted without the store's knowledge, and the dealership is cooperating in the investigation.

The incident underlines how important it is for dealers to restrict access to credit reports. The U.S. Comptroller of the Currency estimates 500,000 people per year fall victim to identity theft whereby thieves steal personal information to tap bank and credit card accounts.

The U.S. Secret Service, which is investigating the Fort Lauderdale case, suggests dealers limit credit-report access to a few employees and require those employees to log into the computer with an identification number or password.

In other retail news:

DriversSeat.com, the National Automobile Dealers Association's Internet portal for new- and used-car shoppers, has surpassed the 1 million mark for both inventory searches and unique visitors. The Web site, which allows dealers to promote their dealerships, was launched June 26, 2000.

Eighty-two percent of nearly 3,400 consumers in a Yahoo! Autos poll said they would feel confident about buying a new or used car despite the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.