



Continuous Improvement at WisDOT

The dealer complaint process goes online to better help consumers

If consumers encounter a problem with a vehicle purchased at a Wisconsin dealer, they can file a dealer complaint with the Dealer & Agent Section's Field Investigation Unit (FIU). FIU receives more than 1,000 dealer complaints annually, and for a long time the only way FIU took complaints was by mail. Each complaint had to be manually processed and assigned to a Consumer Protection Investigator (CPI), a time-consuming process creating unnecessary paperwork and delaying the start of an investigation by a week or more. Consumers were also left in the dark about the status of their complaint, leaving them to wonder when help would arrive.

That's why in 2019 FIU began implementing an online complaint process. The goal was to make submitting complaints easier with less paperwork, fewer delays, and more transparency. The online form allows consumers to submit the details of their complaint, including uploading supporting documents. Immediately after submitting the complaint the consumer receives a confirmation email letting them know it was received. At the same time, the CPI receives notification about the complaint, allowing them to start an investigation right away.

Today, the effects of the online complaint form are being felt by investigators.

"The old complaint forms could result in substantial delays, from mailing the form in, to getting it processed once it arrived," says CPI Nicholas Denk. "Now submissions are instant, potentially shaving weeks off turnaround times." The document upload system is also making investigations easier. "Many times, I get all the paperwork I would need from consumers instantly, and in very high quality, before I even ask."

CPI Brandon Wilbik agrees. "The new electronic complaint process has made the receiving of dealer complaints a lot more efficient. This allows us to code and get started on complaints faster than the old way."

The increased efficiency of online complaints has also been noticed by consumers, say investigators.

"I have had consumers comment about how fast [we] contacted them after submission," Wilbik says. "[They'll say] I didn't expect a call this soon!" CPI John Kleinfeldt has also heard positive comments from consumers. "They were pleasantly surprised at how quick I got back to them."

The easy-to-use form appears to be helping more consumers than ever before. "I do think we have been receiving more complaints," Denk says. "The ease of access seems to encourage people to go through the trouble of asking for our help."

The benefits of online complaints even extend to other areas of consumer protection. Nearly 300 annual work hours have been saved in the transition from paper to online complaints, and this time has been reallocated to projects such as title and odometer fraud investigations.

How to sum up the new dealer complaint process? Denk might say it best: "I think the transition to electronic complaints was a huge success."



LEAN AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
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Project or Initiative Name: Creating online dealer complaint form

Team Lead: Mirenda McArdle, Michael Domke, and Cynthia Pillar

Division: Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

The Process (Background): Complainants complete a paper complaint form, MV2338. Once the form is completed, the complainants mail the complaint forms to the Dealer and Agent Section (DAS) central office at the Hill Farms State Office Building. After the complaint is received the next steps are followed:

1. Someone must scan the complaint form and supporting documents.
2. The complaint information is entered into the Business Licensing System (BLiS).
3. A letter is created and mailed to the complainant explaining complaint process and investigator assigned to the case.
4. Scanned complaint, supporting documents, and copy of letter are emailed to the investigator.

Problem/Opportunity Statement: The process above can take more than a week before the complaint is assigned to an investigator based on mailing time and internal processing. Each complaint is handled multiple times: externally by USPS; internally by the Correspondence Processing Unit (CPU), DAS Field Investigation Unit (FIU) support staff, and Consumer Protection Investigators (CPI).

Scope: Make the complaint process more efficient and greener.

Stakeholders: Wisconsin consumer complainants, CPU staff, FIU support staff, and Field Investigation Unit Consumer Protection Investigators.

Magnitude: Annually, approximately 1,100 consumer complaints are received and disseminated to the Consumer Protection Investigators through the process outlined above.

Goals: Reduce the turnaround time for receiving and disseminating consumer complaints to the Consumer Protection Investigators. Including mail time and internal processing it may take seven business days before the Consumer Protection Investigators receive the complaint and begin their investigation. Also, the internal processing steps above utilize 15 minutes of support staff time per complaint. This time will be repurposed to assist with odometer and title fraud investigations.

Improvement Methodology: 'Just Do It' Work with Wisconsin Interactive Network (WIN) to create an electronic complaint submission process.

Results: DMV worked with WIN programmers to develop an electronic complaint form. This process allows complainants the ability to upload supporting documents to their complaint. Once the complaint is submitted an email is sent to the complainant explaining the complaint process and a link to the CPI territory map. Simultaneously, the CPI receives an email notifying them a new complaint was submitted. The investigator can retrieve the complaint details and supporting documents and enter complaint details into BLiS.

Performance Metrics:

Metric Name	Initial Unit	Final Unit	Difference
Average process lead time (days) mail time to DMV	5 days	0	5 days
Annual hours required internal process time	275 hours	0	275 hours

After Metric Summary:

Initial: Mail time to DMV and through DMV mail room = 5 days per complaint

Final: Mail time eliminated

Initial: Internal Processing (steps outlined above) = .25 hours / complaint; .25 x 1,100 = 275 hours annually

Final: Internal Processing = 0 hours / complaint