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ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

Zangara Held in Contempt

Deal To Provide Consumers Relief

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Albuquerque Journal

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An order of civil contempt was filed against Zangara Dodge Inc. this week as part of a deal between the state Attorney General's Office and Zangara that will provide some relief to former customers.

"Basically, this says Zangara is not going to fight contempt and they will hand over the information we requested —

basically two years of records — so we can do an independent review," said Rebecca Branch, deputy director of the Consumer Protection Division of the AG's Office.

Under the order filed in Bernalillo County District Court, Zangara Dodge is held in contempt of court for violating a consent decree reached by the AG's Office and Zangara Dodge in 2006 as well as violating the state Unfair Practices Act and the Motor Vehicle Dealers Franchise Act.

The order requires that Zangara provide the AG's Office with access to all deal files from 2007 to the present within

five days of the order and provide a letter within 20 days of the order stating that consumers whose credit has been hurt by Zangara's actions are not at fault and provide any other further assistance requested by credit reporting agencies.

Branch said there have been 62 formal complaints from customers who bought cars from Zangara Dodge dealing with issues such as trade-in loans that were not paid off; registration and title fees that were not paid by Zangara; and extended warranties sold by Zangara that were not paid or cannot be fulfilled.

The most recent complaints

came in December 2008, but many more came in after Zangara owner Kenneth B. Zangara closed the dealership's doors Feb. 17, citing the bad economy.

Branch said access to financial information "gives us a lot of power to help other consumers that may have been harmed."

She said the office has been able to find resolution for some consumers, but the order helps mend the "most egregious" issue of trade-ins that were not paid off, causing bad credit.

Consumers can still file a complaint by visiting www.nmag.gov.

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JOURNAL FILE

Zangara Dodge's parking lot emptied by the end of March after the dealership closed.