



AdAlert BBB Procedures on Competitor Advertising Complaints

Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association (MADA), Greater Metropolitan Automobile Dealers Association (GMADA), and Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota (BBB) have a long-standing partnership to create an ethical auto marketplace. The Steering Committee comprised of representatives from these organizations has created a set of advertising standards, which are periodically reviewed and updated in response to emerging concerns and trends.

BBB assists the dealer community by providing services such as Prior-to-Publication advertising review, secret shopping by volunteers, dispute resolution services, daily monitoring of advertising across multiple media, and proactive review of current advertising.

BBB also maintains a unique **competitor advertising complaint process**, wherein staff will investigate concerns raised by dealers while keeping the initiating dealer's identity anonymous. BBB offers this service because it values the perspective of dealers, wants to help ensure a level playing field in the marketplace, and understands dealers may be reluctant to file a formal complaint against a competitor, in the interest of maintaining business relationships.

One challenge this presents is to ongoing communication with the initiating dealer. In keeping with BBB standards for transparency, BBB can confirm back to the initiating dealer that it will act on a reported issue or that efforts to correct the advertising are ongoing, but cannot share specific details of subsequent conversations between BBB and the advertising dealer.

In an effort to address BBB's need for transparency and ensure timely response to competitor advertising complaints, BBB commits to the following timelines for addressing competitor concerns, and the Steering Committee has approved the timeframes below as reasonable for making changes to advertising across various media.

- 1) When a dealer contacts BBB with concerns about competitor advertising, BBB staff will contact the initiating dealer within 1 business day to confirm it will take action, or explain why the advertising does not violate standards. BBB staff will also confirm the dealer's request for anonymity. If the initiating dealer wishes to be party to the advertising dealer's response, it will be offered the option of filing a formal complaint at this time.
- 2) Within 1 business day of this communication, BBB staff will contact the advertising dealer to request substantiation, modification, or discontinuation of the advertising in question.
- 3) If modification / discontinuation is necessary:
 - Advertising dealer will be asked to commit to a timeframe for making changes, with BBB using media-specific guidelines at the end of this document to gauge whether the commitment is reasonable.
 - If modifications are not made within the committed timeframe, BBB will call the dealer principal and send a certified letter.
 - If modifications are not completed following this phone call / certified letter, BBB will issue a '2nd Strike' under its '3 Strikes' policy by notifying MADA, who will in turn notify Steering Committee.
 - If the dealer still fails to complete modifications, BBB will issue a '3rd Strike,' at which point it will issue a press release, update the dealer's BBB Business Review (may impact rating, accreditation status), and ask MADA to highlight the decision in its newsletter.

Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota

220 S River Ridge Circle, Burnsville, MN 55337 • 651-699-1111 • 800-646-6222 • Fax: 651-699-7665
406 Main Ave, 2nd Floor, Fargo, ND 58103 • 701-738-0046 • 800-646-6222
355 5th Ave. S., St. Cloud, MN 56301 • 800-646-6222



AdAlert

BBB Procedures on Competitor Advertising Complaints (continued)

4) If no response whatsoever to BBB inquiries:

- BBB advertising inquiry timeline is 8 business days. If no response within that timeframe, BBB will call the dealer principal, send a certified letter, and implement the '3 Strikes' policy.

Guidelines for Discontinuation / Modification of Advertising

Medium	Days if Discontinuing	Days if Modifying
Print	3	3
Web Banner Ads	3	3
Electronic Signage	3	3
Radio / TV	3	5
Website Formatting / Inventory	5	7
Listings		
Poster Billboards	14	30

For more information, please contact:

Steve Farr
Auto Industry Liaison
steve.farr@thefirstbbb.org
651-695-2430

Karen Thompson
Advertising Review Manager
karen.thompson@thefirstbbb.org
651-695-2418

Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota

220 S River Ridge Circle, Burnsville, MN 55337 • 651-699-1111 • 800-646-6222 • Fax: 651-699-7665
406 Main Ave, 2nd Floor, Fargo, ND 58103 • 701-738-0046 • 800-646-6222
355 5th Ave. S., St. Cloud, MN 56301 • 800-646-6222