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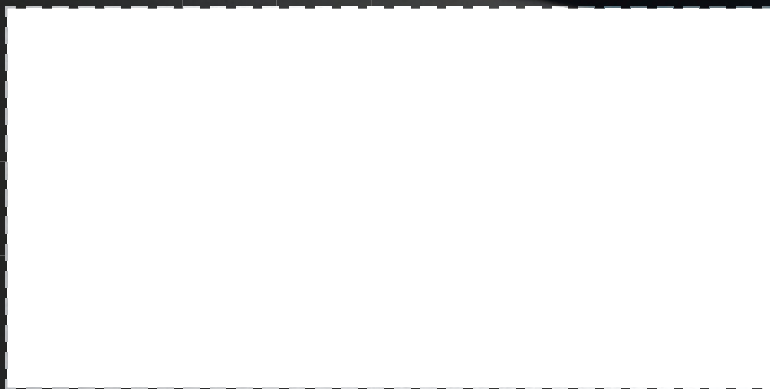
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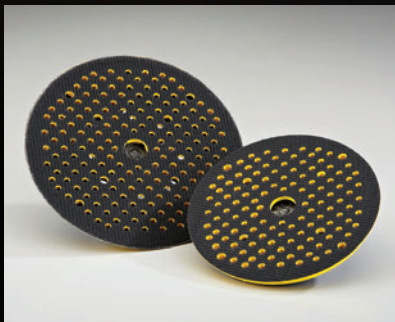
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P800B	07793	07787
P600B	07791	07786
P500B	07768	07785
P400B	07765	07784
P320B	07763	07781
P280B	07762	07778
P240B	07760	07777
P220B	07757	07776
P180B	07756	07775
P150B	07755	07774
P120C	07753	07773
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PART #	DIAMETER x THREAD	DENSITY	COLOR	QTY. PER PK.	PKS. PER CASE	RPM
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EDITORIAL

MICHAEL WILLINS
 GROUP CONTENT DIRECTOR
 mwillins@advanstar.com
 (440) 891-2604

KRISTA MCNAMARA
 MANAGING EDITOR
 kmcnamara@advanstar.com
 (440) 891-2745

STEPH JOHNSON-BENTZ
 ART DIRECTOR

CONTRIBUTORS

BRIAN ALBRIGHT
 b-albright@sbjglobal.net
 (614) 237-6707

MIKE ANDERSON
 mike@collisionadvice.com
 (301) 535-3333

MIKE LEVASSEUR
 mikel@keenanautobody.com
 (424) 257-5410

JAMES E. GUYETTE
 jimguyette2004@yahoo.com
 (440) 564-9180

GREG HORN
 greg.horn@mitchell.com
 (888) 368-7796

KEVIN MEHOK
 k.mehok@comcast.net
 (708) 516-2936

TONY PASSWATER
 tony_passwater@aeti.net
 (317) 290-0611

TOM MCGEE
 tmcgee@autotraining.net
 (888) 471-5800

STEPHANIE SKERNIVITZ
 sdsken@gmail.com
 (440) 239-9034

TIM SRAMCIC
 tsramcic@yahoo.com
 (330) 475-5969

ALFRED THOMAS
 athomas@pct.edu
 (570) 329-2712

JOHN YOSWICK
 info@crashnetwork.com
 (608) 338-0393

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 GROUP PUBLISHER
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 lmend@advanstar.com
 (773) 866-1514
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FEATURE

MAKE SURE TO AIM BEFORE PULLING THE TRIGGER

BY **BOB SPITZ** | ABRN BLOGGER

Make sure you are focused on the proper target before you make a move for change or improvement in your business.

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MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

IMPROVE PROCESS EFFICIENCY AND PROFITABILITY

BY ROBERT HORNEDO | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Steps to boost your shop's performance.

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Learn how to build a learning and training culture in your shop.

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BY AL THOMAS | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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BY BRIAN ALBRIGHT | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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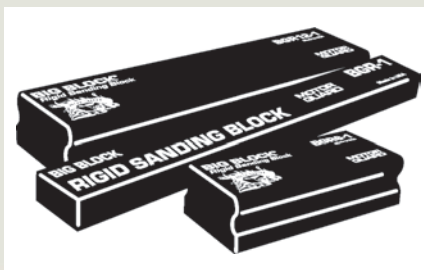
QUICKJACK™
By Ranger Products

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Ranger Products, a division of BendPak, unveiled its QuickJack portable jack system that makes vehicle maintenance on the track and off convenient and fast.

PRODUCT FOCUS



58 Motor Guard developed three new Super-Rigid Big Block models for fast and aggressive blocking that result in fast and flawless finishes.

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VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

TAKE A look around Final Touch with CEO Joel Forte

Members of the Axalta Heavy Duty Collision Business Council 7 got a chance to tour Final Touch with CEO Joel Forte. The shop specializes in RV refinish work and customization.

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BLOG SPOTLIGHT

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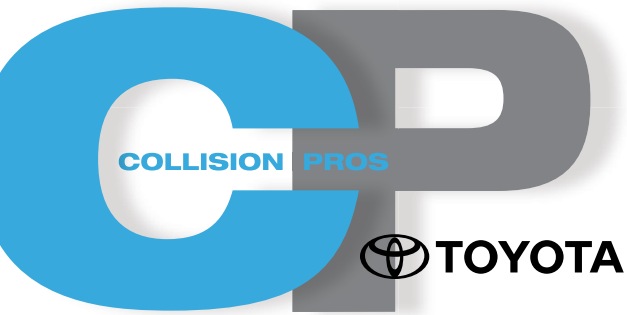


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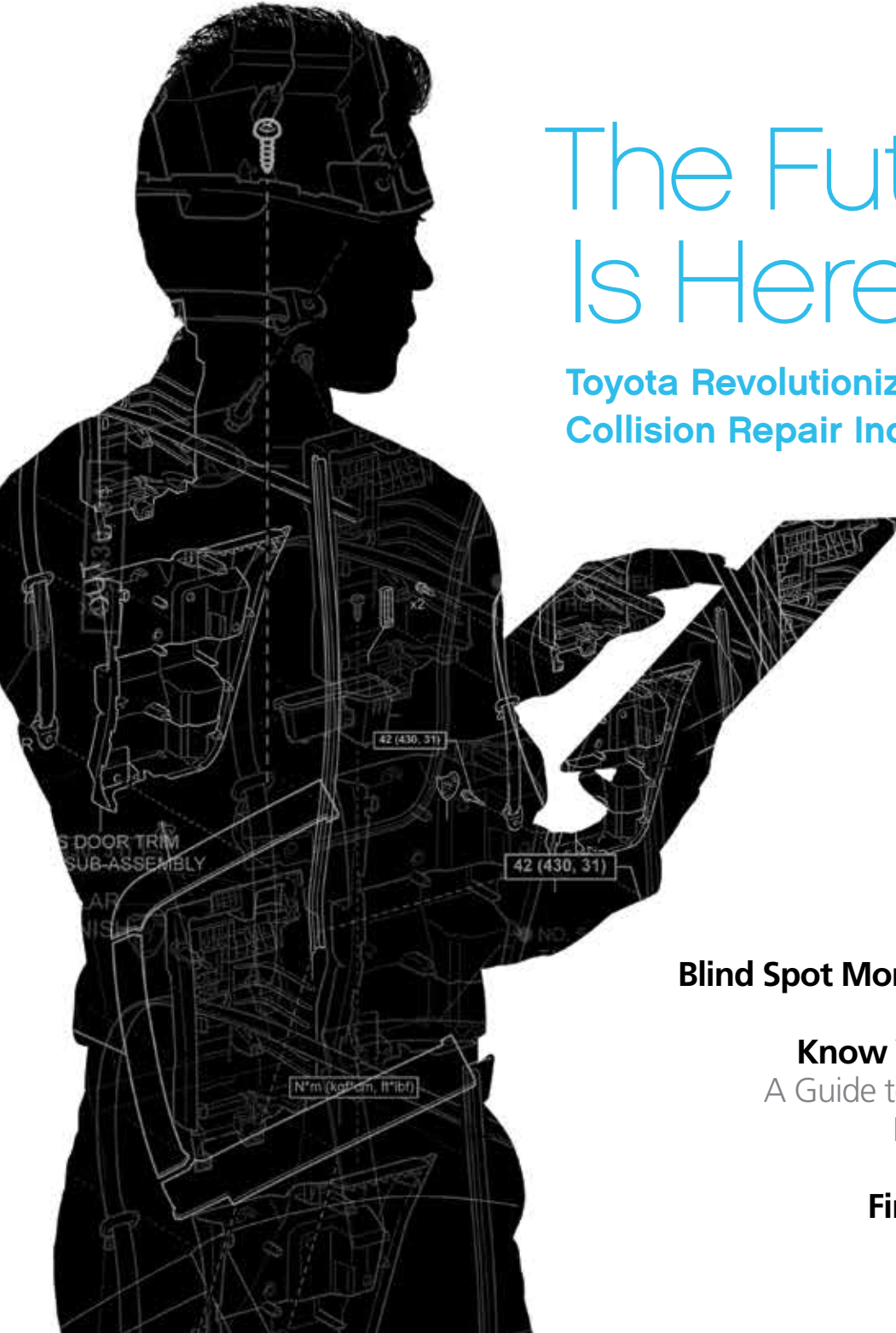


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Winter 2014

The Future Is Here

Toyota Revolutionizes the
Collision Repair Industry



Blind Spot Monitor Alignment

Know Your Resources:
A Guide to Toyota Collision
Repair References

First Class Repairs

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Teamwork Gets the Job Done

IN THIS ISSUE WE ANNOUNCE an exciting new software program: Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures. This program will give shops instant access to all the information they need to complete a collision repair in one place. Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures is made possible by a partnership with Mitchell International, Inc., a leading technology provider in the collision repair industry. This partnership exemplifies what the collision repair industry is all about: knowledgeable professionals collaborating to deliver safe, quality repairs. At Toyota, we believe in doing what it takes to be a strong partner in the collision repair industry and an ally to collision repair shops. This means forging partnerships with companies like Mitchell and delivering the best information to technicians.

One thing you learn in the collision repair industry is that being successful is about teamwork. In this issue, you can see the importance of this philosophy. The collaboration between the OEM and collision repair technicians is demonstrated in every story—whether it is Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures or Toyota sharing crucial information through CRIBs, TIS or other means. The teamwork between technicians within shops is also demonstrated, as in the story about steering suspension repair, which emphasizes how important teamwork is to a fast, accurate repair.

I hope that in this issue of *Collision Pros* magazine you find valuable information that helps you do your job better. As part of your team, we are always interested in hearing your opinions and feedback. If you have something you'd like to share, email the magazine at info@collisionprosmagazine.com.

Kathy Capozza
Wholesale Marketing Administrator Sr.
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“One thing you learn in the collision repair industry is that being successful is about teamwork.”

– Kathy Capozza



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DID YOU KNOW: In Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles, the blind spot monitor sensor is located on the vehicle's quarter panel.

"Blind spot monitoring sensor mounting bracket placement is crucial to the entire system. Proper placement ensures that the blind spot monitor functions as it was originally intended to."

– Chris Risdon, Collision Repair & Paint Refinish Administrator, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



Blind Spot Monitor Alignment

MODERN VEHICLES COME EQUIPPED with a host of electronic sensors designed to assist the driver and promote safety. When it comes to collision repair, calibrating these sensors requires a precise touch, and failing to follow the calibration instructions properly can lead to a big headache. But, even if technicians accurately follow the calibration procedures, correctly aligning the sensor can be nearly impossible if the brackets the sensor sits on are not also properly positioned. Technicians working on blind spot monitor sensors on Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles must also ensure that the mounting brackets for the sensor are restored to their proper position in order to be able to successfully calibrate the blind spot monitor sensor.

In Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles, the blind spot

monitor sensor is located on the vehicle's quarter panel. It is attached using blind spot monitoring sensor mounting brackets. During a collision repair, if these brackets are not reattached to the proper place on the quarter panel, properly calibrating the blind spot monitor can be a very challenging task.

Technicians performing collision repair work that affects the quarter panel on vehicles with blind spot monitor sensors should pay close attention to where the mounting brackets are located on the original part. The brackets should be reattached in the same position. Following this recommendation will ensure that blind spot monitor sensor calibration goes smoothly and that the vehicle is restored to its pre-collision state. ▶

The Future Is Here

Toyota Revolutionizes the Collision Repair Industry

Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures is a new tool that will transform the way repair plans and estimates are written.

TOYOTA MADE BIG NEWS AT THE END OF 2013 by being the first original equipment manufacturer to offer complete repair plans that supply all Toyota recommended repair procedures, parts and additional information during the repair planning process. The idea for the tool was first introduced to *Collision Pros* readers as Predictive Estimating in January of 2013. Since then, Toyota selected Mitchell International, Inc., to incorporate the idea into its new estimating software, which will serve as a one-stop shop for creating estimates and repair plans. The new system, now officially called Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures, is set to revolutionize the collision industry.

“There has never been an OEM standard for estimates in the industry,” says Rick Leos, Collision Business Development Consultant, Marketing Division, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. “Toyota is the first to give a standard—the first OEM to give you all the right procedures and all the right information, all in one place.”

Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures will be included free of charge in Mitchell’s new web-based estimating solution and will provide users with CRIBs, relevant pages from TIS, information on non-reusable parts, step-by-step recommended procedures and any other published documentation. This means that technicians no longer need to flip between different sources to find all the information they need for a repair.

“The beauty of Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures is that it is easy to use and provides shops with incredibly thorough documentation and information for the repair they are working on,” Leos explains. “Estimators and technicians can worry less about if they have missed some crucial step or piece of information, because now everything they need to know is all in one place for them.”

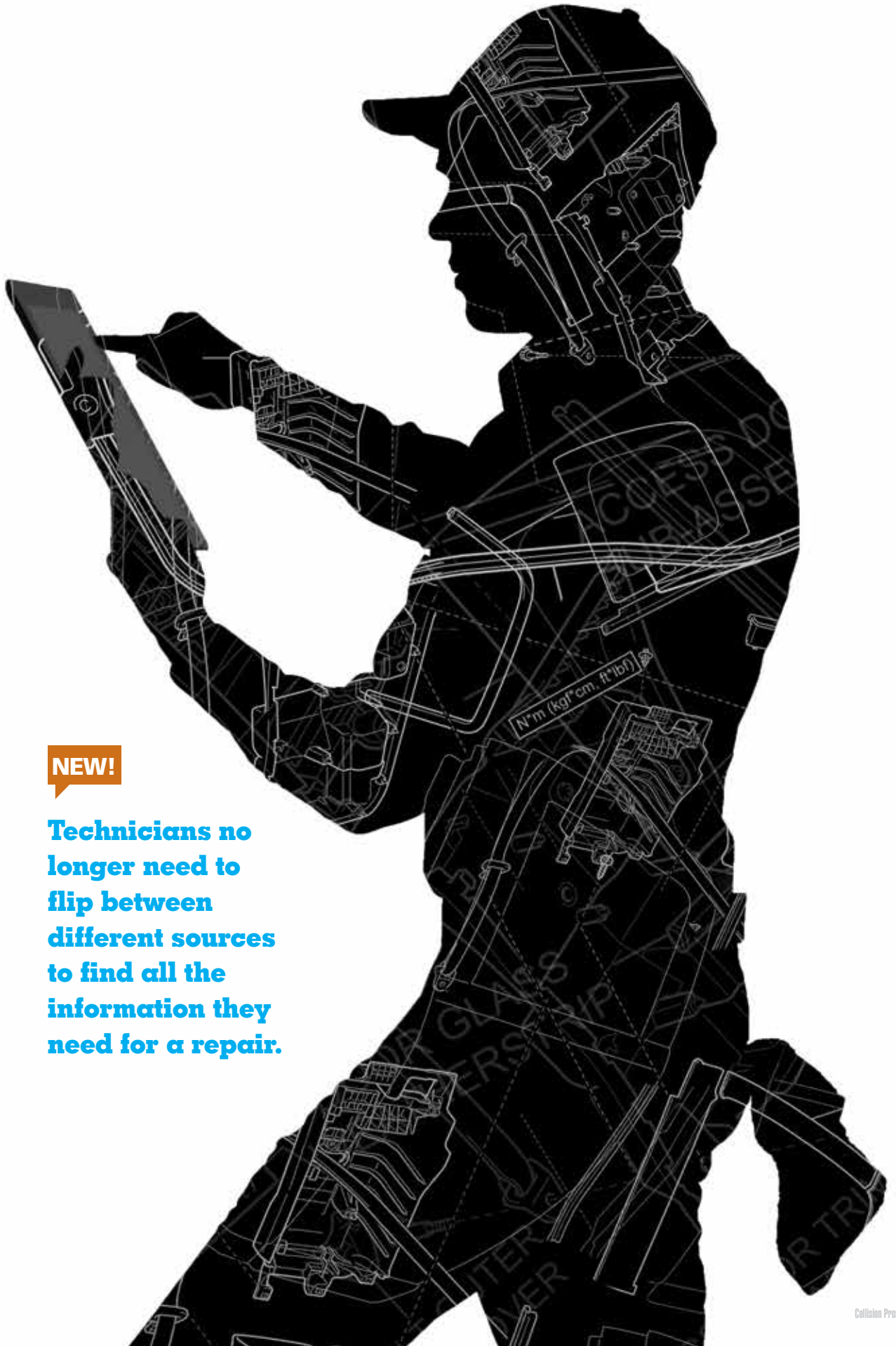


GETTING STARTED

Technicians start by entering the VIN of the vehicle they are working on. They can then select the different areas of the car that they need to perform repair procedures on. Once they have made their selection, a list automatically populates that includes all parts and associated repair information. Rather than starting with a blank page, estimators and technicians start with all possible information they might need for a repair and then can remove parts, information and procedures that do not pertain to the situation.

All information is displayed in a simple-to-navigate list. Users can select additional documentation, which then pops up on screen for easy access. The product is intuitive to use and accessible on a wide variety of platforms, including tablets, smartphones and computers.

[Continued on page 6]



NEW!

Technicians no longer need to flip between different sources to find all the information they need for a repair.

[Continued from page 5]



BENEFITS TO YOUR SHOP

The new system will save shops time and money. An estimate and repair plan that may have taken 30 or 40 minutes to put together can now be completed in minutes. With all the information accessible instantly at the beginning of the repair, there will be less chance of unexpected parts or procedures cropping up, which will help reduce cycle time.

Users can also easily print and email information. Body shops can give their customers a detailed repair plan, giving the client a better understanding of the repair, and shops can quickly and easily share relevant information with insurance companies.

"Ultimately, Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures will be a huge asset to shops," says Leos. "They will be able to ensure they are fixing the vehicle to the OEM standard. They will be delivering a safe, correct repair, which will make their customers happy too."



EXCITING PARTNERSHIP

This new tool will be brought to users through an exciting partnership with Mitchell International, Inc., a leader in providing technology, connectivity and information solutions to the collision repair and insurance industries.

"Mitchell is excited to offer direct access to repair procedures from Toyota within a collision repair estimate," says Jim Brady, Vice President, Product Management, Mitchell International, Inc. "By capitalizing on Mitchell's and Toyota's core competencies and strengths, together we will create a dynamic solution in which Toyota vehicle information automatically appears when parts are added to an estimate."

Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures will be available in 2014. Initially, information will be available for bolt-on panels for all 2012 models forward. More models and parts will be added in the future. The software will be offered through Mitchell and will be available for free to participating Mitchell subscribers.

"Collision repair is about customer safety and superior repair work," says Leos. "Toyota's goal is always to work with collision repair professionals to give them the information and tools they need to repair Toyota vehicles to the OEM standard, helping to ensure safe, high-quality repairs. Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures does just that, by giving shops the best and most detailed information about the repairs they are making." 📄

Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures At a Glance

How it works:

- Enter or scan the VIN of the vehicle being worked on.
- Select the area of the vehicle being repaired.
- A complete list of repair procedures, CRIBs, Toyota Service Bulletins, non-reusable parts, recommended repair procedures from TIS and any additional published documentation is instantly available.
- Users can modify the information by removing items and procedures not applicable to the work they are performing.

Why you need it:

- Saves time and money because estimates are written faster and the number of supplements during the repair process is reduced
- Helps shops ensure that all repairs are completed to OEM standards, which results in happier customers
- Provides all the information needed for a repair in one place, saving technicians the hassle of flipping between multiple sources
- Enables technicians to get the repair right the first time, decreasing cycle time and increasing customer satisfaction
- Delivers greater detail and more information than a standard estimate
- Gives insurance companies all the proper documentation to justify the cost of the repair
- Allows users to easily share detailed information about the repair with customers, so they better understand the scope and cost of the work
- Removes guesswork from the estimate and repair planning process

Know Your Resources:

A Guide to Toyota Collision Repair References

REPAIR PLANNING IS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP toward a successful collision repair. Having a plan—knowing what parts you need and the labor involved to complete the repair—can save you from added expenses, added time and extra frustration once you start work.

Creating a Plan

A repair plan is simply having available the repair information, parts, tools and training you need to get the job done and knowing the steps you need to accomplish in order to complete the repair and return the vehicle to its pre-collision condition. The new Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures tool (see story on page 4) will allow you to create a repair plan with a few simple clicks, but if you are working on a vehicle or procedure not covered or do not have access to the system, follow these steps to put together a repair plan:

CHECK THE PARTS:

Check the Toyota parts system to see if the part or parts you are working on are non-reusable and will need to be replaced rather than simply repaired. This way you can be sure to have all the parts you need before you start your repair.

RESEARCH:

Look for any Collision Repair Information Bulletins (CRIBs), Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs) or repair information that may pertain to the repair you are working on. These may list a new part, a new procedure or a new process for replacing the part, which can save a tremendous amount of time in the repair process.

PUT TOGETHER A ROADMAP:

Once you have the parts and information you need, you can assess the repair from an informed position. Have a roadmap for your repair that includes all the crucial steps so you can ensure that the repair is done right the first time around.

[Continued on page 8]

KEY

MANUALS



BULLETINS



PARTS



TECHNOLOGY



[Continued from page 7]

Valuable Resources

Toyota offers many valuable resources to ensure that you have all of the information you need to carry out a repair properly. All of these resources are important pieces of putting together an accurate and thorough repair plan.



TOYOTA REPAIR MANUALS

What: Toyota repair manuals contain repair information for mechanical repairs, including component removal, assembly, inspection, calibration and diagnostic trouble codes. This information is required for removing and installing mechanical components and ensuring all systems are properly calibrated after a repair is completed.

Where: Repair information is found in TIS under the “RM” tab of the vehicle information search.

Benefit: Following the repair manual information ensures the vehicle is reassembled properly and that it will function as intended.

COLLISION DAMAGE REPAIR MANUALS

What: These manuals contain model-specific repair information, including information about ultra-high-strength steel and high-strength steel, sectioning procedures, component replacement steps, panel gap specifications, emblem and label placement and more.

Where: Collision damage repair information is accessed in TIS under the “CR” tab of the vehicle information search.

Benefit: These manuals ensure technicians are completing all the steps in a repair and performing those steps properly. If you aren’t referring to the Toyota collision damage repair manual procedures during a repair, you are guessing.



COLLISION REPAIR INFORMATION BULLETINS (CRIBs)

What: CRIBs contain vehicle repair information updates, clarify key points and provide special procedures or revised component availability. CRIBs supplement the information found in Toyota’s collision damage repair manuals.

Where: CRIBs are accessed in TIS under the “CR” tab in the vehicle information search.

Benefit: CRIBs can save the shop time in estimating or repairing vehicles by providing repair information and procedures directly related to the vehicle being worked on.

TECHNICAL SERVICE BULLETINS (TSBs)

What: TSBs provide revised information, procedures and parts for mechanical repairs on Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles.

Where: TSBs can be found in TIS under the “SB/TT” tab in the Service Information section.

Benefit: TSBs can save time and help ensure the vehicle is repaired properly using the latest parts, procedures and information available.



NON-REUSABLE PARTS

What: Non-reusable parts may only be used once. These parts cannot be reused during a repair and instead must be replaced with new parts to ensure proper fit and function.

Where: The Toyota parts system places a black dot next to all parts that are non-reusable.

Benefit: Knowing a part is non-reusable at the beginning of a repair can ensure that you order and have all parts on hand to smoothly reassemble the car and return it to the owner faster.

LOOK



The Toyota parts system places a black dot next to all parts that are non-reusable.



TOYOTA'S TECHNICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (TIS)

TIS is a web-based service that provides information needed to service all Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles manufactured from 1990 on. TIS is available at three different subscription levels.

The Standard level subscription gives access to the TIS library, which includes:

- Service bulletins
- Repair manuals
- Wiring diagrams
- Other technical information

A Professional Diagnostic subscription grants you access to the TIS library and diagnostics/reprogramming information, including:

- Techstream scantool software
- ECU calibrations
- Identifix Direct-Hit®

Security Professional level subscriptions grant access to the previous two levels as well as security information, including:

- Key codes
- Immobilizer/smart reset

Subscriptions are available on a two-day, monthly and yearly basis.



TECHSTREAM

Techstream is a resource that combines TIS and a diagnostic scantool into one portable, easy-to-use device. This enables technicians to simultaneously view/analyze on-board vehicle data and browse relevant TIS service documents. It provides access to all the vehicle's on-board systems and enables technicians to easily view a vehicle status report. One of the huge advantages of Techstream is that it gives technicians the capability to reprogram Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles right from the tool.

Techstream offers full support for vehicles from 1996 forward. Periodic software updates add more models and functionality. Techstream is available on a Panasonic CF-31 laptop with a large, bright screen, fast processor and long battery life.



TECHSTREAM LITE

Techstream Lite gives users the ability to use much of the functionality of the Techstream tool on their own PC. It supports DLC3/J1962-based diagnostic functions for Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles manufactured from 1996 to the present. Techstream Lite is a more economical alternative to Techstream. 📄

ADD TO YOUR SHOPPING CART

To find out more about TIS, Techstream and Techstream Lite, visit www.techinfo.toyota.com or call 877-762-7666.



First Class Repairs

The road to satisfied customers starts with the right information.



→ **Bulletin #187** Getting It Straight: Steering and Suspension Collision Repair

VEHICLE SUSPENSION COMPONENTS are an essential connection between the driver and the road and are integral to helping control and stop the vehicle. That is why it is important to approach all steering and suspension repairs armed with the best information, the best tools and the best parts.

CRIB NOTES

Collision Repair Information Bulletin (CRIB) #187, "Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair," provides guidelines for approaching damage analysis and repairs to the steering and suspension components. The bulletin states that steering and suspension components should never be straightened if they have been bent in a collision. Instead, all bent components must be replaced with Genuine Toyota Parts. Toyota does not condone the use of aftermarket or salvage parts for these repairs.

REPAIR RESOURCES

In addition to CRIB #187, there are many other resources available to help

technicians learn how to properly perform these repairs. Toyota offers the online prework course PB503, Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair, and the follow-on instructor-led training B503, Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair, which provide the proper training to perform systematic steering and suspension damage analysis. Technicians should also take advantage of any opportunity to take courses from measuring and alignment equipment manufacturers and should become ASE certified in this area. Having the right knowledge and the right parts and knowing what role you play in the repair process will help you perform accurate and safe steering and suspension damage analysis and repairs.

IT'S ABOUT TEAMWORK

Another key to successful steering and suspension repair is understanding your role in the process.

"It's a team effort," says Chris Risdon, Collision Repair & Paint Refinish Admin-

istrator, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. "It is collaboration between the collision technician and the alignment technician. If they work together as a team and speak the same language, the vehicle will be fixed accurately, the customer will be happier and the repair will be completed faster."

For example, technicians in the collision center should be sure to always align the key control points that the suspension attaches to. This will ensure that once the vehicle gets to the wheel alignment shop, the alignment technician will be able to carry out the alignment tasks quickly and accurately. If the attachment parts are not aligned, there may be issues throughout the repair process.

"Consider the whole vehicle in your repair," Risdon advises. "Consider where suspension components connect to the body structure and ensure that the foundation of the vehicle—the body structure—is aligned correctly too." 🐾

→ **Bulletin #155** How Do I Install This Part? We'll Tell You How!

REPLACING PARTS THAT DO NOT have specific replacement instructions can bring up a lot of questions. What is the Toyota-approved method for replacing this part? Can I section this part? But, just because a part does not have specific replacement instructions doesn't mean you need to guess about the right course of action. Toyota has guidelines for these parts that can help you make better decisions about repairs.

RULES FOR SECTIONING

Not every collision repair body part available from the parts department has specific replacement instructions. Typically, instructions are only available for parts commonly damaged in a collision.

The first step is to search the Toyota collision damage repair manual and Collision Repair Information Bulletins in Toyota's Technical Information System (TIS) for repair information. You can section the part if there is specific repair information for that part in TIS that states

it can be sectioned.

"If you cannot find specific repair information and you cannot find a specific location for sectioning in TIS, you have two options," says Risdon. "Either replace the entire part as you received it, or, if there is a factory seam, you can install the part at the factory seam."

This recommendation can be found in Collision Repair Information Bulletin (CRIB) #155.

IS IT WORTH IT?

When replacing a part that does not have specific instructions, it is important to consider safety and the cost of labor and parts to determine if carrying out the repair work is the right business decision for the shop and the client.

"If specifications don't exist for a part, technicians must exercise due diligence because they are responsible for the outcome of the repair," cautions James Meyer, Senior Technical Training Administrator, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. "Properly trained and educated

management, estimators and technicians have the potential to make better decisions about matters such as this."

This is where proper repair planning (see the story on page 7) and the new Toyota Recommended Repair Procedures (see the story on page 4) can be a huge asset. Researching the parts, repair information and repair procedures involved in a repair can help you make an informed decision.

"Proper research and planning can help prevent technicians from working themselves into a corner," says Risdon. "You don't want to be in the middle of the repair when you realize that the car you are working on should have been considered totaled. Repair planning can help you by preventing you from getting into a jam."

Collision training is available from Toyota. Instructor-led courses T301, Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques, and T460, Structural Body Repair Techniques, cover the subject of sectioning and component replacement in detail. 🐾

Go to www.crrtraining.com to find out more about this valuable training

CP The Last Word

Refer to the training calendar at www.crrtraining.com for the latest training schedule.

THE TRAINING CALENDAR



WWW.CRRTRAINING.COM

WEST CALDWELL, NJ

- 3/4 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 3/5 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 3/18 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 3/20 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 4/8 200 Color Matching for Painters
- 4/22 502 Body Electrical Diagnosis & Repair
- 5/6 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 5/7 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 5/13 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 5/14 908 IS C Collision Repair

NEW JERSEY



CALIFORNIA



FLORIDA



TORRANCE, CA

- 2/18 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 2/19 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 3/4 200 Color Matching for Painters
- 3/6 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 3/18 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 3/19 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 3/21 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 4/2 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 4/3 101 Paint Finish Analysis and Repair
- 4/15 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 4/16 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 4/23 908 IS C Collision Repair
- 4/24 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 5/6 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 5/8 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair

- 5/13 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 5/14 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair

JACKSONVILLE, FL

- 2/17 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 2/18 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 2/20 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 2/24 504 Air Conditioning for Collision Repair
- 2/25 502 Body Electrical Diagnosis & Repair
- 3/3 200 Color Matching for Painters
- 3/5 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 3/10 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 3/11 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 3/12 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 3/13 908 IS C for Collision Repair
- 3/24 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 4/14 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 4/15 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 4/17 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 4/22 200 Color Matching for Painters
- 4/24 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 4/28 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 4/29 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 5/5 300 Welding Techniques for Collision Repair
- 5/7 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 5/8 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 5/19 200 Color Matching for Painters

TECHNICAL WEBSITES



YOU NEED TO KNOW

crrtraining.com

Get Toyota and Lexus Collision Repair & Refinish Training information

autopartsbridge.com

Order all Toyota and Scion parts and components—clips, fasteners and decals—needed for a repair

techinfo.toyota.com

Get vital information you'll need to effectively service most Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles

toyotapartsandservice.com

Search and order Genuine Toyota Parts right from your computer

EDITORS, WRITERS, DESIGNERS



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

EDITOR: Kathy Capozza

MANAGING EDITORS:

Elisa Liehr, Allison Barker

COPYWRITING AND DESIGN:

Liehr Marketing & Communications

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CONTRIBUTING DEPARTMENTS:

TIS
STAR
Lexus Collision Repair & Refinish
Toyota Collision Repair & Refinish
Toyota Certified Collision Centers
Toyota Genuine Parts
University of Toyota, Lexus College
Toyota Technical Education Network
Toyota Wholesale Parts Department

REFER ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Collision Pros
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 S. Western Ave., HQ24
Torrance, California 90509
info@collisionprosmagazine.com

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»» ABRN.COM/LIBERTYMUTUAL

ENTERPRISE CONTRIBUTES \$25,000 TO CREF

Enterprise Rent-A-Car contributed \$25,000 to the Collision Repair Education Foundation.

»» ABRN.COM/ENTERPRISEDONATES

QAP ANNOUNCES KEY LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Quest Automotive Products announced internal appointments, new changes and promotions.

»» ABRN.COM/QAPCHANGES

TOYOTA, MITCHELL INTEGRATE ESTIMATING DATA

A new integration between Mitchell and Toyota Motor Sales will automatically retrieve select Toyota model repair data within the Mitchell platform, simplifying the estimating process.

»» ABRN.COM/TOYOTAPARTNERS

PROFESSIONAL PARTS GROUP JOINS CCC TRUE PARTS

The Professional Parts Group has joined the CCC TRUE Parts Network.

»» ABRN.COM/CCCADD

COONRADT TO KEYNOTE BASF'S VISIONPLUS

BASF is hosting its VisionPlus Performance Group Conference March 9-11 in Clearwater, Fla., and Chuck Coonradt will be the keynote speaker.

»» ABRN.COM/COONRADT

VISIT ABRN.COM

ENTER (KEYWORD)

 SEARCH THOUSANDS OF BREAKING AND ARCHIVED
NEWS ARTICLES TO STAY INFORMED


BREAKING NEWS

WEATHER IMPACTS

POLAR VORTEX MEANS MECHANICAL BUSINESS

 BY BARBARA MORAN-
GOODRICH |
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

With the recent polar vortex sweeping the nation, many businesses have endured setbacks. However, the automotive repair industry has benefited from the recent record-breaking weather conditions.

According to the IBISWorld report, the industry is expected to increase annually by an average of 1.2 percent over the next five years. With this prediction, the number of auto repair shops is estimated to increase to 221,033 shops by 2017. The average age of a vehicle on the road these days is near the 11 year mark, according to the AAIA. Most consumers are willing to invest and sustain the vehicle they have now.

Since the beginning of the

»» CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

TRAINING

Green Garage Challenge to host jobber webinars

Managers of the EPA Green Garage Challenge announced a series of webinars designed to teach automotive parts and paint suppliers about established standards, practices and benefits for marketing green-rated products and equipment.

The monthly program is designed to educate the next generation of jobbers on how to support the evolving hybrid and alternative fuel vehicle market. Participants can discover a wide range of state-of-the-art technology covering eco-friendly vehicle service and repair equipment, products and processes that are critical to the success of today's shop owner.

The objective for each session (15 minute news/ 30 minute presentation/15 minute Q&A) is to reinforce the Green Garage Challenge in support of various local, municipal and government sustainability programs throughout the U.S. and Canada. As national attention is placed on energy efficiency and pollution prevention in the automotive industry, organizations need to ensure that their message to the public is sincere, truthful and more credible than ever. Some national drivers, including Greenhouse Gas reporting, will mean that companies need to prepare to disclose their data if they are not already, and for

»» CONTINUES ON PAGE 13

Photos: ThinkStock



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>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

POLAR VORTEX MEANS MECHANICAL BUSINESS

year, Moran Family of Brands which include, Mr. Transmission, Multistate Transmission, Dr. Nicks Transmission and Milex Complete Auto Care has experienced double-digit increases in key markets. In areas that have endured the most severe cold weather and snow conditions – year over year we've seen same store sales increases in the range of 10 to 15 percent.

The cold and snowy weather conditions of late play a large role in the types of repairs that we take on. However the polar vortex is an exceptional case. With the recent harsh weather in some parts of the country, some cars have needed more care than usual. Many people are now realizing that the maintenance schedule they should have been following is now an emergency need.

During the cold weather months, it is vital for a shop owner to be prepared. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare. Make sure your staff is fully

prepped for an increase in foot traffic and volume of customers. Remind them that a happy customer is a return customer, after all this is a business built on loyalty.

2. Inventory is key. You don't want to turn away a customer due to the lack of proper parts.

3. Have some foresight into the forecast. Check the daily or weekly forecasts. Don't be afraid to market your shop heavily prior to the arrival of an ice storm, for instance, which could generate more collision business for you.

4. Educate your customers. Building trust and rapport with customers increases the likelihood of them returning. Customer service is vital in any type of business, especially ours.

It's our job as professionals to be prepared and know, as much as possible, what our customers will need, if we're able to do that, we will continue to succeed rain or shine.

LEGISLATION

WMABA URGES SUPPORT OF MARYLAND BILL

BY ABRN WIRE REPORTS

The Washington Metropolitan Auto Body Association (WMABA) is proud to announce their support of Maryland's 2014 Senate Bill 487 (House Bill 574).

This consumer-protection bill will prohibit insurer mandated parts procurement processes or vendors and the usage of aftermarket parts for the first three years of the vehicle.

WMABA believes the bill will be met with favor by other Maryland legislators. Consumers purchase or lease a new vehicle with an existing manufacturer's warranty or lease agreement that specify particular parts for the vehicle in the event of necessary repairs. They inherently expect that the repair process will not conflict with those interests, and that

their insurance policy would cover this expectation as well.

"These are issues any consumer can identify with," says Jordan Hendler, executive director for WMABA. "It's about the belief that cost containment cannot come from consumer harm. Our industry recognizes that there is a place for aftermarket parts, but not when their use would be in direct conflict with existing warranty, lease or lienholder agreements."

Consumers and collision centers should have the innate right to choose their vendors for parts or materials necessary to repair the vehicle, especially when price is not a factor. Insurer mandates not only intrude into the customer-repairer-vendor relationships, but also do not add value to their customer experience and decrease productivity. If the consumer's vehicle repair process is held up due to parts choice limitations or unreasonable cost-controlling measures by the insurer, they are likely then out-of-pocket for additional rental car costs.

WMABA feels this legislation is a step in the right direction to protect the collision repair industries' customer during the process of repair.

EVENTS

NACE/CARS 2014 is taking shape

The NACE/CARS 2014 conference and exposition, North America's largest auto collision and service repair event, is approaching fast. This year's event will be held in Detroit at COBO Center July 30 to Aug. 2, with other industry meetings taking place throughout the week.

This event offers more training, education and networking for collision and mechanical repair professionals than ever before. An early schedule of events includes:

- Monday, July 28: CEICA, SCRS, NABC and other board meetings and roundtables

- Tuesday, July 29: Collision Industry Conference (CIC) quarterly meeting and an evening reception

- Wednesday, July 30: I-CAR annual meeting and gala reception, NACE personal development programs, industry and museum tours, ASA board meeting

- Thursday, July 31: NACE and CARS conference sessions and exhibition, ALCOA aluminum presentations, Collision Industry Education Foundation annual golf tournament and scholarship fundraiser, industry and museum tours, MSO and Mechanical Symposium receptions, numerous industry receptions

- Friday, Aug. 1: NACE and CARS conference sessions and exhibition, MSO Symposium, Mechanical

Symposium, ALCOA aluminum presentations, industry and museum tours

- Saturday, Aug. 2: CARS technical conference sessions, industry and museum tours

The Marriott at the Renaissance Center will serve as the headquarter hotel.

For information on exhibiting, contact Robert Martin at NACE/CARS c/o Stone Fort Group, 10575 Katy Freeway, Suite 330, Houston, TX 77024, phone (832) 646-0176, or email robertm@stonefort-group.com.

Those interested in attending or exhibiting can also find information online at www.NACEexpo.com or www.CARSevent.com.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



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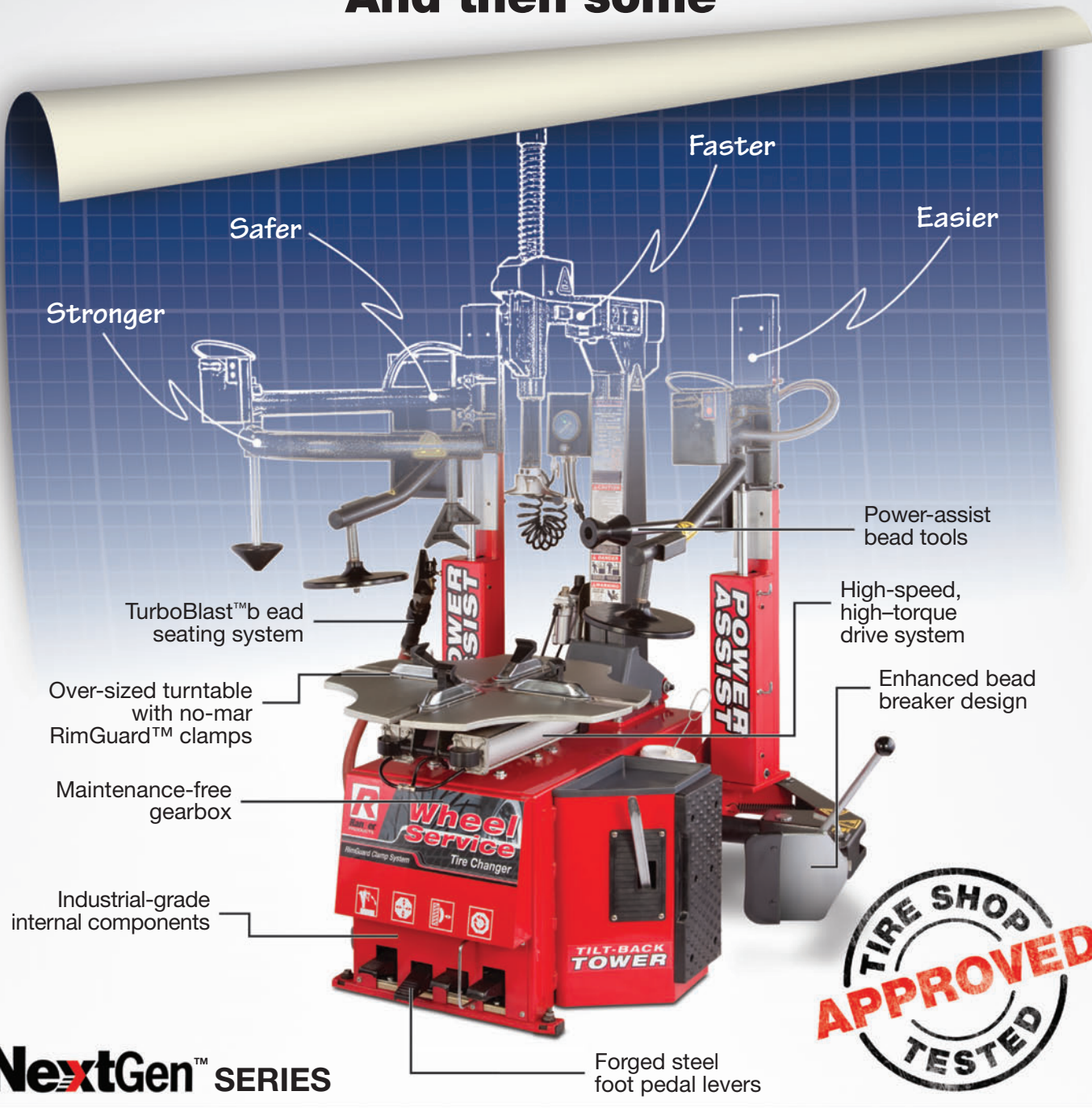
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>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

GREEN GARAGE CHALLENGE TO HOST JOBBER WEBINARS

those that are reporting they need to focus on the strength of public perception. These webinars will outline how you can create legitimate communications that are easy to understand for maximum effectiveness.

Each webinar will feature industry leaders that present:

- How a product or service helps the environment;
- What are the green metrics of the product or service;
- How to measure green savings and sustainability;
- What products qualify for rebates and subsidies; and
- How to disseminate green ratings for marketing and advertising.

This educational series is sponsored by the EPA ENERGY STAR® www.FG2.us campaign to encourage public support for vehicle service and repair shop owners that lower their energy usage and reduce the risks of environmental pollution.

Auto industry suppliers, representatives and associates who want to learn more about green rated products, services and equipment can visit: www.certifiedgreenjobber.com, or sign up for webinars in advance at: www.turborecs.com/webinar/

For more information about the Green Garage Challenge, visit www.greengaragechallenge.com.

WIN, CREF PARTNER TO RECRUIT FEMALE TALENT

With a diverse range of roles and options available to women in the collision repair industry, the timing is perfect for the Women's Industry Network (WIN) and the Collision Repair Education Foundation (CREF) to join forces in an effort to spread this important message. By working together, these two organizations hope to motivate talented young females to join the industry and develop their career paths.

The result of this collaboration has been a unique poster campaign designed to inspire and attract young female collision repair students. The poster, *There's A Place For You*, has been distributed to over 1,150 technical schools and colleges that the Education Foundation supports.

"As young women continue their education and enter the work force, it's important that they understand the breadth of potential that a career path in the collision repair industry holds," explained Ruth Weniger, CEO of Airbag Solutions and Chair of WIN's Communications Committee. "We hope that this message encourages females to learn more about the collision repair industry and that they become inspired by the support and opportunities that are available to them."

The poster depicts, in photographs, the diversity of roles the collision repair industry has to offer young women as they continue their education and enter the work force. Photos appearing in the poster reflect positions as a paint technician, insurance estimator, body technician, research & development, marketer, chemical technician, glass repair technician and industry retailer. Photo selections were based on photo quality, clarity and how well each photo depicted a particular role.

"The Collision Repair Education Foundation is proud to partner with WIN to promote females in the industry," said Collision Repair Education Foundation Director of Grant Programs Melissa Marscin. "The poster that WIN recently created featuring females in the industry should inspire young female collision students to set high goals for achievement in the industry."

Copies of the poster are available (while supplies last) in exchange for a \$20 donation to the WIN Scholarship Fund at: www.abrn.com/WINposter.

WIN is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to encouraging, developing and cultivating opportunities to attract women to collision repair while recognizing excellence, promoting leadership, and fostering a network among the women who are shaping the industry. For more information go to www.womensindustrynetwork.com.

NHTSA moves ahead on V2V mandate

Anthony Foxx, U.S. Department of Transportation secretary, announced that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will begin taking steps toward a proposed mandate requiring new vehicles to contain vehicle-to-vehicle technology (V2V). NHTSA notes that this technology will "improve safety by allowing vehicles to 'talk' to each other and ultimately avoid many crashes by exchanging basic safety data, such as speed and position."

"Vehicle-to-vehicle technology represents the next generation of auto safety improvements," said Foxx. "By helping

drivers avoid crashes, this technology will play a key role in improving the way people get where they need to go while ensuring that the U.S. remains the leader in the global automotive industry."

NHTSA will release a study on V2V in the coming weeks. The study was launched in August 2012 in Ann Arbor, Mich., with 3,000 vehicles in the "largest-ever road test of V2V technology." This will be the first step toward developing a federal regulation on V2V policy.

V2V crash avoidance technology has game-changing potential to significantly reduce the number of crashes, injuries and deaths on our nation's roads," said David Friedman, NHTSA acting administrator. "Decades from now, it's likely we'll look back at this time period as one in which the historical arc of transpor-

tation safety considerably changed for the better, similar to the introduction of standards for seat belts, airbags and electronic stability control technology."

NHTSA highlights that V2V communications can provide the vehicle and driver with "360-degree situational awareness to address additional crash situations – including those, for example, in which a driver needs to decide if it is safe to pass on a two-lane road (potential head-on collision), make a left turn across the path of oncoming traffic, or in which a vehicle approaching at an intersection appears to be on a collision course. In those situations, V2V communications can detect threats hundreds of yards from other vehicles that cannot be seen, often in situations in which on-board sensors alone cannot detect the threat."



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COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY Stats & Trends

R&R bolt on parts is the top trait in which shop owners expect entry-level techs to be proficient, according to the **I-CAR** Snapshot of the Industry.



Make sure to aim before pulling the trigger

Make sure you are pointed at the right target before making a move

BY BOB SPITZ | ABRN BLOGGER

I was working at my desk late one afternoon when I got a call from a client back in Baltimore. It was about 8 p.m. his time and he sounded aggravated and more than a little tipsy. "I'm going to read you something that I'm going to give to my lead tech tomorrow morning!" he said. "I'm not putting up with this B.S. anymore!" I let him read me this scathing letter that was guaranteed to lose a tech that had been with him for years.

After he vented for a while (he was like a charged up condenser, and I was bleeding the charge out of him — painful, but necessary). When he finally wound down, I calmly asked him, "What's going on?" He went on about this once-upon-a-time great tech who has now become a belligerent, uncooperative pain-in-the-butt! (I wound him back up!)

I asked him if he would put down his saber for a minute and allow me to ask him some questions. He reluctantly agreed, but told me it did not matter what I said, "This guy is HISTORY! And if the service writer doesn't snap out of it, he's next!" I told him, "fair enough," and then started to pull the string. Something BIG must have changed with this tech and I needed to find out what it was. So I proceeded with my questions:

When did his attitude change? What was going on at the shop at this time? Did he hire anyone new prior to the attitude change? This question got his attention. "You know, I hired a new tech about two weeks prior to the start of the problem." "Oh really?" I said. "Tell me about him."

Turns out, he had hired a new tech about two months ago. The guy had good references and seemed to know his business, but in hindsight the owner admitted there were some weird

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abrn.com BEST OF THE BLOGS

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BEST OF THE BLOGS are articles written by bloggers on ABRN's community pages

PartsTrader perceptions

BY PHAZEONE

Wow! State Farm's partnership with PartsTrader is going to change the body shop/parts supplier world. While it is not all bad, the way it is being presented is a little deceiving or, at least, misleading. If you attend one of their webinars or meetings, it all sounds good. In the real world, it will present quite a few problems and a large intrusion into your business. Here is my view of what they tell you and what is closer to reality:

1. State Farm, in their meeting said, "We will never tell a body shop where they have to buy their parts." What they did not mention was that the body shops will be graded on whether or not they choose the "best supplier" for each job, "best" being either

the least expensive or the supplier with the quickest turnaround time. State Farm grades the body shop on cycle time, quality of work and cost of repair. So, if a shop wants to remain a State Farm Select repair shop, they have to mind their points. Now what do you think that is going to mean to a shop owner? All parts purchases will be made through PartsTrader and shops will have very little choice in where they purchase their parts.

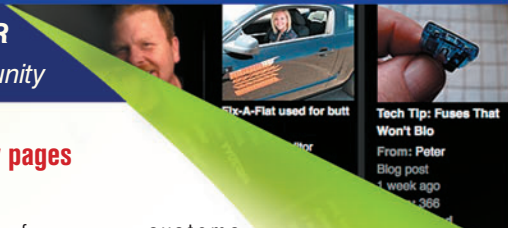
2. State Farm, in their opening statement, claims that, according to their survey, the relationship between the shop and the supplier is the most important issue from the shops' perspective. Actually, the relationship is the most important issue on the minds of both shop and parts supplier. This is merely a statement of fact

and not an admission of agreement on State Farm's behalf. What State Farm would like to see is that the relationship would outweigh the need to maintain a healthy margin. While large parts suppliers will be able to maintain the relationship, small- to medium-sized suppliers will not. Customer service will still need to be curtailed, even from the largest suppliers. Shipping that was in the past a no-charge or low charge service will now become a standard of the industry. Fees charged for returns will have to be maintained or even increased based on return rate.

3. "State Farm has no control on what systems a body shop uses for other insurance companies." Well, that is a true statement. PartsTrader is a good system that is easy to use. It is similar to other

systems out in the market that allow most of the ordering to be done via the internet. However, this system will allow shops to send out to bid all of their parts needs. Why would a shop not use it? This is part of an open market, and I do not have an issue with it. Being coy about it does not help parts houses to prepare for the change.

4. "We are only interested in getting our shops competitive pricing for their parts." How would State Farm know that their shops are not receiving competitive pricing already? Their perception is that the price we purchase parts from the OEM manufacturer for is too high. Continue reading at ABRN.com/MyView.



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March 20, 2014
@ 12 p.m. EST

Key metrics for running an MSO

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THE
SHOP OWNER

MIKE LEVASSEUR

Staying in touch with staff

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MINDING
YOUR BUSINESS

ROBERT HORNEO

Improve process efficiency, profits

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MIKE ANDERSON

Get paid for 'finish sand and buff'

Make sure to aim before pulling the trigger *continued from page 14.*

things about him. Nothing he could put his finger on, but just an odd feeling about the guy.

His first couple of weeks, everything seemed fine, but then he realized some little changes started to appear. Even in his inebriated state, the light was coming on!

"You know, I just realized my top tech

stopped joining us at lunch. He and the new tech got buddy-buddy and are always going out to lunch together." "This is also around the same time that he (the top tech) started having trouble with the service writer. These guys used to get along, now they're at each others' throats." Continue reading this blog at ABRN.com/Trigger.

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Noteworthy

READER FEEDBACK TO ONLINE ARTICLES

On LinkedIn, Travis Williamson, owner of Collision XS, started the following discussion:

It seems like our industry is going the way of consolidators. What can we, as independent shop owners, do to market our businesses? Should we wear our "independently owned" status as a badge of honor?

Greg Joynt: Think of all the value you add as business owner, as opposed to a managed shop for a big corporation. You are on hand to ensure what goes out the door is quality, as it's got your name on it. You know your customers and how important they are to the business. You will always go the extra mile because even the best manager in the world has no skin in the game — it's not his home or life savings at risk. Be proud of what you do and the incomes you generate that spread through your community.

Mike Davey: Build your personal brand. Do everything you can to make sure your community knows your shop and you. There is value in being able to talk directly to the guy who owns the place. There is also a lot of value in showing that you and your shop

are part of the community, locally owned, etc.

Frank Terlep: To any shop that wants to thrive in any environment, my recommendations are simple, but not easy. 1. Become irresistible. Operate a business where people want to do business with you and can't get the same service and experience anywhere else; 2. Perform. Offer best quality, cycle time and customer experience; 3. Ask for and get raving customer reviews. 1+2 will get you 3; 4. Stay focused on your customers. Every previous customer has influence over 4.2 vehicles; and 5. Become the local market claims and collision expert.

Consider an old story I heard many years ago: A small town with one local barber had a new \$5 haircut franchise open up down the street. Everyone in town was worried about the local barber. Then one day, they saw a sign out front of the barber's shop that read, "We fix \$5 haircuts."

Joe Fisher: About the barber shop theory, you're right. But there aren't many barber shops around anymore, are there? Soon it will be the same for auto body repair shops. That is, if we do nothing about it.



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Mercedes-Benz

Q+A WITH JAY HORAK

OWNER,
AUTOENGINUITY

HORAK TALKS THE NEW SERVICE RESET TOOL, DIAGNOSTIC SOLUTIONS ON A BUDGET AND COMPANY INITIATIVES IN 2014

BY KRISTA MCNAMARA | MANAGING EDITOR

A global leader in vehicle diagnostic solutions, AutoEnginuity boasts delivering superior vehicle specific coverage while maintaining reasonable prices. Jay Horak, owner of AutoEnginuity, talks with *ABRN*.

ABRN: AutoEnginuity recently released the Service Reset Tool. Tell me about the features it offers.

JH: The Service Reset Tool is the first of its kind to perform the Conditional Based Service (CBS) oil reset and battery replacement registration without a personal computer. The tool can perform both the Service Interval Reset (SIR) and CBS oil resets and perform the battery replacement registration feature for late-model BMW/MINIs.

The Service Reset Tool does not require a personal computer, nor does it require you to enter the make, model or year of the vehicle. With a push of a button, the hardware will intelligently determine the correct protocol for your vehicle and send the appropriate commands — it's a true one-touch reset tool. Field updatable, it will help you to continue to service newer BMW/MINIs without having to purchase a

new reset tool. Firmware updates are available online and will be free for the life of the product.

ABRN: Diagnostic solutions can be very expensive, and AutoEnginuity boasts the importance of coverage. What are some diagnostic tools you recommend that can give shops the biggest bang for their buck?

JH: Our ProLine bundle is really the most versatile and cost effective tool for any fleet. It provides factory-level Asian and US carmakers' coverage. We find that almost every fleet or shop supports these vehicles and requires a robust and comprehensive solution. But that solution also has to fit into ever-shrinking budgets. With the ProLine bundle having an MSRP price at \$1,300 and our annual updates being priced at \$150 for each of the three regions, it's hard to beat the coverage for the cost.

We do also offer the European coverage expansion for the ProLine bundle, but those shops needing it are more specialized.

ABRN: Can you also explain the fleet maintenance solutions available

through AutoEnginuity?

JH: Our ProLine bundle is really a universal fit for fleets. It's a compact solution that uses a shop's Windows PC computing device. Our software can be installed on any device without interfering with other factory or aftermarket products — i.e., no standalone laptop required. What's more, the software unifies the user-interface experience for all car makes so as to allow the technician to focus on repairing the vehicle — and not learning a function on a scan tool. Finally, with coverage for 48 carmakers available, the ProLine bundle has the breadth and depth of coverage required to effectively repair the vehicles in any fleet.

ABRN: What is on the horizon for AutoEnginuity in 2014?

JH: We are currently looking at the creation of a tablet-based (i.e., Apple iOS) device. Shops aren't using tablets today but they will be in the near future. We will also be offering a new user-interface for the ProLine bundle in the summer. The new user-interface will streamline common functions so as to allow the technician the fastest way to repairing the vehicle. ☺





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Staying in touch

Monthly newsletter helps employees, their families stay in tune with company culture

In a previous column (see *ABRN* January 2014 or visit www.ABRN.com/LeVasseur), I explained the new-employee orientation that I personally conduct for everyone who joins our company. Another way we develop our company culture and integrate new employees is through our monthly newsletter.

We launched the newsletter – called The Airbag – in May 1997, and I’m proud to say we haven’t missed a month yet. Part of our company culture is building consistency within all aspects of our operation, so I’d view it almost as a sign of weakness if we weren’t able to produce it each month. We have more than 150 employees, including some who have been with the company since 1997 (and some even longer), and they now know they can expect to see the newsletter every month. Over time, The Airbag has managed to morph into an almost-iconic representation of the company’s values. It’s more than just information. It symbolizes stability and consistency within our organization.

We’ve always produced the newsletter in-house. It was something I personally worked on for many years. About three years ago, I was fortunate enough to be able to turn responsibility for it over to my wife, Alison, who works with our marketing director.

What do we include in the newsletter? Some things are featured every month. We highlight employee birthdays, for example, and show our key performance indicators for each of our 11 locations. We include dates for important meetings or available training.

We also highlight what’s been happening within our company. A recent issue spotlighted one of our locations that had been recognized by a large insurer as having the best CSI for a particular quarter.

“BY MAILING THEM, WE FIND OUR EMPLOYEES’ SPOUSES AND CHILDREN READ THEM. IT’S A SIMPLE WAY TO CONSISTENTLY STAY IN TOUCH WITH OUR STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES.”

The newsletter gives company management a chance to thank our staff, who donate and volunteer their time to help and better the communities we serve. Recently we were asked to help a local Ronald McDonald House repair their Ronald McDonald bench. After years of being exposed to the elements, it was going to take a talented group of individuals to bring Ronald back to life. It was also a fairly intricate job, given the unusual composite used in its construction. Our team donated its time to complete this repair on behalf of all the kids who love to sit on that bench with Ronald McDonald. Seeing their photos and story in the newsletter validates the long hours and artistic talents of those who contributed to this project.

Sometimes the main article of the newsletter might be less about our business and more about bringing useful information to employees and their families. Alison recently wrote an article about ways to make the most of your weekend to ensure it’s a relaxing way to recover from the stresses we all encounter at work.

The newsletter also includes a monthly contest, often a trivia or numbers-related quiz question; the first employee to bring the correct answer to their location manager wins \$25. This helps get employees engaged with the newsletter, motivated to read it and at the same time creates some good-natured competition. (If two people come up with the answer at the same time, the manager asks some questions about the other content in that month’s newsletter, and the employee who knows the most about it gets the prize.)

It would be easy to send an electronic version of the newsletter to each employee, but we still use our original distribution method – snail mail. Sometimes being old fashioned is a good thing. We could distribute it with our employees’ paycheck stubs, but I’m not sure it would be read or even make it home. By mailing them, we find our employees’ spouses and even their children read them. It’s a simple way to consistently stay in touch with our staff and their families.

We also mail it to our board of directors and about 50 other key industry contacts. An executive from one of the largest insurance companies once approached me at an industry gathering with the answer to that month’s quiz in the newsletter. That tells me that in addition to bolstering our company culture, the newsletter is helping share our news, highlight our culture and bring exposure to our business with some of the others impacting our industry.

If you would like to see a electronic sample copy of the newsletter, send me an email request.

Tell Me What YOU THINK



If there’s a topic you’d like me to address, I’d love to hear from you.



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ABRN.COM/LEVASSEUR

Mike LeVasseur is president and COO of Keenan Auto Body, which has 11 shops in Pennsylvania and Delaware.



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MINDING YOUR BUSINESS



FOLLOW THESE EASY STEPS TO BOOST YOUR SHOP'S PERFORMANCE

BY ROBERT HORNEDO | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

IN TODAY'S world of auto body repair, the collision shops are held to a high standard when it comes to time and quality. How fast can repairs be made without sacrificing quality? The industry standards compared to the industry average differ greatly. So how can you be faster without losing your quality or profit? And can you actually be faster and improve quality and profit simultaneously? Yes, you can. The most successful shops in the country have already implemented the following:

Take pride in your shop

Be proud of your business. Clean up the shop. Throw away trash and useless junk, and remove old parts and cars that take up space. Sell off equipment that you don't use any longer. Organize your tools and service the ones that are still viable. Put good lighting in the shop, and have a space for everything. Get your new and used parts off the floor. Use parts racks, one for each RO. Make your shop inviting to the consumer, front to back.

Write thorough estimates

The first step in writing a complete and comprehensive estimate is to use an electronic measuring system for documentation of all damaged areas. A lack of measuring can lead to

secondary and induced damage being initially overlooked, only to be found when the vehicle is already in the repair process. A great deal of time is wasted preparing supplements that need approval, stalling jobs in progress. Oftentimes, a technician will complete a quick repair of an area not listed on the estimate just to keep the car moving, meaning the technician and the shop worked for free. Remember the 2 percent rule. If you can get 2 percent more gross sales out of each vehicle, how much does that equate to you?

Writing a thorough, complete estimate the first time reduces the time a vehicle sits in your shop. Measure every car, lower and upper body. Make a set of rules for your shop for when it is appropriate and necessary to measure the car. Here is an example:

- Measure and assess all damage before writing an estimate
- If the vehicle requires a hood, fender or bumper replacement, measure the vehicle before writing the estimate
- Measure the entire vehicle from front to back
- Measure suspension components if your system has that ability
- Measure upper body as well, considering every part of the car is structural

Find the hidden damage now, improve your cycle time, reduce supplements and improve cash flow.



“I can’t even imagine my fuel bill without using Blowtherm’s heat recuperator system.”

~ Dave Olender,
Olender’s Body Shop
Vernon, CT



“Considering we’re hitting record low temperatures this winter, with the Heat Recuperation system, we are witnessing rapid temperature rise to “called for temps” in the spray and bake cycles, which helps lower our fuel costs. Very impressive.”

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“We’re actually kicking out an additional 4 cars per day. Plus, Blowtherm’s technology is giving us a much cleaner finish.”

“Our other location, East Windsor, CT, will be upgrading soon. Blowtherm will remain our spray booth vendor of choice.”

~ Dave Olender,
Special Projects Mgr.
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Olender’s has two Blowtherm Extra Spray Booths (one drive-thru and one backout system), both with Heat Recuperation and Air Speed/Waterborne Hi-Solid Flash-Off Systems, along with a Blowtherm Mix Room.
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~ Jeff Olender, Owner/Partner
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Schedule smart

I often see most jobs come in at the beginning of the week on Monday and Tuesday, with a push to get cars out on Friday. If the vehicle is drivable, schedule customers to bring their cars in throughout the week. Many successful shops are already doing this, and it works well.

You cannot work on a vehicle if you don't have an open bay, so why create havoc in the shop or for your customer? And if you already completed step one — measure and assess all the damage — you can have the customer sign the repair order, order the parts in advance and keep the vehicle in your shop the minimum amount of time. This makes the repair process smoother, improving cycle time and reducing rental car costs. Delivering cars throughout the week frees up space and keeps the shop moving and flowing.

WIP (Work in Progress)

If you have five body technicians and 30 cars waiting for repair, your hands-on time for each car is very low and your cash gets tied up in parts for jobs you can't possibly finish in a reasonable amount of time. Only start jobs when you can actually finish without interruption. Don't bring cars through the door if you are still waiting for parts or approvals. The customer is in a rental longer and the insurance company



applies unnecessary pressure on you and your team.

Consider workflow

How do the cars move in your shop? Do the vehicles move forward into the stall, back out in reverse to paint prep, then forward to the other side to paint, outside for reassembly, then to the side of the shop for detailing? Consider how the cars move in your shop. Keep vehicles moving in one pattern, rather than zigzagging, to improve your cycle time. Keep the movement fluid as much as possible and consider the amount of time it takes to move your WIP.

Control quality

Someone in your shop must be in charge of quality control, and it has to be someone who knows how to repair vehicles. We often see production managers or the estimator leading quality controlling, but they have an interest in getting the car out the door and may not be so concerned with the details. An unbiased inspector who has no monetary connection to productivity should be the inspector. If your shop is not in the volume range to have an individual assigned to this task, then it falls on the manager or owner to do the job. A simple inspection check sheet offers a systematic approach to the inspection process.

When a team concept is in place, then each member of the team quality controls the other team members. The team leader quality controls the entire team. This is not a trust issue,

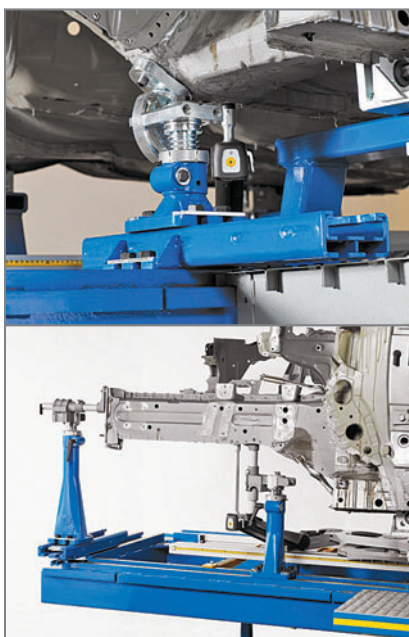
but a quality issue; you want to provide your customer with 110 percent satisfaction, so be thorough.

Hire the right team

The people who make the wheels turn in your business are just as important as the work coming through the door. We have met a lot of estimators and managers who treat their position as an average 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. job and don't understand the value of teamwork. If you don't have team mentalities, you just have a bunch of self-interested employees. Every member of the organization is important, otherwise you would not have them there. So empower your employee. Give them latitude to make decisions and benefit from the correct decisions while learning from their mistakes. After too many mistakes, or repeating the same ones, that team member is out. Employees who feel a part of the process do a much better job than employees just doing a job.

Get the right equipment

The unibody vehicle of today is not the same unibody of two or three years ago. With the implementation of various high-strength steels and aluminum, you can't repair these new vehicles with equipment technology that was designed for older vehicles. You must get on board with electronic measuring that can measure the entire vehicle, including suspension and upper body. You must have a high-pressure 10,000 amp inverter spot welder, and you absolutely must have fixtures for





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YOU NEED LIVE TRAINING

BY PETE MEIER | TECHNICAL EDITOR



In late January, I watched the sun set on the French Quarter of New Orleans. It gave me a moment to reflect on the first full day of the 2014

Mobile Air Conditioning Society's training event. With each class lasting roughly three hours, I only got to attend two of the classes offered, but the two I attended were well worth the time.

I am a firm believer that our business requires us as professional technicians to undergo constant training. Even though my job is primarily behind a desk now, I still get my hands dirty from time to time to stay current. I defy any of you to take a year's hiatus and come back as competent a tech as you are today. The technology is changing that fast.

How do you get that training? There are several options; your local vocational school, the various private trainers (I-CAR, NAPA, CTI, WorldPac, just to name a few), and of course, I encourage all of you to attend the free web-based mechanical and shop management training events offered by

ABRN and Motor Age, our sister publication for the service repair market. But nothing compares to sitting in a classroom at an event like MACS (or VISION or CAN, or ATE). You may be sitting in a hotel meeting room just like you would if you got the training closer to home, but at these events you aren't coming in at the end of a hard 10-12 hour day in the shop. For whatever reason, I find myself more focused on learning and more eager to learn, than I would under any of the other methods I mentioned.

In addition to the ability to focus strictly on the business at hand, you get to interact with techs, teachers, corporate trainers and others from around the country. You share experiences, both familiar and new, and the sum total does become greater than the sum of the parts alone. Then there is the end of the day, when the networking and socializing continues, new friends are made and old connections restored, victories and frustrations shared.

I know it's not easy. It's hard to justify the costs. But when measured against the benefits, both tangible and intangible, attending a live training event is an experience every tech should enjoy at least once in a while.

Maybe I'll see you at one soon!

holding while pulling and holding to specification for part replacement. Every European car manufacturer requires fixtures of either the dedicated or universal type. And now Japanese and American car manufacturers are requiring multiple-point anchoring of five or more positions. That means your old frame machine with four point anchoring is now obsolete if you are repairing late-model unibodies.

Consider staying ahead of the curve and have a dedicated clean room area for you shop. Domestic vehicles are soon coming out with aluminum frames and structural components. Do you want a piece of that market, or do you want your competitor down the street to handle that?

Train, train, train

Let's consider energy management, meaning we must repair vehicles and

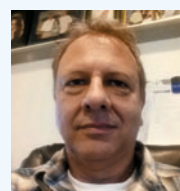
restore them to perform in subsequent collisions as if new. We are not engineers redesigning vehicles and implementing our own repair procedures based on experience repairing vehicles of yesteryear. Collision damage repair is now very matter of fact. OEM repair procedures are the only way to repair a vehicle, without exception, and that means you must be trained, skilled and equipped with the proper tools and tooling. Toyota, Lexus, Honda, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Porsche, Volkswagen, Audi, General Motors and others have specific training courses available either through the OEM themselves or ICAR. Estimators and technicians should be taking every single course available. There is no excuse for ignorance.

Work smart

The body shop business is complex and very technical. To succeed, you have

to be smart and not take anything for granted. Be organized, clean, thorough, plan ahead, think from your customers' perspective, re-educate yourself and re-equip your shop to be lean, fast and quality conscious. Learn to crunch the numbers, watch your vehicle flow and most importantly, love what you do and you will do what you love. 📞

ROBERT HORNEDO / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Hornedo has over 27 years auto body industry experience. He is president of Hornedo Inc., which does business as Pacific Collision Equipment Co., in Signal Hill, Calif., specializing in Car-O-Liner Bench machines, computer measuring systems, welding systems and other high quality specialized equipment. A former I-CAR trainer, he is currently ASE certified.





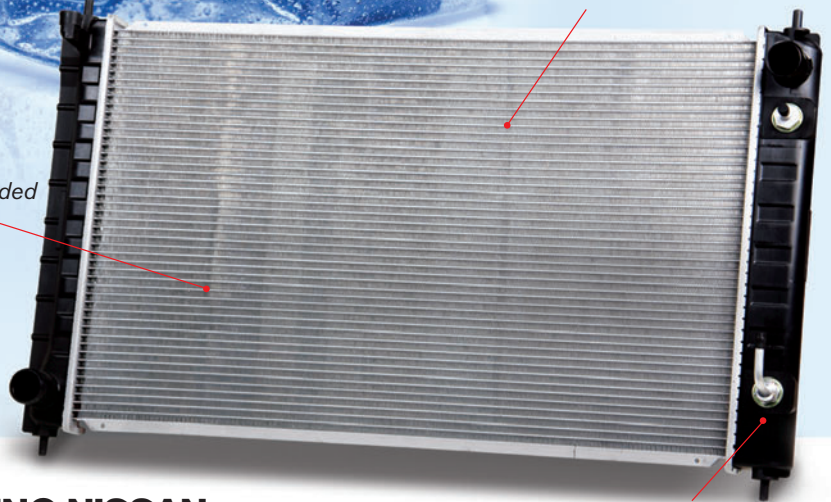
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believes that using your company logo as this icon is a key to building brand awareness. Claypool is the president of Optima Automotive, which provides website design and social media management for shops. He said Google+ will automatically render your logo to fit in its circular icon space. This isn't true with Facebook and Twitter, which may cut off the ends of a horizontal logo that don't fit within their square icon space. In this case, you can search for "how to make a rectangular logo fit on Facebook" for instructions on how to adjust it. Someone with basic Photoshop skills also should be able to add some "white space" to the top and bottom of your logo art file to have it show up fully in the icon space.

3. Be social

Remember that social media is about being social. It's about making connections with people. So don't make it all about cars. Your "cover photo" at the top of your Facebook page, for example, could be an attractive shot of the front of your building if it looks well-maintained and professional. Even better, Claypool believes, is a nice photo of all your employees.

"But if it looks like a police line-up, you may want to rethink that," Claypool said, noting that one shop shot its employee group photo at the end of a hot day when the technicians were covered in dust and sweat. "You want to put your best face forward."



4. Respond to comments

Interact with everyone who posts a comment. You double the odds that "Friends" of those who post on your company Facebook will see your name and logo when you respond to whatever they post – even if just to say "Thanks." Keep it professional but also friendly and informal.

5. Use visuals

Use graphics, video and photos whenever possible. Visuals tend to jump out at people using social media, more so than words. That said, don't rely solely on before-and-after photos of vehicles you've worked on, which might not be of much interest to anyone but the owners of those vehicles. Goff's Collision Repair Centers (<https://www.facebook.com/GoffsAutoBody>) in Wisconsin, for example, posts links to articles and videos (each with a photo) on such things like a truck made out of ice, iconic cars used in movies, and shop involvement in donating repaired vehicles to those in need.

6. Utilize LinkedIn

LinkedIn is more about business-related connections, so it's less useful in terms of marketing to potential customers. But it can be a good way to connect and exchange endorsements or recommendations with insurance agents, owners of mechanical shops and towing companies, and other sources of potential referrals.

7. Use #hashtags

Hashtags can help extend your reach. Posting something about assistance your shop provided to a local non-profit? Include a hashtag for that group ("#NameOfCharity") with your post. Anyone (whether they've connected with your business previously or not) searching for that hashtag will see your post.

Scott's Collision Centers in Easton, Pa., for example, posted photos of some of the giant crayon sculptures the company painted for the nearby "Crayola Experience" attraction. By including a hashtag (#CrayolaExperience), Scott's post would show up with anyone searching for posts related to that attraction, another potential way to reach new customers.

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON BORING SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Midas is among the automotive-related companies recognizing that consumers aren't necessarily looking just for car care tips on social media. Just as Midas has used humor (delivered via a wise-cracking golden hand) in its television commercials, the company is also taking a similar approach on social media.

"Most people aren't using Facebook to learn how to measure tire tread depth," Brian LePorin, Midas' director of marketing, said. "For the most part, social media users want to be entertained, inspired, and rewarded. If Midas can deliver the kind of content users truly want, our brand wins."

Posts on the Midas Facebook page, for example, tend to be visual – photos and videos – and focused on humor. A photo of a koala bear at the wheel of a car saying, "It's cool...I'm koalafied to drive." A photo of a sign typo that reads, "Violators will be towed and find \$50." A photo of a puppy curled up in a car's cup holder ("pup holder"). There are links to Midas TV ads, and to a story about a Midas technician who found a diamond ring – lost six years earlier – in a vehicle he was working on.

In just the first month of the new social media campaign last fall, LePorin said, Midas saw more than a 10 times increase in its Facebook engagement rates.

8. Tweet it out

Looking for ideas for posts or Tweets? Consider some brief driving or car care tips. Share funny (but not apt-to-offend) bumper sticker messages. Remind people not to drink and drive, or text while driving. Promote local events in your area. Visit <http://nationaldayscale.com> to find out what a particular day or month has been designated (i.e., January 14 was "National Dress Up Your Pet Day"). Root for your local sports teams. Offer a discount or free carwash or other service to veterans, first responders, active members of the military, school teachers, etc.

9. Tie to other marketing efforts

Get them looking for your other marketing. Offer a reward to those who



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post a photo of your shop's ad on a billboard or bus (or wherever else you advertise).

10. Create a contest

Contests and puzzles are a great way to solicit interaction on social media. Watch for good (perhaps car-related) trivia or quiz questions you can post, offering some reward for the first one to post the correct answer.

11. Stay current

Keep it relevant and entertaining. Social media shouldn't just be promotion of your business. It should offer what people are looking for on social media: humor, entertainment, items of interest and value that they will want to share with others. Don't just tell people it's important to have their airbag system properly repaired after an accident; post a link to Honda's video showing what an improperly timed airbag does to a watermelon (visit ABRN.com/HondaWatermelon).

12. Expand your brand

Social media can expand your "brand." Unlike Facebook or Google+, Twitter allows users to set up a page that has much the same colors and look of their company website. This helps extend the look and feel of your company brand.

13. Encourage interaction

Encourage your customers to interact with you on social media. Include links to all your social media sites on the homepage of your website. Post a flier

in your customer area offering some reward if they "check-in" on Facebook at your location. Include with the paperwork you give each customer when repairs are completed a flier that invites them to "Like" you on Facebook, follow you on Twitter, etc.

14. Grow SEO

Use social media to boost your search engine standing. Two-thirds of all searches are now done through Google, so setting up and using a Google+ page for your business (and building the number of "+1s" you have – the Google equivalent of a Facebook "like") can't hurt how close to the top your company is in Google search results. If you have videos used on your website or TV commercials you've produced, set up a YouTube channel and post them there; YouTube is owned by Google, so anything that drives traffic to that site could boost your placement in Google search results as well. Consider making some brief (under two minutes) videos offering car care tips for customers (how to wash/wax their vehicle, interior detailing tips, etc.).

15. Boost posts

Facebook enables you to "boost" a post, essentially paying to promote a post to not only those who "like" your page but to others on Facebook in a particular zip code or other demographic. Clicking on the "boost post" link at the bottom of the post will bring up information on the options and costs of doing this. This may be most effective for visual posts about your company's positive involvement in the community.

16. Quality over quantity

Think quality over quantity. Work on developing a presence on one or two social media platforms before moving on to others. Some social media consultants say it's ideal to send one or two Tweets a day, and post one to three times a week on Google+ and Facebook. This type of consistency is important but it's also easy to lose social media fans if time and again they see no value or interest in your posts. So choose your posts carefully. If you're not a personal user of social media, solicit help from someone (insider or outside your company) who is; that person can help

EYE-CATCHING AND ENGAGING POSTS

Here are some examples of the sorts of things that could make good social media posts for collision repairers:

- Back in early January, ABRA Auto Body & Glass posted a link to an article with seven safer-driving resolutions for the new year. Visit ABRN.com/7resolutions.

- You can never go wrong with an ironic photo of a car crashed into a body shop. ABRN.com/CarCrash.

- Dramatic weather events offer a chance to post about driving carefully – or in the case of sheets of ice falling from an apartment building, parking carefully. Visit ABRN.com/ParkCarefully.

- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety can be a good source of interesting articles and video, including this dramatic crash between a 1959 and a 2009 Chevrolet. Visit ABRN.com/IIHScrash.

- Enterprise last year launched a campaign to encourage drivers to get rental car coverage on their policy; it includes a funny video featuring a father stuck driving his daughter's pink car while his is in the shop. Visit ABRN.com/PinkCar.

- Carfax offers a free VIN check site consumers can use as one way to determine if a vehicle has been previously flood-damaged. Visit ABRN.com/VINsite.

- Consumers love new apps for their smart phones. Links to automotive-related apps, like this one designed to help them find the lowest gas prices in their area, can make for good social media posts. Visit ABRN.com/GasBuddy.

provide you with input on the types of posts they enjoy seeing on social media.

17. Be patient.

Think of social media as an extension of what's happening in your office. Using social media isn't likely to quickly result in a flood of new business. It takes time to build an audience. But it's a great way to keep your shop in front of potential customers. Just as importantly, it allows people to see how your business treats customers, how it is involved in the community, and how it is a trusted and professional source of useful and interesting information. ☞





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PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Is OK good enough?

The answer from anyone in your shop, or you, should be it never is

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Employees know what's expected of them in their job, and of course they know what's good enough, right? How many times have you thought, "You're a professional, you should know what the job is, just do it!"

More specifically, do they know exactly what you expect? Your business has a direction. It might not be the right direction or one you prefer, but it has a direction. So, either you set the direction of your business or your business will set its own. Same with your employees: If you don't set a standard of performance, they will.

So what should the success of your business look like? Do you have a clear set of expectations for the business and staff? Most importantly, do your employees know what you expect of them every day and in every area of their job performance?

Set expectations

The success of your business depends on the application of three words: expectations, standards and accountability. Expectations are what you want and need from your shop. The standards become the level of performance that you set for the individuals in your crew.

Your ability to determine and communicate these standards and make them achievable with your employees determines how well and how quickly you can achieve success.

Your expectations and standards need to be real, tangible and measurable. "Pro-

viding exceptional customer service" is a common expectation many shop owners have for their business. It might be what you want a customer to think about you, but it is hard to measure. So we have to focus on the things we can measure that will help to create that emotion in our customers. "We perform courtesy checks to provide each client with a complete understanding of the condition of their vehicle." That is a standard. Service advisors will send each work order into the shop with a courtesy check form attached to the repair order, and techs will perform a thorough courtesy check on 100 percent of the vehicles. As a standard, this can be tracked, measured and ultimately managed.

Communicate expectations

The real challenge for you as an owner is to identify the measurable benchmarks of your business and communicate those as standards to your staff so they can understand what is expected of them. More importantly, this is what their performance will be judged against to determine success or failure. As an employee, when you understand what the target is, you can set yourself in a path to achieving it routinely. No matter how broad or focused, deter-

mining and setting expectations and standards is not an impossible task.

Make people accountable

The magic is in accountability. Without accountability toward expectations, employees can slip and move toward the standards they believe to be sufficient. In the absence of real accountability, what motivates an employee to the standards you've set?

Accountability comes in several forms, all of which are important. For example, there has to be a tracking and reporting element. There also has to be a consequence for performance, whether as reward or penalty. This is where production-based pay plans work really well.

Business expectations

So, how do we do it? It starts with you knowing the needs of your business. What are your expectations? Make them known so you can hold employees (and the business) accountable. Come up with measurable performance standards. Your employees and business should report to you (or a manager) with daily results.

Finally, make it real. Give consistent feedback. If there is no follow-up, then likely your staff will consider it not so important after all. If you make it important, it is more likely that they will remain on the same page as you and be motivated to keep working hard.

The money is in the math, but you have to know where to start. Go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2014-02e to get a free copy of the Win Number Drill and get started on setting standards for your staff. ■

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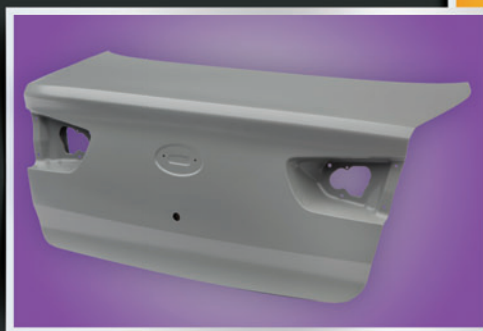
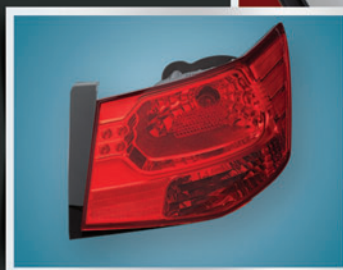
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SHOP PROFILE

A snapshot of one of the industry's leading shops

SOUTH BROADWAY COLLISION CENTER/ LEXINGTON, KY



A case for loyalty

South Broadway relies on unparalleled repair standards to ensure customer referrals

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Truly locked in with word-of-mouth customer loyalty, people come from upwards of 200 miles away to patronize South Broadway Collision Center in Lexington, Ky.

The 40,000-square-foot shop with 42 bays bills itself as “The Asian and European Autobody Specialist.” Having established a niche of being the top repairer for luxury vehicles throughout a widespread marketing sphere, factory representatives from both Audi and Mercedes-Benz report that “we buy over 90 percent of all the crash parts sold in the region,” according to owner Douglas A. Trulock.

“Our mission is to repair vehicles back to a true pre-collision condition,” he says, pointing out that the entire staff is “devoted to collision repair at an unpar-

alleled standard.” This is accomplished by following manufacturers’ guidelines and employing knowledgeable technicians, along with investing in state-of-the-art tools and equipment.

“Using only the premium lines of OE certified paint and materials and maintaining a competent management staff are what we feel are the required ingredients that result in the highest quality of collision repair for every vehicle,” says Trulock, adding that the workforce holds the key to the company’s sustained success, amounting to an annual gross of \$3.3 million.

“We doubled our sales from the time I bought it,” he notes. Armed with a degree in economics from the University of Kentucky, up until his purchase of South Broadway in 2002, Trulock’s career had consisted of business achievements in ventures far afield from collision repair, such as moving up through a chain of convenience stores that included truck stops with fast food and full-service restaurants, and then latching onto a series of management positions at a taxicab fleet. Holding



Douglas A. Trulock

AT A GLANCE

South Broadway Collision Center

Name of shop

Lexington, Ky.

Location

Douglas A. Trulock

Owner

1

Number of shops

16

Years in business

21

Number of employees

42

Number of bays

7

Number of DRPs

40,000

Square footage

\$3,373

Average weekly ticket

31

Average weekly vehicle volume

Standex

Paint supplier

CCC One

Estimating system used

www.southbroadwaycollision.com

Web site



elective office in a series of industry associations was another aspect of his endeavors in the corporate world.

And if you've ever heard the high lonesome laments of the late, great Bill Monroe, you know that the lure of the Bluegrass State was striking a responsive chord. Trulock also wanted to be his own boss.

"I decided to buy a small business where I was the owner back in the land that I love – Lexington," Trulock recounts. Upon engaging the services of a business broker, he was offered three unrelated enterprises that were on the market, and one of them happened to be a body shop over on Angliana Avenue.

South Broadway Collision Center was Trulock's pick. "I thought it was an industry that was easy to get into and run, but I was wrong," he says. "It turned out that it was the toughest industry that I had been involved in. Now I've devoted my life to it, and it's the longest-lasting industry that I've been involved with."

Helping to alleviate the initial challenges was Dan Michalsyi, a veteran technician who had been with South Broadway since its inception in 1997. "He educated me on what it takes to repair a car correctly, and then I got involved with I-CAR and other shop owners around the country."

Trulock, who has gone on to hold several I-CAR leadership positions, observes that his experiences with 20 Groups were especially helpful. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, so-to-speak, "I looked at what everyone else was doing. Every time you reach out to colleagues in your industry and open your mind and listen, you can never say that it isn't worth it," he says.

Working together

With a total of 21 employees, Michalsyi, the 10 other repair specialists and the front office staff deserve much of the credit for providing the excellence delivered by the business, which consistently gets top five-star customer service reviews, according to Trulock,



who prides himself on maintaining a lucrative and nurturing work environment that encourages longevity and operational stability.

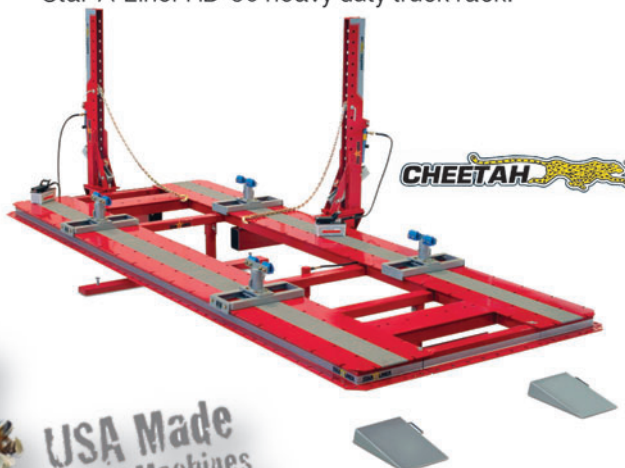
"Our management team sets a strong emphasis on quality repairs and customer service as deemed necessary by both vehicle manufacturers and our particular customers. The technicians

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understand the importance of upholding the highest standards of quality workmanship and take pride in their workmanship. As a result, the entire team works together with that purpose in mind," he says.

"I have the best," Trulock declares. "Fortunately I have a core crew that has been with the business for 15 years. I make sure they have the right equipment, and I listen to their concerns; they share an enthusiasm for doing something superior."

An atmosphere of personal and professional growth permeates throughout the business, bringing an array of impressive certifications. "Each manager and technician is required to pursue ongoing training and continued education in their specific area of expertise," he explains. "I expect the best quality and workmanship in everything we do." Most of the instruction comes through I-CAR and vehicle manufacturers. "We pay for the cost of training, including the time the employees invest."

Although turnover is low, a newcomer who fails to embrace the company culture is quickly dispatched. "I won't hesitate to get rid of someone if they don't do quality work and they're not a team player. When they do (perform as expected), I'll do everything in my power to help them succeed and prosper."

Trulock is active in advising the region's high schools and trade schools

regarding their respective auto body programs, in addition to scouting potential hires already working in the industry. "I try to stay involved in the local market, and I've recruited from out of town with some success."

Out on the shop floor, a single technician repairs a single vehicle almost from start to finish, including taking on Jaguar-certified aluminum welding tasks. "One technician follows the whole car – other than painting. Your quality is much higher with one technician and one painter."

Standard operating procedures are frequently adjusted and modified on an as-needed basis. "We continue to work to improve cycle time without losing quality in workmanship," says Trulock. The high-end nature of the business – it also hosts a detailing department, an in-house rental car facility and indoor storage space – lessens the suitability of averaging cycle time in a days/hours format. "I don't look at it that way." Daily productivity is a better measure. "I've been waiting a month for a Maserati hood, for example, and situations like that would throw it off."

A delicate balance

South Broadway, a 2010 ABRN Top Shop, is affiliated with seven direct repair programs (DRPs). "I have a delicate and difficult balance in following OEM specifications and maintaining relationships



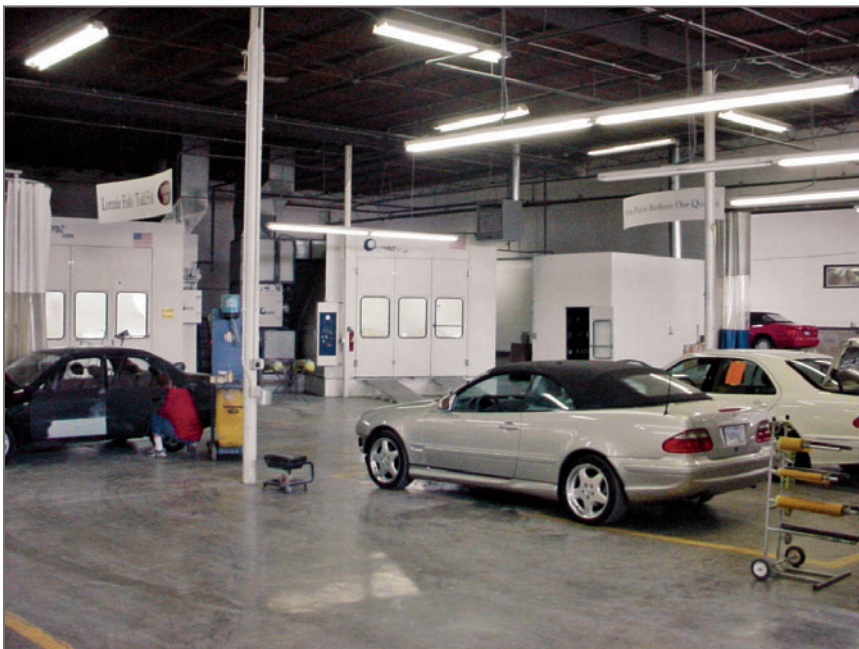
with insurance companies," Trulock says. Factory parts are not inexpensive, and "I have to do a lot of things at no charge. Our first priority is safety and quality."

When pursuing a repair, "we have to be mindful of the cost and time for the insurance companies," he reports. "We use used parts when we can find good quality used parts. If the insurance company says we have to use aftermarket parts, we make the customer aware of it."

Two strategies are in play when dealing with suppliers. "First, I believe in being a loyal customer. I expect the estimator to ensure the accuracy of orders to have the lowest possible returns. Secondly, as a large purchaser with a low percentage of returns, I expect the best possible discount from list pricing. I treat everyone as a professional as I would like to be treated."


A strong word-of-mouth reputation attracts a steady stream of customers through the bay doors, augmented by enthusiastic support for area schools, athletic teams and other community organizations.

"I believe quality repairs and happy customers are the best marketing," says Trulock, noting also that he has a dedicated marketing specialist on board who oversees the shop's social media presence. "We don't waste money with the Yellow Pages anymore; it's an Internet world today." ■



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SPEEDING UP PAINT PREP

USING THE RIGHT TECHNIQUES CAN SAVE TIME AND IMPROVE THE FINAL PRODUCT

BY **ALFRED THOMAS** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Most of us wouldn't list sanding as a favorite task; however, a good paint job is 90 percent prep, so sanding is one of the most important jobs done when painting a vehicle. In fact, sanding is 30 percent of paint labor (**FIG 1**). That said, the faster you can get it done, the more profit that can be made. Let's look at some techniques that help speed the sanding process.

Washing and cleaning

One of the first steps when prepping a vehicle for paint is washing (with soap and water) and cleaning (with wax and grease remover). This prevents a great deal of problems that may crop up later in the process. However, some painters might get away with painting a vehicle that is not clean, or

they may not recognize that some of their problems stem from not properly cleaning the vehicle before painting. Besides the obvious fish-eye problem, other problems such as dirt in the paint, missed defects and poor adhesion can all be traced back to a poorly cleaned vehicle.

Both "prongs" of this procedure are critical. In the soap and water step, pH-balanced soap removes contaminants over the entire vehicle, including the door jams, under the hood and the deck lid. Next, the technician should clean the area to be painted with a wax and grease remover that is compliant with your shop's paint system and the regulations of your area. This removes contaminants not soluble by soap and water. The vehicle can be blown dry following the clean-

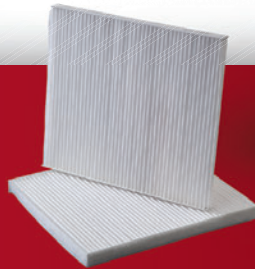


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ing process so that sanding can start immediately. A hand-held air amplifier that is used for waterborne paint drying works very well (**FIG 2**).

Inspection

Find any defects that must be corrected before initial prep of the paint area by first inspecting it. Look for things that may have been missed by the tech doing the body work, as well as for any defects that the estimator missed. If any are found, notify the estimator so a supplement can be written. An initial inspection allows the technician to make a repair plan. During this step, the tech should also retrieve the paint code and write it down on the work order to ensure all needed supplies are available for the job.

Before we start sanding, let's first look at the way abrasives are graded so we can choose the correct one.

Abrasives

Changes in the grading system of abrasives happened some years ago, but is still not fully understood by many. For years, there was only one method of classifying abrasives — the CAMI or Coated Abrasives Manufacturer's Institute system. This system allows larger percentages of grits other than the one labeled to be on the sandpaper. For example, a piece of 400 grit paper could contain some 360 grit and 500 grit particles and still be labeled as 400 grit.

A second system is the FEPA — or Federation of European Producers Association — grading system. This European system, which uses a designator of P before the grit number, has a much tighter tolerance regarding grit sizes. The P (FEPA) papers have become the grit system that is most often called for in paint makers' recommendations.

Actual grit sizes in the US grading system (CAMI) and the European system (FEPA) are similar up to about 220, but from that point on they vary greatly. For example, CAMI 240 grit is equal to FEPA 280, and CAMI 600 is equal to FEPA 1200. To make things even more confusing, there are two additional sandpaper grit systems: the Japanese Grading System (JIS), which does not use a designator, and the Micron grading sys-



tem that uses a μ symbol following the grit number.

It is best to follow the paint maker's recommendations.

When a shop indiscriminately orders 400 grit paper, its techs may not be getting the correct paper for the job at hand. Therefore, if the recommendation is to use P500 to P600 for final sanding to get the desired results, the shop should be careful to purchase P-rated paper for the paint tech to use.

The recommended method of sanding should also be followed. In fact, many paint manufacturers recommend a different grit when dry sanding by hand than when a tech chooses to wet sand. Some also have different machine sanding recommendations for wet sanding than for dry. As machine sanding is the more common method of sanding, techs should be careful not to assume that the sandpaper grit they use when hand sanding will be the same as when they machine sand.

A discussion about sanding and abrasives is not complete without talk-





ing about a prep cart (**FIG. 3**). Rolling up to the job with a prep cart containing everything that is needed to complete the job significantly reduces the time needed. The cart should be stocked at the start of the day with all the needed sandpapers, scuff pads, sanding paste, tape, etc.

Blocking: Power vs. hand

I was one of those guys you see on the internet “doing it my way.” I admit this one took me a while to accept. For years I thought those techs who tried to block with a DA were less concerned about a quality finish. I believed it was impossible to make a non-wavy, smooth, flat finish without blocking by hand — wet. In fact, in cases when I was super-concerned about getting a show quality finish, I would paint-stick (**FIG. 4**) block the primer with a sprayed-on guide coat. This may have still been the case today, if some significant changes had not come about, such as better DAs. Even in the face of all the articles online stating that you can only get a flat blocking by hand, I now respectfully disagree.

Hand blocking with sprayed-on guide coat, either wet or dry, has been replaced by use of a painter’s DA (a DA with a circular pattern that is best suited to power blocking). Interface pads, which should be used with grits of P400 or greater, help with sanding control. Also dry guide coat, which doesn’t clog the finer grit paper as fast, should be

used. There is a learning curve, but with a little practice, the result you seek can be achieved.

The key points are that first you use guide coat to help you see when to stop sanding. One of the most common mistakes made is sanding more than needed. The guide coat shows you just when to stop — do not continue to sand after all the guide coat had been removed. If you do, it turns the surface into a wavy mess.

Second, another common mistake is not holding the DA flat to the surface. The better you get at holding the DA flat to the surface you are sanding and not topping over the edge or riding over body lines, the better you will become at power blocking. Also, using a fine-finish DA pad and a DA with the correct size pattern is essential.

Lastly, recognize that the technique for sanding is also important. The surface should be sanded completely in one direction, such as left to right, and then in the opposite direction. When the entire surface has been sanded in both directions, check the surface. If more sanding is needed, repeat the process. The tool should be started ON the work surface and stopped with the tool OFF the work surface to keep from leaving marks. The sanding should be done with light operator hand pressure on the tool. For those who prefer, there are 3-inch by 4-inch orbital sanders that may be used to help in the blocking process.

DA types

DAs have for some time come with different handles, with different sanding pattern sizes, and different pad sizes and shapes. Though they may all look similar, they can be very different.

To help on DA pattern size:

3/32 DA = 3/32

1/8 = 2/16 = 4/32

3/16 = 6/32

5/16 = 10/32

3/8 = 6/16 = 12/32

Sanding pattern

The orbit or “throw” of the tool is the amount of offset the counterweight moves when a sander is in motion. If

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a large orbit sander is used, it will move the abrasive in a larger motion allowing the abrasive to cut more. If a small orbit tool is being used, the abrasive will move in a small motion. The amount of movement will determine the cut performance of the abrasive. The biggest factor impacted by the orbit of the sander is the amount of cut that is transferred to the abrasive. In fact, the cut from a large orbit tool (5/16") is as much as 2 times when comparing to a small orbit tool (3/32"). When you increase cut, you increase refinement speeds as well. For example, when sanding to refine P1500 grit scratches with P3000, a 5/16" orbit tool will remove the P1500 scratch twice as fast. This helps get the vehicle out the door quickly. Cut increases significantly help both the body and paint shop side of the business.

The fear that many techs have when using larger orbit tools is the impact it

will have on the scratch finish. This is due to the old terminology of categorizing tools as "coarse or fine." The orbit of a tool has shown very little effect on the scratch finish of the abrasive. It does not matter if you are using a P800 disc with a 3/32" orbit tool or a 5/16" orbit tool. The finish is still a P800 scratch. The bigger difference will be the cut performance of the abrasive disc. The production increase of using larger orbit tools far outweighs the small differences in scratch.

Small orbit tools originally started in the wood-working business and made their way into the auto body industry. A 3/32" orbit tool is very comfortable with no vibration, but they also have very low cut and generally tend to decrease the performance of abrasive discs. Since the abrasive has very little movement, it will also load and clog up since the dust will be trapped underneath. Large orbit tools do a bet-



ter job at kicking out the dust from underneath the abrasive, limiting the amount clogging on the disc.

There are some drawbacks to going to larger orbit tools, but the advantages outweigh the differences. A 5/16" orbit tool will have more vibration than a 3/32" orbit tool. This can be hard on a tech, but generally a sander is being used for a limited amount of time to keep fatigue to a minimum. There is also the drawback of burn through. You may want double the cut from your abrasive, but with more cut can come more burning through on e-coat or blend panels. There is a limit to how much is too much. 3/16" orbit tools tend to be a happy medium for techs who worry about too much cut and vibration.

So if you have a DA now and it is not marked, how do you find out what size it is? You can test the pattern size by placing a piece of paper on it and lightly touching a pencil to it as it runs freely (**FIG. 6**).

DAs made specifically for painters have a smoother operating path and tighter pattern, and are suited for power prep, or dry blocking. Also, as the environmental laws change and more areas are mandating the removal of drains in shops, wet sanding may become more difficult. Thus dry sanding with vacuum pickup or sanding in prep decks may become a paint shop's only option.

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Interface pads

These are pads that fit between the DA pad (FIG. 7) and the paper; they also make the cutting action of the DA less aggressive over high crowns. If a tech does not use pads like these, it is more likely that a cut-through over the high crowns will result. With the use of "interface pads," as 3M calls theirs, the surface of the sandpaper is cooler, which extends the life of the pad, especially on finer grit paper. With the use of a guide coat, a DA and pad quickly sands smooth areas over featheredged surfaces, as well as over body filler. If imperfections such as sand scratches or contour mapping are present, they can be quickly seen, and the continued blocking can be concentrated on the area until it is corrected. Following the first sanding, a second guide coat can be applied and a finer sanding can quickly be done to assure that all scratches are removed and the proper grit finish is obtained.



Guide coat

Guide coats have been used for many years, but weren't always. Even when an aerosol spray can was used, it needed time to dry and would load up the sandpaper quickly; thus, many technicians didn't use it. Dry guide coat, though, can be quickly applied and immediately sanded with no appreciable increase of paper loading. Its new convenience virtually eliminates any reason not to use it (FIG. 8). Guide coats quickly and visually reveal any imperfections in the repair, so even a novice tech can know when the surface is properly prepared (FIG. 9).



Good planning eliminates wasted time and materials, and can virtually eliminate paint flaws due to poor prep. We can produce the needed flawless surface in a shorter amount of time with the use of rolled primer, finish DA, dry guide coat, and fast and clean application of glaze. In fact, if the body techs either significantly reduce or eliminate pinholes by mixing body filler without air bubbles and use dry guide coat when sanding body filler (thus making it flatter and smoother), glaze may not be needed as much in the paint department to prepare the surface for refinishing. ☺

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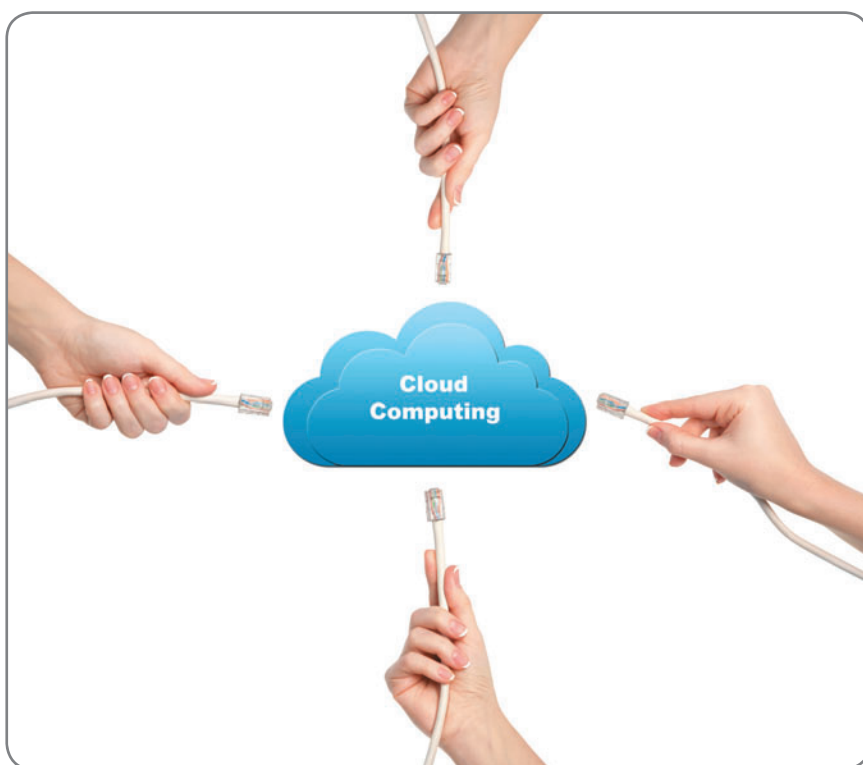


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Insurance companies and OEMs are expanding their telematics deployments. How can shops benefit?

BY **BRIAN ALBRIGHT** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The idea of the "connected car" has received significant buzz in the automotive industry, with OEMs and technology vendors touting the benefits of turning a vehicle into a network node that can seamlessly connect drivers' smartphones, iPods, tablets and other devices. In the auto repair space, though, telematics technology (which is intrinsically linked to this connected vehicle functionality) holds the most promise for the industry.

A variety of OEMs, insurers, parts suppliers, fleet services companies and technology startups now offer telematics solutions that can do everything from monitor driver behavior to access diagnostic information, and the availability of these sys-

tems continues to expand. According to Frost & Sullivan, OEMs are increasingly making telematics systems a standard feature in vehicles. According to ABI Research, the number of telematics users is expected to increase from 72 million to more than 300 million by 2018.

Toyota has one of the most advanced systems, providing a social network of customers, dealers and OEMs to provide service alerts. Hyundai's Bluelink is tied to roadside assistance and warranty offerings. It also provides in-vehicle service scheduling and an in-vehicle recall advisor.

But apart from the OEMs, insurance companies have been the most aggressive proponents of telematics solutions. Progressive, State Farm, Allstate and others have deployed "usage based insurance" (UBI) products that use telematics hardware to monitor driver behavior and reward "good" drivers with lower premiums. Aftermarket telematics solutions are also emerging, and may present an opportunity for non-dealer repair shops to take advantage of these systems.

Theoretically, a telematics device with access to diagnostic codes and vehicle data could send alerts to a driver's smartphone indicating that it was time for an oil change or provide trouble code details when the check engine light comes on. If the driver has established a relationship with a repair shop, that information could also be sent to the repairer to prompt a callback, schedule an appointment or even initiate a parts order. Using location-based data, these systems could also point drivers to the location of the nearest repair shop or tow truck service.

"By taking this data and sharing it with drivers in a more valuable form, they will reward you with more loyalty," says Blair Currie, vice president of marketing at Intelligent Mechatronic Systems (IMS), which offers a telematics solution that combines an OBD-II device and smartphone connectivity.



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How all of this would work, however, is still unclear. "For fleet management and UBI, it's well known. For the independent aftermarket, it's not known right now," says Chris Slesak, director of telematics at Delphi Automotive. "The aftermarket channel has to work together to make the business model successful and while there are still questions, the foundation is in place to launch successful telematics programs into the aftermarket."

The insurance approach

For any of this to happen, there has to be an ecosystem of telematics users and services available that can link drivers and repairers. Since the OEMs are primarily operating closed telematics systems, the next most logical place for this ecosystem to develop is in the usage-based insurance market.

According to Frost & Sullivan, 60 percent of major insurance companies in the U.S. offer a mileage or behavior-based discount to customers using telematics technology. "The objective for these programs is to decrease cost of ownership, but telematics-based insurance is not a one-size-fits-all so-

lution," said Praveen Chandrasekar, telematics and infotainment program manager at Frost & Sullivan.

Progressive has probably the most well-known UBI solution (Snapshot), which according to company spokesperson Erin Vrobel is in place on 1.2 million policies. The system (which uses an OBD-II plug-in device) collects information about how, how much and when a customer drives.

"Time and speed information helps to calculate the number of miles a customer drives, when they drive and how often he or she slams on the brakes," Vrobel says. "The usage-based data is an important part of the rating formula; however, Progressive still rates primarily on traditional data such as driving history, vehicle type, etc."

State Farm provides services more in line with OEM systems like OnStar: emergency response, roadside assistance, vehicle location assistance, diagnostic and speed alerts, and its In-Drive service can be used with both OnStar and Ford SYNC equipment. Allstate's DRIVEWISE is similar to the Progressive program, focusing on mileage and speed, without the accompanying GPS data.

According to Fred Blumer, founder of Hughes Telematics and CEO of Vehcon, there is an opportunity for repairers to partner with insurance companies on these UBI programs, which will eventually cover millions of vehicles.

If there's an opportunity for body shops to tie into UBI technology, it would likely come through DRP programs; in the event of an accident, the telematics solution could potentially issue shop recommendations via drivers' smartphones or an in-vehicle device. However, this would require location data, crash detection information and participation of the shops, insurer and vehicle owner. And right now, many UBI systems don't collect location or diagnostic data.

For mechanical repair shops that provide regular maintenance, there is more of a play, since vehicle owners would be interested in getting usage-based alerts about maintenance from their preferred shop.

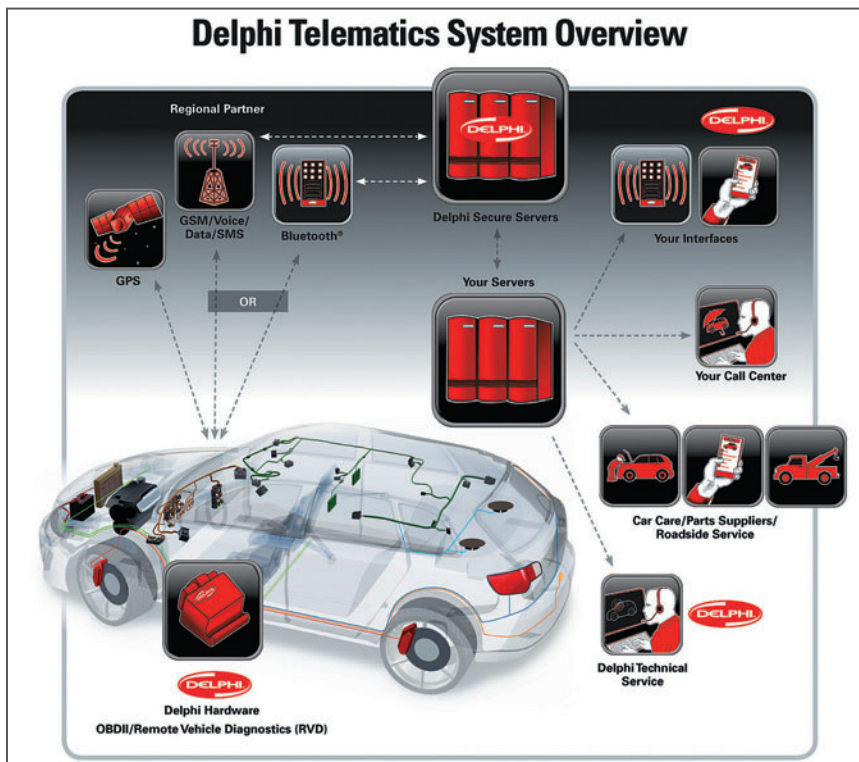
Shops could also remotely read trouble codes, which could make scheduling repairs easier for both the driver and the shop. But some of the OEM diagnostic information is still proprietary (and therefore of limited use to non-dealership locations), and even the codes that can be read aren't necessarily specific enough for anyone to diagnose the problem without seeing the actual vehicle.

Presenting a simple alert, without a lot of confusing detail, might be better for consumer-facing solutions. "You want to enlighten the customer enough so they know if the problem requires immediate attention, or if it can wait," Slesak says.

Whose data is it?

A major obstacle to the use of telematics by repair shops is that the most widely used solutions are closed networks; it has only been recently that OEMs and insurers have begun partnering with other companies to offer telematics services, and they've largely been working with each other.

But who really "owns" the data? Right now, the customer and vehicle data is held by whoever provided the system. "The OEMs are attempting to build a closed ecosystem," Blumer says.



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"They want to own the entire vehicle ownership lifecycle, and they want to be first in line when the vehicle needs service."

One idea that's gaining traction in the non-OEM space is that drivers should have ownership of the data, and be able to share it with anyone they want. A number of telematics start-ups are taking this approach; with a plug-in telematics device that stores data in a cloud-based solution.

This helps to level the playing field for traditional independent shops and provide them an opportunity to increase customer loyalty and help generate revenue when it comes to car maintenance and care, Delphi's Slesak says.

Privacy concerns paramount

There are still questions about the infrastructure needed to support all this connectivity. Will repair shops get into

the business of selling and supporting telematics hardware, or will they rely on partnerships with insurers or other suppliers? Where will all of this data be stored, and who will manage it?

And just how much data customers are willing to share will limit how shops, insurers and other companies can leverage telematics to generate new business.

Other models emerging

OEMs and insurance companies have the largest telematics user base, but a number of new solution providers are emerging that could help open the door for repairers. Delphi, for one, has been banging the telematics drum for years, and the company's consumer product (Vehicle Diagnostics by Delphi) provides smartphone access to diagnostic data, as well as remote start and unlock functionality.


For MSOs and other repair organizations, another route might be partnering up with a fleet management solution provider. Most large fleet operators already use telematics solutions for vehicle tracking, driving monitoring and diagnostics. Granting a local repairer access to that data could help them effectively outsource maintenance functions.

Zubie is another company with technology that combines an OBD-II port device with smartphone capabilities. The OBD-II device provides performance and maintenance tracking, predictive maintenance assessments and fuel economy data. Zubie claims it will be able to generate reports for vehicle owners that specify what maintenance their vehicle needs and provide estimates.

Then there's Magneti Marelli, which has developed telematics products for OEMs and the aftermarket. As part of its CheckStar program, the company has deployed 500 mobility specialists in Italy who deal specifically with telematics and vehicle connectivity issues at its shops.

Tag N Go in Colorado has targeted its device at families and driving schools and emphasizes operational safety. Sprint has worked with Modus to create an OBD device that blocks text messages and Web surfing on drivers' phones, and the carrier has partnered with IMS for services that include usage based insurance, maintenance reports and roadside assistance.

For these companies to make money, though, they not only need customers to upgrade to the types of analytics packages offered by Zubie, they also need to share vehicle data with other service providers.

In the meantime, insurers continue to expand their UBI offerings and have begun partnering with OEMs to leverage the existing factory telematics hardware. The current telematics landscape is still a patchwork, and the existence of multiple, incompatible solutions will be an obstacle for repairers. "Insurance companies and OEMs want to have that data for themselves," Currie at IMS says. "By sharing it with users, you change the whole paradigm." 



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CARBON FIBER: BECOMING MAINTSTREAM?

COLLISION REPAIRERS MUST BE PREPARED TO TACKLE CARBON FIBER AS IT MAKES ITS WAY INTO EVERYDAY, HIGH-VOLUME VEHICLES

BY **JASON BARTANEN** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Carbon fiber is currently getting a lot of media attention. Coverage focuses on how it is light, strong and used by the aerospace industry; how many vehicle makers are investing a great deal of research into the space-age material; and often exotic cars are mentioned like the Lamborghini Aventador, McLaren P1, the Alfa Romeo 4C,

or the BMW i3 and i8. These vehicles have body structures and outer panels that are made of carbon fiber.

The BMW i3 and i8, for example, are going to have exterior panels and almost the entire passenger cell made of carbon fiber. Carbon fiber is not a material that will only be used for body and trim panels, it will often be used anywhere steel and aluminum is commonly used. This material is steadily filtering down from the exotics to the high-end.

So, how much longer before carbon fiber makes its way into the everyday, high-volume vehicles? And, how will the collision repair industry repair these vehicles as they are produced in greater quantities? To start to get some answers you have to start at the beginning.



Vinyl decals can give the appearance of carbon fiber.

JASON BARTANEN

is the Technical Director for I-CAR, the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair, a not-for-profit training organization focused on education, knowledge and solutions for the collision repair industry.

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COLOR THEORY, APPLICATION, TINTING AND BLENDING (REF03, 1-2)

Saturday, March 22; 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

WHEEL ALIGNMENT AND DIAGNOSTIC ANGLES (STE04, 1-2)

Saturday, March 22; 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

REPLACEMENT OF STEEL UNITIZED STRUCTURES (SPS10)

Saturday, March 22; 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

SECTIONING OF STEEL UNITIZED STRUCTURES (SPS11)

Saturday, March 22; 1 - 5 p.m.



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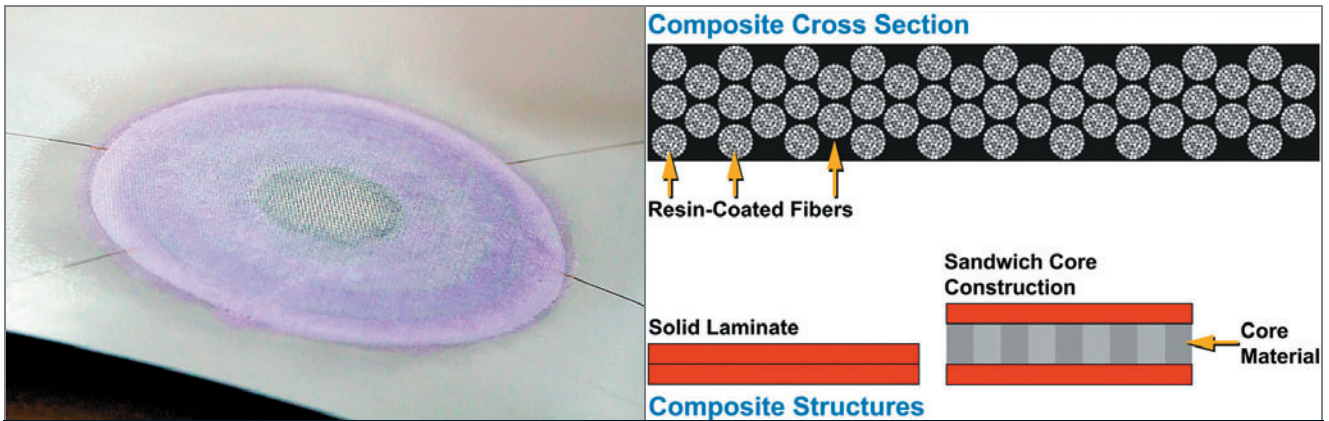
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(left) Sanding of a completed carbon fiber repair is not recommended because it can damage the fibers and weaken the repair. (Right) Composites are made by combining fibers with a resin material.

Carbon fiber: What is it?

Carbon fiber is a manmade filament or fiber with a high carbon content between 92 percent and 99 percent carbon. It is made into a variety of different cloths, weaves or chopped fibers. The fibers are then combined with a resin material to make parts. This resin might be vinyl, vinyl-ester, epoxy, or one of many other types of resin.

Carbon fiber is the buzzword for a composite that has amazing possibilities now and into the future.

Carbon fiber damage

When approaching a damaged carbon fiber part, you must understand that composites react very differently than steel or aluminum. A small crack or blemish in carbon fiber could travel much further than you think. The tell-tale dents and buckles on aluminum or steel panels, used as a red flag during damage analysis, no longer exist. Even three-dimensional measuring may not show where all of the damage is on a carbon fiber structure. The majority of the damage could be on the backside of the part or in between the individual plies (layers) of carbon fiber.

To properly analyze damage, special tools and testing equipment is available to help find all of the damage within the composite structure. These tools widely vary in price, from pennies, to thousands of dollars, and include items such as tapping hammers, thermal-imaging cameras and ultra-sonic testers.

Is carbon fiber repairable?

The answer — it depends. Repairing carbon fiber structures is not harder, it's just different. It requires some new tools, equipment and skills. Training on how to handle, inspect and repair this material is critical for complete and safe repairs.

If the part is a cosmetic or exterior panel, some vehicle makers allow limited repairs using conventional composite repairs. These repair materials are the same materials that are used for sheet-molded compound (SMC). The same repair techniques are also used, but there is a chance for contour mapping of the repair because the carbon fiber panels are so thin. If the damaged part is a component of the vehicle structure, the repair process changes.

Carbon fiber repair options

There are several repair options for carbon fiber depending on damage and vehicle maker repair instructions. These include vacuum bagging, adhesive bonding, rivet bonding and conventional composite repair.

Vacuum bagging is the main focus of the I-CAR Introduction to Carbon Fiber CFR01e course. There are many different options and steps to this repair. With this type of repair, each of the damaged plies is removed and replaced. The repair is then compressed and heated to cure the repair.


Adhesive bonding is only done at a factory seam of a composite part. It involves removing the damaged part, us-

ing partial replacement techniques, and adhesively bonding the seams. This is only done when there are vehicle maker repair instructions.

Rivet bonding is usually done at a factory seam of the composite part. It involves removing the damaged part and replacing it with rivets and adhesive. This repair is only done when there is a vehicle maker repair procedure.

Conventional composite repair uses the same products and techniques used on SMC repairs. This repair can only be used for cosmetic applications because these products are weaker than carbon fiber and will not have the same performance standards.

Carbon fiber is relatively new to the automotive industry, but it is repairable depending on the damage. As the collision repair industry starts to repair these vehicles, there will be challenges, to overcome. The challenges with carbon fiber intensive vehicles are similar to the way that the industry is learning and adapting to unibody construction, high-strength steel (HSS), ultra-high-strength steel UHSS, and aluminum intensive vehicles.

The first step to meet these challenges is to begin to acquire knowledge about the material and what is involved in the repair process with this space age material. The industry will need to identify when to make the investment in tools, material, and training. It is not a question of if carbon fiber is going to appear in high production vehicles, but when it will appear. 

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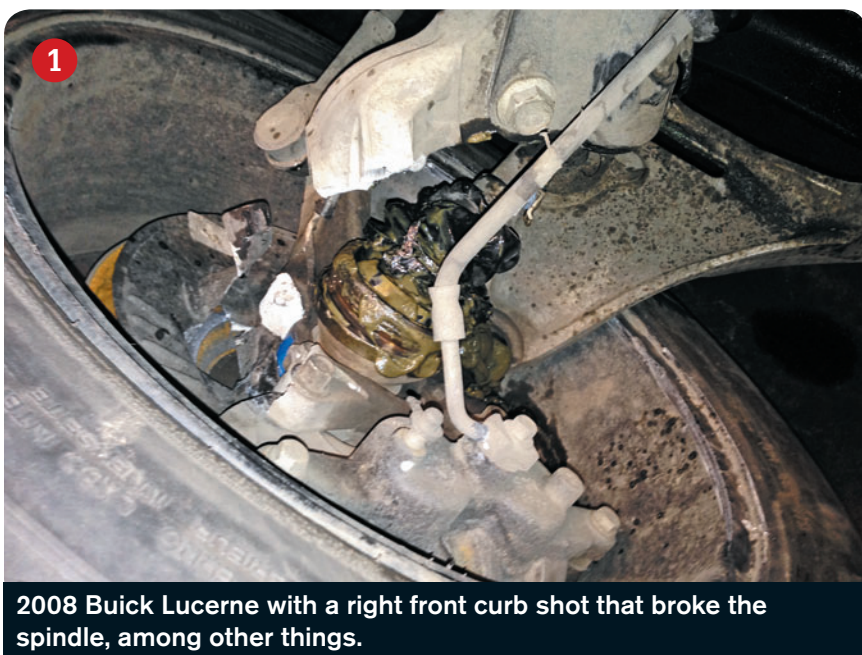
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Improve your inspection process and communication with the customer to avoid repair expenses that aren't your responsibility



2008 Buick Lucerne with a right front curb shot that broke the spindle, among other things.

IMAGE / DONNY SEYFER

BY **DONNY SEYFER** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

A touchy subject we often deal with is having to talk with customers about repairing their cars after an accident when we find a problem that we believe was pre-accident. We all know that every customer's car was perfectly maintained and in pristine, show-ready condition before their accident. But we also know that when a car takes a light hit to the front, it rarely causes the right rear electric window motor to suddenly stop working. To avoid getting into an argument that makes the entire process more difficult, let's look at some ways we might change the dialog with the customer and increase our expertise in sleuthing out these conditions before we make that initial contact.

I have the pleasure of knowing many of the best-run collision shops in the country, so I may be preaching to the choir on many of these ideas. However, if you do not follow the suggestions to come, just know that many of your peers are. To kick that off, I highly recommend that you have a check-in sheet for your techs to fill out that contains a pre-inspection list. If it is at all possible, you should connect a code reader, or better yet, a full feature scan tool and collect all of the Diagnostic Trouble Codes (DTCs) from the vehicle, operate the electrical functions of the car and inspect basic maintenance items on top of your normal blueprinting operation.

Why are we looking at these things when a car comes in with body damage? So that we can capture things that are obviously wrong up front and have a conversation that we control, rather than getting that call back after we deliver the vehicle. If you determine that a vehicle's maintenance is lacking, your notes to that point will help avoid an expense that is not your responsibility. As an example: a car comes in with no oil reading on the dipstick, and it clearly has not had collision-related damage that caused the oil to leak out. If that engine fails a week after your repair, the customer is highly likely to blame the accident for the engine failure, and the insurance company may wind up buying one. On the other hand, if you noted there was no oil in the engine and the oil change sticker was a year and 10,000 miles overdue, the conversation will be completely different. Armed with facts, you now can approach the customer and offer to change their oil with all of the cautions that are appropriate for an engine that has had no oil in it.

I have noticed a tendency for estimators to have a tough time putting on the service writer hat and asking the customer to pay for things that are not accident related. For many of you that have mechanical departments, this becomes even more critical if you want to not only retain technicians with great skills, but also to help generate revenue to fund the plethora of tools that are necessary to sort out problems on all of the interdependent systems throughout the vehicle. You might be surprised how many customers are happy to have the opportunity to get other repairs done while they are driving a rental car and do not have to make other arrangements for regular or irregular maintenance. To lower the stress of making that call, be sure to have a solid and accurate estimate that prioritizes the needs in case the customer decides to only buy part of your recommendations. If you appear organized and knowledgeable, customers will be less likely to question whether you are actually qualified to perform work other than the body and paint on their car. Of course, it is also very important that your staff actually is trained and properly equipped, or that additional revenue will be replaced by additional headaches.

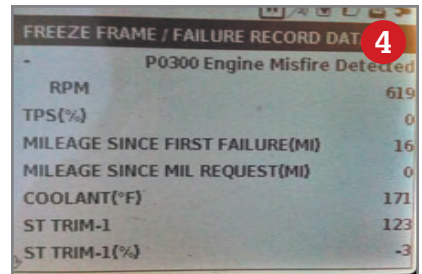
Now that we have covered the part involving customer service, let's look at a couple examples of determining what is and isn't collision related.

If an owner knocks the whole corner off their car (**FIG 1**), it is a safe bet that any pre-existing damage to the drive axle, strut

or ball joints is going to be pretty hard to ascertain. What is important is to check the other side because if there are many miles on the car, we might want or need to recommend replacement of such parts as ball joints, shocks or struts to go with the new pieces we are putting on the damaged side of the vehicle.

Back in January, I mentioned the importance of using the proper method for measuring parts. If we take the example Buick Lucerne and look in our service information for ball joint inspection, we can see in **FIG 2** that the tolerance for wear is very small, as they are using a micrometer to measure deflection. **FIGURE 3** shows the procedure, which is typical of late-model cars, but not what many techs are using to determine wear. By using the right test, you won't miss a ball joint that would make getting a good alignment difficult. This is where you are going to find those revenue opportunities. Often times the plastic socket liner will get broken in a steering end or ball joint from a sharp blow, but the reality is that downsizing these components has created many that do not last the life of the vehicle. In most cases, if the part is so bad you can see it moving, it probably either caused the accident or was damaged during the accident. It is tough to say sometimes, but look for the evidence of impact as well as the maintenance condition of the vehicle and make the best call you can.


Earlier, I suggested scanning the vehicle for Diagnostic Trouble Codes and attaching them to the blueprint or work order for later use. First and most important is DO NOT clear the codes in the system until you are all done with the car or a diagnostic procedure recommends it. In many vehicles, you may have lost your proof that the problem was present before the accident. Here is a simple and common scenario. A vehicle arrives with the malfunction indicator lamp (MIL) on. The technician is performing his pre-check and finds a P0301 code present. The code description

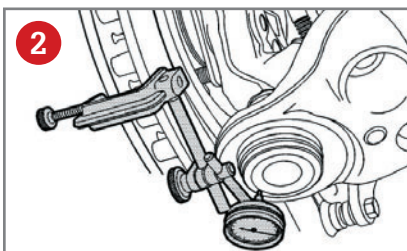


FREEZE FRAME / FAILURE RECORD DATA	
P0300 Engine Misfire Detected	
RPM	619
TPS(%)	0
MILEAGE SINCE FIRST FAILURE(MI)	16
MILEAGE SINCE MIL REQUEST(MI)	0
COOLANT(*F)	171
ST TRIM-1	123
ST TRIM-1(%)	-3

Note the mileage since first failure. Unless you have driven this around after the accident, this is a pre-accident problem and the engine was almost warmed up when the fault occurred.

is universally a misfire on cylinder number one. Could the car have a misfire after the accident? Sure it could. Could it have been there before the accident? You bet. How do you know? Well, if you do not clear the codes, the Onboard Diagnostic System (OBD) has some help to keep everybody honest. It is called freeze frame. When the event that sets the code occurs, a little guy inside the magic box known as the diagnostic executive makes a note, takes a picture of all of the data during that time and flips on the porch light to let you know something is going on in his digital world. With most good scan tools, you can view this freeze frame, and it will tell you when and in many cases how often this problem has happened. Carmakers all take a slightly different approach, but you will be able to tell if the problem is new or not pretty easily. **FIGURE 4** shows you an example of how one tool displays a generic P0300 – General misfire code. It is important to learn how your scan tool package works so that you can use this data to your advantage.

Determining before or after is challenging detective work that can serve all parties involved. You may be able to help your customer with facts to get a component replaced that might have otherwise been their responsibility. You might also have an opportunity to repair a pre-accident problem and improve your revenue. For insurance adjusters, a thorough pre-check on your part will expedite returning the car to the customer and establish responsibility with less debate. And who doesn't like that better? 



measuring a ball joint with a micrometer

Important:

- The vehicle must rest on a level surface.
- The vehicle must be stable. Do not rock the vehicle on the floor stands.

1. Raise and suitably support the vehicle. Refer to Lifting and Jacking the Vehicle (See: [Wheels and Tires/Vehicle Lifting/Service and Repair](#)).
2. Clean and inspect the ball joint seal for cuts or tears. If the ball joint seal is damaged, replace the ball joint. Refer to Lower Control Arm Ball Joint Replacement (See: [Service and Repair](#)).
3. Support the lower control arm with a floor stand as far outboard as possible and raise the suspension to just below ride height.
4. Install J 8001 or a suitable dial indicator in a way to measure vehicle lean in the ball joint.

Important: Do not pry between the lower control arm and the wheel drive shaft boot.

5. Gently lift or pry the suspension to induce ball joint movement.
6. If the dial indicator reading is more than 1.6 mm (0.063 in), replace the ball joint. Refer to Lower Control Arm Ball Joint Replacement (See: [Service and Repair](#)).



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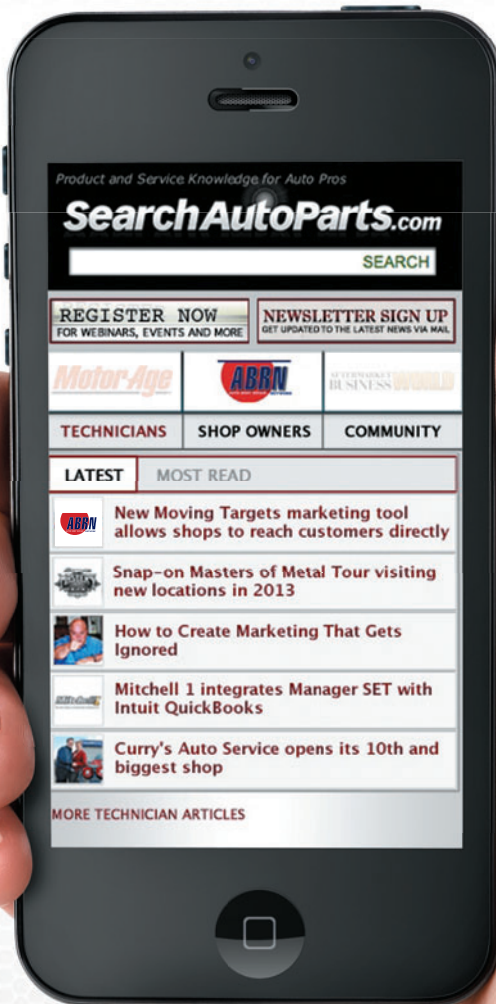
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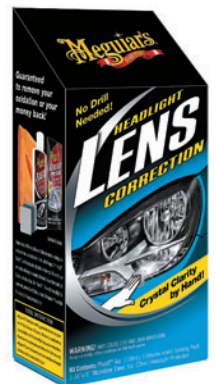
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THE LAST DETAIL [✓]

S

hop owners or estimators in my estimating classes will sometimes say, "Mike, this insurance company won't pay for finish sand and buff."

I usually preface my answer by saying although there are several terms for this process ("de-nib," "intrusion removal," etc.), make sure you're not calling it, "color sand and buff." That's an outdated phrase from the days of

lacquer paints when you had to sand and buff the lacquer finish to bring out its luster and shine. That's not what we're talking about.

Getting paid for finish sand and buff comes down to three questions: Is it necessary? Is it included in any other labor operation? And, is there a formula for it?

So is finish sand and buff required to return a vehicle to pre-accident condition? Absolutely. I can tell you I've been in three different automaker plants recently, and I've seen it being done in all three. You can download a Toyota/Lexus bulletin that backs this up at ABRN.com/bulletin. It states, "Toyota recognizes the reality of paint finish application in the shop environment. In addition to color matching and blending, counter-measures to remove paint process intrusion (dirt nibs) are necessary to achieve an undetectable finish match. This is also common in manufacturing plants when process intrusion is encountered."

Under the "Tools" section on my website, www.CollisionAdvice.com, there are statements from all five major paint manufacturers detailing the need for the finish sand and buff process. Axalta's statement, for example, calls it, "a normal and necessary operation for both OEM manufacturers and collision repair shops." If it's necessary for automakers, who are working with clean body shells in highly specialized paint facilities, Axalta points out, how could it not be for shops, which cannot, "duplicate the application and dirt isolation processes used by the OEMs, and therefore are faced with the inevitable need to remove dust and dirt particles from the finish before the vehicle is delivered to the owner."

"Some detail work (de-nib and polish/wet sand and buff) can be expected," Akzo Nobel Coatings' statement agrees.

"While refinishing automotive panels with zero dirt inclusions is possible in theory, it rarely happens in actual practice," BASF's document states. "Following best practices for cleanliness in paint processing areas, and equipment maintenance can minimize this problem and should never be disregarded, but in the overwhelming majority of repairs, some dirt is inevitable."

And dust and dirt aren't the only reasons finish sand and buff may be necessary. There can be pre-existing issues with a panel that we

“Is finish sand and buff required to return a vehicle to pre-accident condition? Absolutely.”

GET PAID FOR 'FINISH SAND AND BUFF'

Automaker, paint manufacturer and estimating system documentation all helps to justify the process need

have no control over. Let's say you blend the color on a panel (and clear the entire panel) on which there were some minor stone chips, for example. The clear will puddle in those chips, becoming a real eyesore. So you have to finish sand and buff that.

I've been in some urban areas where acid rain or industrial fall-out etches into the finish, causing the substrate to get soft. When you apply a new coat of color or clear over that, that substrate will swell up, creating what looks like a bunch of water spots. Again, this is something beyond the shop's control and requires finish sand and buff.

The second question you need to answer is if finish sand and buff is included in any other labor operation. It definitively is not. Visit the Database Enhancement Gateway (www.DEGweb.org) to download all three of the major estimating systems guides or procedure pages. All of them clearly list finish sand and buff (or "de-nib") as a not-included operation. See "P28" on Mitchell International's "P-pages" (ABRN.com/P28), for example, or "G39" in Motor Information System's Guide to Estimating (ABRN.com/G39), which is the basis for CCC Information Service's estimating system).

Another indication that it's a non-included operation is that the estimating system providers have provided formulas for determining estimated time needed for the process. Mitchell, for example, on page 17 of the "P-pages," says to allow three-tenths per refinish hour to finish sand and buff a panel, and two-tenths per refinish hour to "de-nib and finesse" a panel.

Lastly, email me or tiffany@collisionadvice.com for a free copy of the negotiation tools I have built for finish sand and buff. Having the right documentation helps estimators justify the need for this procedure. ☺

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Mike Anderson, a former shop owner, currently operates COLLISIONADVICE.COM, a training and consulting firm.

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