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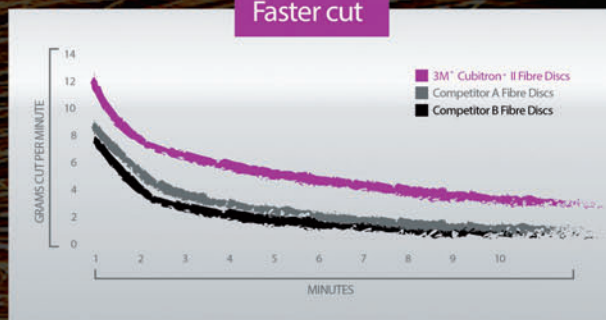
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VOLUME 53 | NUMBER 8
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SERVICE, SPEED AND ACCURACY
SHOULD BE MAIN SHOP FOCUSES**

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**RECRUIT WITH FAIR PAY
THOSE KEEPING THE INDUSTRY AFLOAT
ARE DROWNING IN POOR WAGES**

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ABRA FOR SALE

8 ABRA Auto Body & Glass is up for auction by Palladium Equity Partners, the private-equity firm that owns it.

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ANALYSIS

FOCUS ON SAFETY, QUALITY

BY KRISTA MCNAMARA | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Collision Advice's Mike Anderson told 2014 CARSTAR National Conference attendees to focus on quality and safety in their shops above all else.

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FEATURE

RECRUIT NEW TALENT BY FIRST PAYING TECHNICIANS FAIRLY

BY LARRY SILVEY | ABRN BLOGGER

Technicians — who have the intellect and skills of an engineer, but have chosen to work on cars — are drowning under poor wages, making \$36,000 per year on average.

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MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

OUTMANEUVER CONSOLIDATION

BY KEVIN MEHOK | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Shops can protect their business with stellar service, appearance and operations.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF ABRN

Industry representatives weigh in on critical collision repair issues in our annual roundtable.

FEATURES

THE SHOP PROFILE

ACCURATE AUTO CARSTAR, HY-TECH CARSTAR
JAMES E. GUYETTE / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

24 Innovation-oriented shops in Illinois are attracting word-of-mouth referrals.



THE PROFIT MOTIVE

TECHNOLOGY EQUALS OPPORTUNITY
TOM MCGEE/ CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

22 Today's cars are different than past models, with new technology and features, and should be treated as such.

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COVER FEATURE

WORKING WITH ALUMINUM

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TECHNICAL TRAINING

BY GEOFF PRESTON | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Demand for aluminum repair has increased rapidly in recent years and will continue to do so. Is your shop ready to capitalize on this market?

TECHNICAL TRAINING

MECHANICS OF MASKING

BY AL THOMAS | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

30 This seemingly simple area of takes time, skill and know how.



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FROM ABRN CONTRIBUTING EDITOR AL THOMAS.
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60 The Extra spray booth from Blowtherm USA features direct drive twin turbo fans, inverted direct fired burner, post and burner filtration and parts hangers.

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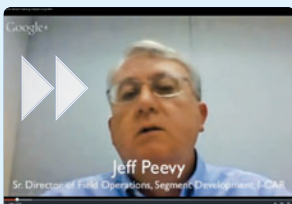
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ABRN HOW2 VIDEO GALLERY



AUGUST'S FEATURED VIDEO
I-CAR'S JEFF PEEVY ON TRAINING ROI IN THE SHOP

[URL ABRN.COM/TRAININGROI]

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

COLLISION FRONT-END damage estimate exercise

Larry Montanez, P&L Consultants, takes us through a hands-on exercise with a 2013 Mercedes after a low-speed front end impact. We use OEM repair guidelines and the AudaExplore Repair Guide to Estimating for repair requirements.

[URL ABRN.COM/FRONTENDESTIMATE]



BLOG SPOTLIGHT

THE BOTTOM line is the bottom line, and if you are not doing the things necessary to assure that you are profitable, you are working very hard to get nowhere. Perform an internal audit to determine where your profit model is taking you.

[URL ABRN.COM/PROFITMODEL]

TONY MOLLA, vice president of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, explains how to use ASE certification to boost business and get a real return on investment.

[URL ABRN.COM/ASETOOL]

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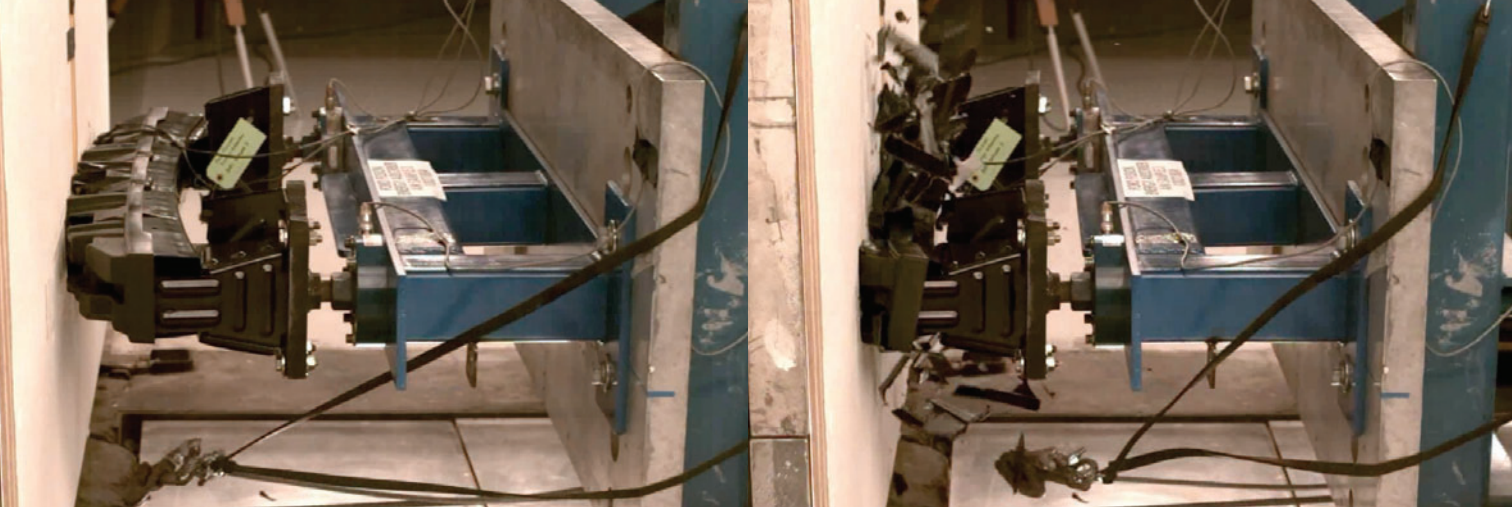


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ONLINE COVERAGE

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NSF'S FRAYER EARNS ASQ LEADER AWARD

The American Society for Quality named Bob Frayer of NSF International as the recipient of the Quality Leader of the Year award.

»» ABRN.COM/FRAYER

SEMA ELECTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The 2014 SEMA Board of Directors has named Greg Adler and Tim Martin as new members.

»» ABRN.COM/ELECTION

AMI CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Automotive Management Institute, a provider of management education for the automotive service and collision repair industries.

»» ABRN.COM/AMI25

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I-CAR has launched an all-new instructor-led course for estimators and appraisers called Documentation and Digital Photography (DOC01).

»» ABRN.COM/DOC01

CREF, 3M NAME HIRE OUR HEROES GRANT WINNERS

The Collision Repair Education Foundation and 3M announced 55 winners of 3M's Hire Our Heroes award.

»» ABRN.COM/HIREHEROES

TOP SHOPS CONTEST OPEN

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MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Judge shops on safety and quality

"As an industry, we throw a lot of stones. You can't judge by whether a shop is part of an MSO or an independent. You can't judge a shop by whether they use aftermarket parts or not. You need to judge by safety and quality," said Mike Anderson, consultant with CollisionAdvice.com at the 2014 CARSTAR National Conference in Puerto Rico, June 21-24.

Safety should always trump data, cycle time, budget and severity, Anderson says. "We should always focus on service, speed and accuracy."

To provide service, keep your customers informed. Communicate and follow up after repairs. Maintain speed by fixing cars fast. But keep in mind that fast does not mean providing poor repairs. Make sure your management operations are effective, as administrative delays impact process speed. Focus on eliminating supplements and meeting your promised delivery date to ensure shop accuracy.

MSOs can leverage their size by tapping into their shops' performance to develop best practices. Use technology to exchange experiences, build a call center and centralize the posting of parts invoicing. Review and audit estimates. Do sales training.

"By working together, you can change the world," Anderson says. "Play to win, not to lose. Second place is just the first loser." Continue reading at ABRN.COM/PR2014.

BREAKING NEWS
ACQUISITIONS
ABRA FOR SALE

ABRA Auto Body & Glass is up for auction by the private-equity firm that owns it, the *Wall Street Journal* has reported.

Having acquired ABRA in 2011, Palladium Equity Partners has now hired an investment bank to sell the MSO, which operates 229 stores in 18 states. Sources familiar to the matter say Palladium could get more than \$500 million in the sale, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

ABRA has acquired 100 shops since year-end 2012.

ABRA's most recent acquisitions include 12 True Quality Collision Centers shops in Ohio and Indiana; 13 shops from Wilburn Auto Body in Charlotte, NC; and 24 Collision Centers of America locations in Chicago and northwest Indiana.

ABRA plans to continue expanding in the months ahead as part of its aggressive growth strategy.

Photos: CARSTAR



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COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY Stats & Trends

Shops that embrace a **learning culture** increased revenue by **\$36** for every **\$1** spent on training, according to the findings of a recent I-CAR study on training ROI.



Recruit new talent by first paying technicians fairly

The people keeping the industry afloat are drowning under poor wages.

BY LARRY SILVEY | ABRN BLOGGER

I've heard countless times how important technicians are to the automotive aftermarket. From manufacturers. From distributors. From auto parts retailers. From the industry associations. From the shop owners themselves.

Yet we're only willing to pay them a measly \$36,000 per year on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Let's think about that for a second in terms of the real world. I don't think it outlandish to think a technician would be married and have a couple kids — you know, a family of four. If we take that scenario, the poverty guideline for that family is \$23,550, which means the average tech makes \$12,450 more than someone caught on the poverty line. At such a minimum level, it's clear that this difference is not discretionary income; rather, it's survival income. There's always the possibil-

ity that technicians can pass on marriage or get a divorce if they are married. In either case, \$36K just might cut it for a bachelor living in his parents' basement in Small Town, USA.



At \$36K, you might think I'm talking about the Tire Busters or the Oil & Lube Jockeys. Well, that's another abysmal story that I'll save for another day. I'm talking about those we as an industry want to flaunt as professionals. They are technicians, not mechanics! Those who actually diagnose and repair vehicles. Those who have the intellect and skills of an engineer, but have chosen to work on cars. Those who have the expertise to take a car apart and put it back together and not have a part left over. Trained, skilled and certified. In fact, they are in continual training staying

Continues on page 12

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

Parts profits and shop viability

BRIAN CANNING

Parts sales always follow labor sales, but if you are undercharging and discounting and forgetting to charge for shop supplies, you are having the same negative impact on your bottom line as having a technician who is not productive or an effective labor rate that is significantly below your floor rate. You will not generate the gross profit dollars your shop needs to survive and you will continue to work very hard for a very low return on your investment in time and money. Why would you do that?

Acknowledging that the ability of most shops to be profitable on the labor side is much more complicated than the parts side, I would suggest that parts profits

are just as often overlooked and are having a similar negative impact on our bottom line.

The sad and unfortunate truth here is that solutions are generally easy, doable and ignored. In a common automotive business model, parts sales would represent somewhere between 45 percent and 55 percent of total sales, and with similar expectations for gross profit dollars, parts represent a profit opportunity that is too often unfulfilled, that too often falls short of our reasonable expectations.

Unlike the labor side of our operation, which is affected in many ways, parts profit solutions are generally easy to implement and administer; it is quite simply deciding on an expected return or margin, and applying a multiplier

or formula to deliver that number. Reality would suggest that although the math works flawlessly, we humans are entirely capable of derailing even the best plans and procedures. We consistently miss our gross profit goals on parts.

In setting a benchmark on parts margin for a typical shop, I would reasonably expect a return of around 60 percent. It is not that most shops achieve this number, but as an important first step I would at least be aiming there.

To get there, we have to first understand what gross profit is. Quite simply, gross profit is sales less cost of goods. Unlike the labor side of the equation, which is complicated by tech wages (cost of labor), gross profit is quite simply sales less whatever the parts cost.

If I have a part that costs me \$60, wanting to generate a 60 percent gross profit margin, I multiply cost by 2.5 or 250 percent, or in other words I sell the part for \$150. Working the formula, I would take that \$150 sale price, subtract out that \$60 as cost of goods and arrive at \$90 in gross profit and a gross profit margin of 60 percent ($\$150 - \$60 = \$90$ gross profit or a 60 percent gross profit margin). Confused yet?

Setting a selling price may seem a simple matter of multiplying our parts acquisition cost by 2.5, but try that on a more costly part, and you won't like your customer's reaction. Continue reading at ABRN.com/PartsProfits.



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THE SHOP OWNER

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Growing our own talent

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THE PROFIT MOTIVE

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MIKE ANDERSON

Memory savers not endorsed

Recruit new talent - Continued from page 10

abreast of new technologies ranging from sophisticated powertrains to infotainment systems. Old school mechanical aptitude helps, but today's vehicles require nothing short of electronic wizardry.

Of course, the paltry \$36K is an average. Some technicians do much better than that. But before you start panting with excitement, only 10 percent of the technicians make more

than \$60,000 but then there's the downside — at least 10 percent is making much less than the \$36K. Not that techs should think they're going to get rich working on cars, but something is really out of whack when you think that these are literally the people who are responsible for keeping this industry afloat.

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Noteworthy **READER FEEDBACK TO ONLINE DISCUSSIONS**

Herman Mata, CEO at Worldwide Auto Repair says: "I am thinking about investing in a social media course to help me attract more customers to my shop. Has anyone done such a thing?"

Frank Terlep: Social media can be a great marketing, branding and customer service tool. We also recommend email, text, mobile apps and your website.

Jason Hawkins, senior rep, ATI Superstar: Social media is good for branding and contests, and you should be informed; however, it will rarely sell you a job. Texting is actually the wave of the next year to fit in the ritual of estimating all the way through follow ups and reminders. Not only are people shying away from social media because they're bombarded with it, the social media companies filter out all but 4 percent of your posts unless you pay for it. Your relevance needs to be focused on the Google Plus page and your website being mobile.

Ron Perretta, Professionals Auto Body, Inc.: I run collision and mechanical facilities. I've been marketing and advertising for 32 of the 35 years and

social media strong for the last 10 years. I'd never tell anyone to use social media to attract a sale or a person to your front door. What was your plan to get people to know about your business and to use your social media sites, open a text, email or read material from you? I get annoyed when businesses text me, email me or send me things when I don't have any connection to them, particularly a service business.

Josh White, owner, Priola Body Shop, Inc.: Twitter, Vine, Instagram, Facebook, etc. won't bring enough to be worth the effort to set it up and maintain. Folks out there are hustling it, though. I just talked to a fellow owner who paid \$20,000 to have all the major social sites set up. Don't be that guy. Focus on Google, Yelp and consider Groupons if you can do it in a way to get people in the door without losing money.

Steve Bermann, online lead generation expert: When a potential customer is looking for body repair, are they going to look on Facebook? Twitter? I think not. It's usually a Google search. What impact would your business have if your lead could find you on the top of a Google search?

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PAINT STORE IN A PARTS STORE



Q+A WITH DAVID BYERS

CEO, CARSTAR

BYERS SAT DOWN WITH *ABRN* DURING THE CARSTAR NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN PUERTO RICO, WHERE THE MSO CELEBRATED 25 YEARS IN BUSINESS

BY KRISTA MCNAMARA | MANAGING EDITOR



ABRN: As CARSTAR celebrates 25 years, what are some of the keys to success that you'll take to the future?

DB: The whole company was founded on the concept of training, education and helping our people be more successful. That is really the concept that Lirel Holt, the founder of CARSTAR, set out to do. It is critically important that we carry that mantra forward and continue to help our people be some of the best educated, best certified, best prepared people in the industry.

ABRN: Training needs are continuously changing. How do you keep your shops up to speed?

DB: We have a proprietary training system called The EDGE Performance platform. It has multiple tiers, a ton of content and sequencing where we take our stores through each of the tiers. They are sequenced in such a way that they work together more effectively. And at the end of each of those tiers, we have certification for our stores. This process ensures that we get all of our training fully executed and implemented throughout the network. It includes technical training, financial training, operations training, process training. The entire CARSTAR process is

baked into that system. The EDGE platform is continuously evolving. Since Dean Fisher's arrival last year as Vice President of Field Services, we have put an intense effort on upgrading and expanding it, providing significantly more content and providing certification for the various levels, ensuring that our stores comply with getting through the tiers on the appropriate timeframes. It's 1,000 percent more robust than it had been in prior years.

ABRN: How is CARSTAR preparing its shops for aluminum?

DB: We are the only MSO that does aluminum certification today, and we've been at this for several years. This is something we are accustomed to, and that gives us a leg up in how we then prepare the rest of our network for these changes.

ABRN: CARSTAR focuses on the 3Cs — closing ratio, cycle time and CSI. Why are these the three key elements?

DB: We believe that almost everything else derives from one of those things. For us, closing ratio is incredibly important because it is people who are already coming to your door. So the ability to have a higher closing ratio is money in the pockets of our owners.

Cycle time is really everything. You can talk about days of rental, touch time, but cycle time is what we are measuring that will drive our ability to get additional work and drive down costs. CSI, or NPS as we look at it, is the single best way to measure overall customer satisfaction in most industries I can think of, not just collision repair. And at the end of the day, we are a customer service business and understanding how we are performing against customer expectations is the only way for us to know how to improve our business over time.

ABRN: What are some of the ways you help to foster a positive relationship with your insurer partners?

DB: We do have a deep relationship with the carriers, and it's one where we can help them and they can help us, so it's mutually beneficial. We are very clear with perspective franchisees that this partnership is important to us, and we purposely don't look for candidates for the network who are anti-insurance. We don't think that is productive; we don't think that is the future. We have embraced a different path of cooperation, which we believe is why we continue to be the largest MSO in the category. ☺





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Growing our own talent

Successful internship program gives students a fast-track intro to our profession

The industry's shortage of collision repair technicians is cause for great concern. Talking about this major issue is one thing, but creating an internship program within our shops is how we feel we create a career path for future technicians and cultivate new talent within our company.

Earlier this year, two students became the first to complete a nine-month unpaid internship with our company – something we are calling the “Collision Repair Opportunity Program” (CROP) – and now both have full pay and benefits as productive employees with us. Because of the success of this pilot program, we’re expanding it to include more students at more of our locations.

CROP grew out of a strategic planning session we had in 2012 when cultivating talent was among the issues we saw facing not just our business, but the collision repair industry as a whole. Once we created a basic framework for CROP, Max Sorensen, who manages one of our locations, took the lead and did a lot of the legwork on the project, working with our marketing director Craig Comacho to get the word out to the vocational and technical high schools in our area.

Here's how it works: Graduating high school seniors apply for the internships through our website, just as if they were applying for a regular position with our company. We then select interns using a basic aptitude test and a three-interview screening process. Our employee who will be serving as that student's mentor during the program participates in the third interview to help us ensure the two will be a good fit.

The chosen students then begin a nine-month internship working with the mentor in either our body or paint department. We provide them with a starter set of tools,

as well as a workbook that spells out the curriculum.

At the end of the first three-month “term,” the intern must complete both a written and hands-on test. Upon successful completion of the testing, they can move on to the second and third three-month terms of the internship.

We piloted the program at just one of our locations the first year and were very satisfied with the results. Our first intern, Oscar Cantoran Corona, completed the program this past March, under the mentorship of that location's head painter, Nate Tarr. Oscar is now working in our paint department, has zero student debt, and gets to keep the tools (valued at about \$1,500) that we provided at the start of the program.

We had one student who, five weeks into the program, decided body work was not the career he wished to pursue. Although not an ideal outcome, we felt good that he gained some work experience and was able to move on to another profession before he invested years and thousands of dollars pursuing collision repair training.

In May, our second CROP intern, Cesar Serrano, completed the program under the mentorship of body technician John Pinkitti. Cesar has moved into a blueprinting role within our company.

As I said, we're now expanding CROP with interns at three of our other locations as well. One key: It's imperative to have very qualified instructors as mentors. They need to be not only quality technicians, but also able to continually narrate for the intern what they are doing and why.

We held a meeting this past spring to explain the program to other potential mentors within our company, noting that it isn't just “free help” for them, but nor will it hinder their productivity. It ends up really being a wash; the boost to the mentor's production provided by the intern is essentially offset by the time the mentor spends helping the intern learn.

But there are other benefits, the mentors say, in the form of satisfaction of helping another person learn the profession and of building a legacy for the talent and career they've developed.

And for us, we see CROP as a key part of our strategy to grow the talent we'll need as our business continues to grow. 📶

“THE CHOSEN STUDENTS BEGIN A NINE-MONTH INTERNSHIP WORKING WITH A MENTOR IN EITHER OUR BODY OR PAINT DEPARTMENT.”

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OUTMANEUVER CONSOLIDATION

SHOPS CAN PROTECT THEIR BUSINESS WITH STELLAR SERVICE, APPEARANCE AND OPERATIONS

BY KEVIN MEHOK | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

AS AN “old timer” in this industry, I started working for an independent body shop. That’s all there was. I had never even heard the word consolidator. But time passed, and I found myself in the thick of the consolidation movement.

For many years, I worked for large groups, helping them grow and expand. As a whole, the industry benefited from this movement and the infusion of knowledge and business acumen it brought. Then I opened my own shop.

My feelings started to change as I began to try to grow my company. My experience helped me overcome some obstacles that confront small shop owners, as the consolidators began to open more shops around us. But I could see that many of these once prospering shops were beginning to languish.

Let me be clear — I understand that sometimes evolution for

good creates casualties. Shop owners who refused to change for the better suffered because of this. You have to be willing to change and adapt in order to maintain your position. Today, the landscape is changing daily, with bigger companies gobbling up smaller MSOs one after the other, until it seems like no independents will be left when the dust settles.

Don’t believe it. There will always be a place for well-run, professional shops in any environment. So how do you battle the approach of the consolidators? There are several simple things that you can do to not only survive this onslaught, but thrive in it.

The quality difference

There is one simple answer to fighting back against consolidation: be better than consolidators are at everything. Do a bet-



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WIDE DRIVE-THRU

ter quality repair, treat your customers with more respect and run your shops with efficiency. I ran a lot of shops as a manager for MSOs. I worked hard and did a good job. I can tell you, however, as the owner, I work even harder. Remember that as the consolidators grow, they have to staff their facilities. One area that is very difficult for them is to make sure the proper people are hired in the proper positions. Often, people who aren't a good fit in management can occupy that position. This creates a weakness that helps independents, if they are properly managed to be better.

I have mentioned in previous articles that you have to step back and look at your shop and see it as a prospective customer would. What sets your shop apart from the many that surround you? If the answer is nothing, then you are in trouble. When a prospective customer walks into your shop, how do they feel? Is the shop office neat, clean and efficient looking, or is it filthy, looking like an afterthought thrown together just to have a place to write estimates? Today's customers are pretty savvy and generally own a car that is more expensive than in days past. Does the look and feel of your shop evoke professionalism, trust and quality? Really look. Chances are, it does not.

I understand that it is expensive to remodel. It doesn't cost much, however, to repaint and neaten things up. Clean up waiting areas, throw away old furniture and maybe buy some nicer stuff at auctions or flea markets. Get creative. Have you ever seen one of those home makeover shows on TV where they transform a room with some elbow grease, a few gallons of paint and a huge dumpster? It's really possible to do if you apply yourself. Create an atmosphere conducive to capturing the jobs that come into your door. A clean, professional office often will sell the job before you even write one line of the estimate.

Treat your customers like gold because they are. Never let them know you are frustrated when they walk in the door five minutes before you are closing. Take care of them better than anyone else around you. Work to gain a reputation in your area that you are, without a doubt, the most customer-conscious shop in your town or market. If this word spreads, and it will, when

customers get into a situation that requires your service, they won't go where they are directed; they will come to you, because every one wants to be treated that way. This doesn't cost a thing, and anyone can do it.

Tighten up the repair quality in your shop. Tomorrow, pull one car out of your completed lineup and go over it with a fine-tooth comb. If you find it has flaws, and you will, don't allow it to be delivered, even if it's late. It shouldn't be deemed completed if it has flaws, but it does happen more than you would think. I look at every single car that is done in the shop. I don't always see everything, but generally I can catch a few things that were overlooked that need some attention. Make time to do this — little details are really important. I always am amazed that my professional staff and I, who all have so much car knowledge, can look at a finished vehicle and not find a flaw. Yet when the customer arrives, who isn't a car expert, they look at it for 10 seconds and are pointing out issues. This should never happen, and you have to work daily to prevent it. Remember, quality is everyone's job, and it can't just be corrected at the end of the repair. Quality has to be maintained throughout the repair process, so that when it comes to final inspection, everything is done better than your expectations.

Look at your equipment. Does it need a little sprucing? If it does, take a weekend and do it. A clean, well-equipped shop will go a long way to helping capture a job. When a prospective customer looks into your shop, do they see a modern, maintained facility? Is it cluttered, littered with parts and dirty? It is common sense, but that image does not invoke trust. Again, keeping the shop clean and neat costs very little, but can net a lot.

Think about Wal-Mart, which attracts droves of customers. I go there every week; it's a great place. Considering all that they carry, Wal-Mart could have gobbled up many specialty stores around them (like the consolidators). And yet, there are numerous other stores that we go to. We enjoy the personal treatment and are even willing to pay more for the same item we could have bought at Wal-Mart — for less. Use this same philosophy for your customers.

Evaluate operations

Every MSO uses a best practices shop operation process across all areas to maintain consistent results. This is a must in any sized shop, independent or consolidator. If you don't operate with specific processes throughout your operation, you need to start. You absolutely have to standardize your operation from the office, through the repair, until delivery and post-repair follow up. I know that every group works hard on this issue, so you need to work harder! Get your place humming and operating like a well-oiled machine. A smaller company can have the advantage here with owners at the helm to really stand vigilant that the process you put into place is followed on every repair. Following up on this is the most important part. Anyone can develop a process, but staying true to it is the challenge.

Monitor your market and ask questions when adjusters come into your shop. Find out who is busy, and why. If anyone asks how you are doing, tell them "great!" Psychologically, this is a huge weapon. If prospective customers hear you are busy, they will want to come to you!

Insurance impacts

Be relentless in your attempt to land new insurance contracts. Even when you are told by an insurance company that they don't need another DRP, keep trying. You may just inquire at the right time, when one of the big guys has failed monumentally, and you will get a chance. When you get it, run with it. Believe that no other shop out there, no matter who they are, is as good as you. Keep doing these things and you won't only survive, you will thrive. ■



Kevin M. Mehok is CEO of CrashCo Collision Centers, a division of Auto Care Collision Group, Inc. In his more than 30 years of experience in the collision industry, he has worked with CarCare Collision Centers and Collision Centers of America. He also served in an executive level position with Collision Team of America, Gerber and several other Chicago-area consolidators.

✉ E-mail Kevin at kevinm@crashcollision.com

PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Technology equals opportunity

Today's cars are different than past models and should be treated as such

BY TOM MCGEE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Think about your first cell phone and all the really cool functions that it had. My first cell phone was a “bag phone.” As for cool functions, well, it made phone calls. There were no apps, Internet, videos or music. It was just a phone.

Just like cell phones, cars have added technology over the last several years. While there have been tremendous advancements, I couldn't tell you how many times I've heard: “I've been doing this for more than 30 years, and I know how to perform the repairs.” Or, “They are still cars and nothing is really changing on them.”

We have highly qualified individuals working in the collision industry. However, vehicle manufacturing and construction methods, accessories and safety systems have made it virtually impossible for anyone to remember everything about how to repair every vehicle they encounter.

It's not a '65 Mustang anymore

Several years ago, I did research to see what has changed over the years. I looked at the 1965 Mustang. The options on the Mustang were power steering and brakes; manual front disc brakes (V-8); deluxe retractable front seat belts; rear seat belts; padded visors; heavy-duty battery; radio and antenna; vinyl roof; tinted glass with banded windshield; and air conditioning.

What I didn't find on the 1965 model were advanced high strength steels; aluminum; composite plastics; carbon fiber; anti-lock brakes; stability control; multiple

airbags; collision avoidance systems; lane departure warning systems; or blind spot detection systems. Today's cars aren't the same as the 1965 Mustang, or even a car made five years ago.

Importance of documentation

Documented repair procedures have multiple positive impacts. First, a detailed repair plan helps us better determine actual repair costs. Second, if we itemize out what needs to be done while creating the repair plan, we become more efficient in our parts ordering process. Third, it improves our key performance indicators (KPIs). By reducing delays in the repair process, we also have a greater chance of reducing cycle time, improving touch time and delivering the vehicle on the date promised.

Negotiations

Having documentation can aid the shop in any negotiations that take place with an insurance company. Just like the shop's staff, the insurance companies' staffs have the same difficulty in knowing exactly what needs to be done to every vehicle they encounter. Documentation that helps in successful negotiations can be the OEM repair procedure and inquiry responses

from the Database Enhancement Gateway (DEG), which can be found at www.degweb.org. Having documentation can help bridge the knowledge gap and create a level playing field that allows the right repair decisions to be made at the beginning of the repair process.

Documentation packet

For many years, we didn't see the need for documenting what we did in the repair process. To help manage the change that needs to be made, start with small changes and expand over time. With the need to have supporting documentation today, I suggest that the initial documentation packet be created while the repair plan is generated. Store a set of the documents as .pdf files on the server with your digital photos of the vehicle and print a hard copy for the technicians to work from. This should be incorporated into your standard operating procedures. Once your staff is efficient at developing the initial set of documentation, expand it to include one or two more areas.

Technology is an opportunity

Look at technology as an opportunity. As new technologies are introduced, we can increase sales and profits and market our services to specific groups. We have created a list of seven technology-related items for you to consider when creating a documentation packet for the vehicles you repair. Try it free for a limited time by going to www.ationlinetraining.com/abrn1408. It also makes a great tool for training your staff on how the work they do makes a difference to the business. ☛

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SHOP PROFILE

A snapshot of one of the industry's leading shops

ACCURATE AUTO CARSTAR, HY-TECH CARSTAR



Innovation leaders

Illinois shops attracting word-of-mouth referrals

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

A longtime pattern of embracing measured change in manageable increments is hitting the mark at Chicagoland's Accurate Auto and Hy-Tech CARSTAR locations.

"We are committed to having the latest technology, innovative repair processes and best-trained technicians to provide the best auto body repair available. The employees are dedicated to customer satisfaction as well as industry training and ongoing education," explains owner Joe Maslanka.

"We provide outstanding care for our customers and their vehicles before, during and after the collision repair process. We live by CARSTAR's trademark phrase, 'Relax... We'll take it from here.'"

Having previously served as an I-CAR district chairman, Maslanka is also a board officer on the Chicago region's 15-shop CARSTAR Business Group, which last year achieved the top national honors from the franchisor's corporate headquarters.

"One of the biggest advantages is being involved with other owners," Maslanka says of his decision to sign on with CARSTAR shortly after the organization was established. "I became a businessman and not just a self-employed collision tech. I was looking for mentoring and this helped me immensely. The fact that I've been with them for 24 years speaks for itself."

With the assistance of a partner, Maslanka established Accurate in 1975 at age 20 after taking auto body repair classes at Lane Technical High School and studying business at Wright Junior College.

"When I opened my first shop it was a small location so I didn't need a lot of work to keep me busy. I initially repaired the cars of friends and family and eventually developed a good reputation. Little by little my business grew, allowing me to buy out my partner and move to a better location," Maslanka recalls.

"I have (had) some of the same customers since 1975. They're still coming back to me and sending their friends and family after all these years, and that's the best advertisement you can have.

"Our customer philosophy is to give the customer what they ask for and more by providing a quality repair with a completed repair check on each delivered vehicle that leaves the shop," he adds. "This ensures that the vehicles are repaired correctly and all the bells and whistles are checked."

A second location in Elgin, Ill., opened in 1994 when Maslanka purchased an

AT A GLANCE

**Accurate Auto CARSTAR,
Hy-Tech CARSTAR**

Name of shops

Chicago

Headquarters location

Joe Maslanka

Owner

2

Number of shops

39

Years in business

47

Number of employees

15

Number of DRPs

3 days

Average cycle time

\$1,980

Average repair ticket

52

Average vehicles per week

\$5 million

Annual gross revenue

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existing facility in need of some serious upgrades.

"Within two months, I began making changes, and little by little I got the awesome shop that I have now," he says. "I hired a progressive architect, and with the help of my production manager Butch Lenart, we created the best laid-out shop we could imagine."

The 8,450-square-foot endeavor with 22 bays netted a nomination as Elgin's best structural rehabilitation project. Lenart started working with Maslanka at the Chicago shop, and he remains a valued company leader 30 years later. "He was a great fit to manage Hy-Tech. If we identify something to do, it gets done."

Don Maslanka, Joe's brother, manages

Chicago's Accurate Auto, encompassing 17 bays in 7,500 square feet of space. "Don is all over these guys to get the right part and provide the best customer service."

As the owner, Joe Maslanka is a big believer in management by walking around, he reports. "The most important person working with me is my wife Julie," Maslanka asserts. "She gave up her career in nursing to help me market my business. She has done an outstanding job with relationships with the insurance community, she takes care of all the loose ends and gets to the little things that I cannot accomplish in my busy work day." Julie also sits on the CARSTAR Business Group insurance committee.

"It's so important in this industry to have good, conscientious employees that you can trust to be there for your customers year after year," Maslanka emphasizes, stressing that he does not consider his staff to be mere employees. They are all integral to company success and held in high esteem, complete with boating excursions on Lake Michigan, house parties, pig roasts and other affirming activities. Free lunches occasionally are provided during the work day to further encourage company camaraderie. "I retain my employees by being supportive of their needs, providing training and paying them well," he says.

Making an impression

"I use many different approaches to recruit good employees," says Maslanka. "I think I have a keen sense in what kind of employee will work out best for my shop. I have been known to hire people even if I don't have an opening at the time if they impress me."

Recruits are oriented by taking the CARSTAR University online program to learn the repair and management systems. "By making the new employee comfortable in his or her job they will undoubtedly turn out to be a good and responsible employee," Maslanka points out. "We make them aware initially of what is expected. We believe that a good orientation is the best tool for keeping an employee, and many of them have been with me for more than 10 years.

"The biggest changes we face on a daily basis is keeping our technicians trained in all the new processes and having enough office staff to meet the demands of the insurance companies and customers."



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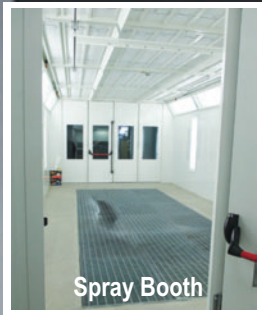
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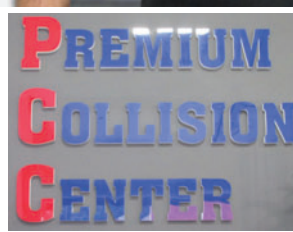


“In a fast-paced production shop, your spray booth could make or break you. Our Air Speed system gives us shorter curing times and shorter flash-off times between coats, which increases productivity,” explains Jack Balyan.

Mr. Balyan continues, “After careful examination of all of the top quality spray booths available, Blowtherm-USA was second to none. It’s the fine details of this booth that leaves the competition in the dust.”

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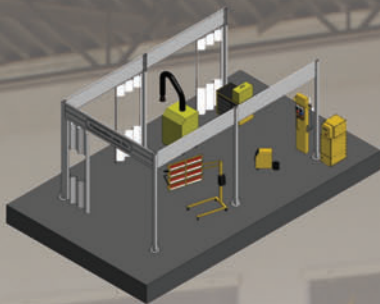


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Change is a constant, and embraces all of the operational aspects. At Accurate Auto, for example, “office manager Maggie Czubeck speaks fluent Polish and is our line of communication with our Polish-speaking clients. This neighborhood has evolved, though, and we try to cover all the bases.” Hence George Flores, the parts manager, is fluent in Spanish to better serve a shifting demographic. “Maggie speaks Polish, George speaks Spanish and I, um, speak English,” quips Maslanka, displaying a robust sense of humor that is part of the company’s culture.

In discussing the reaction to the company’s conversion to waterborne paint, Maslanka remarks, “You can’t print that!” He goes on to recount that “outside of some resistance from the staff, it went pretty well.” Personnel from BASF assisted with the switchover as management set the tone that this type of change was inevitable. “When you commit to something you do it,” Maslanka declares. “It’s the finish of the future.”

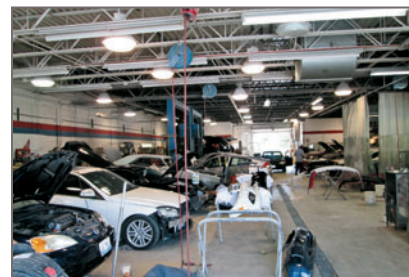
In addition to being amendable to the shifting strategies and standards that emerge through the nationwide CARSTAR systems, Maslanka describes the challenges brought about by dealing with insurance companies. “The way work arrives at your door has changed. Insurance companies have really been controlling it. Traditional marketing has lost its affects.”

With 15 direct repair program (DRP) affiliations, “the game has changed considerably,” he says. “If you score well, you get a lot of work.” Maintaining the shop’s Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) of 95 percent requires constant diligence, as does addressing cycle time issues and negotiating with the carriers.

“We always maintain honesty and integrity at all costs to continue our good relationships with our insurance partners, and we expect them to do the same in return,” says Maslanka, noting that a firm stance comes with the territory. “We stick to our guns. When we have an estimate we stand by our times; once you establish that stand and rapport you’re pretty well respected and established.”

Standing out

Several marketing campaigns have been implemented over the years. Newspaper advertisements, radio spots and cable television commercials have met with varying degrees of success. “It’s difficult to



stand out or make an impression in a market as large as Chicago, and it’s very expensive also. We were involved in our ad campaign with CARSTAR, and in spite of a huge spend, it made very little impact on sales.”

What has worked well is word-of-mouth. “We make sure all of our existing customers are satisfied and ask them to refer family and friends. We have a ‘Refer a Friend’ program going on in which if a customer refers a friend they each receive a gift card. We also ask the customers to write either a Google review or Yelp review. We also pursue fleet accounts such as glass companies, lock smiths, mechanical contractors, etc.”



JAMES E. GUYETTE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

James E. Guyette is a long-time contributing editor to ABRN, Aftermarket Business World and Motor Age magazines.

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7



MECHANICS OF MASKING

THE SEEMINGLY SIMPLE AREA OF PAINT AND REFINISH TAKES TIME, SKILL AND KNOW-HOW

BY **ALFRED THOMAS** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Automotive refinishing masking appears deceptively simple. It is one of the job duties many entry-level workers start with in the paint department, but it is not as simple as it appears. On the surface, you are covering the areas of the vehicle that will not be painted and opening the areas that will receive refinishing. Simple, right? Except that since each paint job is significantly different from the previous, a detailed plan must be made every time. With masking, you must be thorough, pay great attention to detail and work fast. The better the mask job, the cleaner the finished product will be. Another challenge is the vast array of masking materials to choose from, each with its own specific task. Finally, I am always amazed at the innovative ways workers come up with to use old materials. So let's investigate the details of this job.

Inspection

Masking starts with the vehicle inspection. Before the department starts work on a new job, those involved should read the work order and understand what the estimator

has designated for the repair. It is best to go over the work order with the shop foreman, confirming that all work ordered has been done and completed to company standards. Starting a paint job only to find there is still work that must be completed will cost both time and profit.

Determine which panels need to be blended. It takes at least 12 inches of blend room before the next panel. If there is less, the next panel should also be blended.

Also check that the repair area is ready for paint. Is the repair flat and straight? Are all body lines correct? Do all the newly installed parts fit properly? Has the vehicle been de-trimmed as needed?

Check that the non-repaired panels to be blended are free of dirt, debris, chips and scratches. If there are defects in a non-repaired area, it may be necessary to call the customer and offer the opportunity to repair them before the blend.

The obvious question is, "Are all vehicles blended?" This is hotly debated — some believe today's very complex paint colors with metallics, multi-stages and pearls make it nearly impossible to match a panel's paint colors without blending.



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Others believe some colors can and should be panel painted, which saves time and material. Many shops believe all vehicles should be blended, as it makes more money and has less repaints in the long run.

Remove parts vs. mask

Though most of the trim removal is often done in the body shop, it still may be necessary for the painter to take some things off and properly store it. So when do you take trim off, and when do you mask? It may be best to mask a part when it can be masked properly. However, if the part can be taken off in less time than it takes to mask it off, it should be removed. Most vehicles today have molding and parts that fit so close to the car's surface that masking is often impractical.

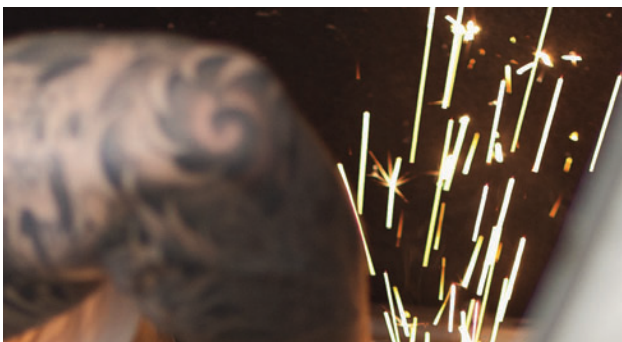
When a part is removed, it must be bagged and tagged. It is also best to store each vehicle's parts on a dedicated rack for ease of reinstallation.



Masking materials

Tape. In the past, there was only beige automotive masking tape. It came in 2-inch, 3/4-inch, 1/4-inch and 1/8-inch widths. We used these for all taping

on the vehicle. Now we have more tape to choose from. We still have beige tape. We have blue or green tape that goes directly on the vehicle; it is thinner than the beige, but not affected



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by water or heat from the baking process. There is also blue plastic tape, which can be stretched around tight corners. Lift tape has a hard edge that is placed under objects and then pulled tight, lifting moldings up a bit so paint can migrate underneath and not leave a hard line.

Paper. We have a vast selection of paper types and widths to choose from: some very thick and protective, others with a special film to prevent color or clear from bleeding, and still others like the general masking paper. Masking paper comes in a variety of sizes including 6, 12, 18 and 36 inches. Masking machines also come in different varieties. A popular one is called the tree, and it dispenses three or four sizes of paper. The machine dispenses both paper and tape together; the tape is half on the paper and the other half off, so it can be applied with ease to the vehicle.

Liquid mask. Though not all shops use this, it is gaining popularity. It is a liquid sprayed on the area to be protected

(FIG 1). When the painting is completed, it is washed off.

Aperture tape. This soft foam tape has an adhesive on one side and fills body openings such as between the fender and door.

Plastic covers (bagging). Some painters will apply a 12-inch masking paper to the vehicle close to the painted area, and then cover the remainder of the vehicle with special plastic film (FIG 2). Others do not use any masking paper and use the bagging film completely, only opening the area to be painted.


Masking

Back masking. In this technique, wide tape such as 1½- or 2-inch is placed halfway, and paper is applied to the tape that is sticking up. Alternately, in some cases, bagging film is stuck to the exposed tape, protecting the opening (FIG 3).

Reverse masking. This is done by placing masking paper on in the opposite direction, then folding it backward, causing a slight roll in the paper edge to avoid a "hard line" (FIG 4), which occurs when paint covers the masking, leaving a hard, raised area (FIG 5).

Masking for blending. When masking for a blend, the area left open will receive the base coat (FIG 6). The area that will be clear coated, in this case the roof and complete ¼ panel, is also left open. After the base coat is applied (FIG 7), the entire open area is cleaned, and then clearcoat is applied (FIG 8).

Masking removal. There are two schools of thought: the first is that it should be removed as soon as possible after it is cured. The second theory is that the masking should not be removed until the vehicle has been detailed so the clean-up will be faster. The wise choice would depend on how much detailing is required. Removal of polishing compound can be difficult, but you do not want the masking paper to remain on the vehicle for an extended period of time.

Masking is no simple job. To do it properly and efficiently takes considerable practice and skill. New workers may be put on as painters' helpers may be to see how much potential they have to become a painter. If you can master masking, you may have a future in the paint shop. 



Alfred Thomas is associate professor and department head of Collision Repair at Pennsylvania College of Technology. He spent 15 years in the collision industry as a technician and shop manager.

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BY **GEOFF PRESTON** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Vehicle manufacturers are producing more models with aluminum every day; therefore, demand for aluminum repair has increased rapidly in recent years and will continue to do so. Already 30 percent of all the hoods and over 20 percent of the bumper beams are aluminum. Body, bumper and closure parts account for 58 percent of the aluminum content growth from 2009 to 2012. Shops eager to capitalize on this market need to do two things: learn how to work with aluminum and re-equip their shops with tools specific to this type of repair.

Reasons for usage

OEMs are using lightweight materials, like aluminum, to improve fuel economy — better mileage, smaller engines moving less mass and greater acceleration. Government initiatives accelerated the weight loss of production vehi-

cles by mandating the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards of 54.5 mpg by 2025. Companies realize it makes economic sense to utilize this abundant, recyclable resource that makes up about 8 percent of the earth's crust. The top selling pickup in history, the Ford F-150, has been redesigned and will feature aluminum in its build materials in 2015.

Things to know

Aluminum behaves differently than steel. Change the shape of a steel part; it remembers the form it used to be. The opposite is true with aluminum. Once it is reshaped, it forgets its original form and will take on a new shape.

It is a work hardened material. When aluminum is stamped into shape, it becomes stronger. After the panel is bent in a collision, it becomes stronger still. Flex it too much

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and it breaks or cracks. To repair and pull the damaged area, the panel must be heated to 350°F to allow the metal to soften. The heated panel can be pulled, during which time the material is being work hardened to set the new memory.

Aluminum dissipates heat very quickly, but can become permanently changed if heated past approximately 450°F. A thin coating of aluminum oxide forms after being exposed to the air in as little as 15 minutes. This oxidation has a much higher melting tem-

perature than the original aluminum material and a stud will not fuse correctly to the panel. Aluminum's melting point is 1,200°F and aluminum oxide is 3,600°F. The oxide can be removed using a stainless steel brush.

Galvanic corrosion will occur when a less "noble" metal like aluminum, comes in contact with a more "noble" metal like steel, in the presence of an electrolyte such as water. The aluminum will corrode around the steel contamination, ruining the finish paint. In order to avoid contamination, a separate set of working tools and separated work area must be maintained. Steel bolts, screws or rivets should not be used when in direct contact with aluminum unless properly coated.

Identification

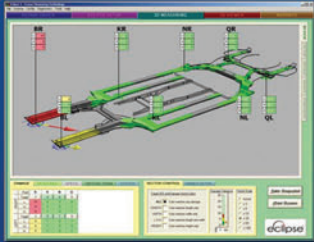

A quick method is to use a magnet; it will not be attracted to an aluminum panel. It is a good idea to refer to the manufacturer literature for series identification of cast and panel pieces. In all cases manufacturer methods and guidelines on whether to repair or replace should be always followed.

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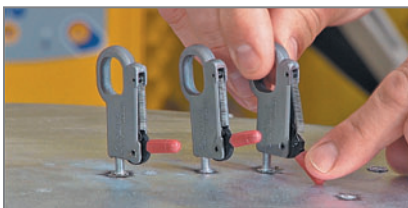



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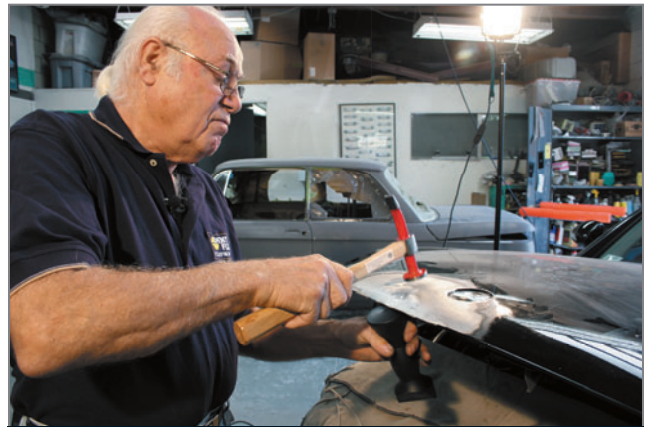


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Selecting the appropriate tools

You will need an abrasive grinding disc, inline removal tool and stainless steel brushes to remove the paint and oxide coating. To shape the metal it must be softened. Heat to the appropriate temperature with a digital temperature-set heat gun. Aluminum has a high thermal conductivity and heat travels throughout the panel rather than in a concentrated spot. Maintain a temperature range of 350-400°F. Have a coworker heat the area while you use the dent pulling tool. If you go above 450°F the structural rigidity of the part could be permanently annealed. A good tool to monitor temperature is an infrared thermometer that determines surface temperature without having to touch anything to the aluminum. Infrared has difficulty with reflective surfaces, so measurement must be taken off nearby painted surface or use a permanent marker. Heat indicating crayons can also be used if an accurate reading is not being obtained. Visual cues like color change in the metal are non-existent when aluminum is heated.

Once you heat the damaged area to the appropriate temperature, repair techniques are similar but differ subtly from steel. Weld on dent pulling can still be performed as long as you have the appropriate tools. A Capacitor Discharge Welder (CDW) is needed to overcome the high thermal conductivity property of the aluminum and fuse the stud to the surface. It must produce a higher level of power and deliver it more rap-




Use a "hammer off" technique to shape so you don't stretch the aluminum too thin.

idly that a traditional stud welder. An important factor to consider when selecting a CDW is to look at how the unit is grounded. When working on a dent at the center of an aluminum hood, less desirable units with wire grounds require two exposed metal areas near the edge as ground points. More work is now needed to prepare and later properly blend the repair in three separate locations with the rest of the hood and fenders. Look for the grounds to be on the front of the gun on both sides of the electrode. This eliminates extra areas to blend and less work in general.

Once the studs are attached, a T-Puller, Bridge Puller and Squeeze Puller offer a range of pulling options. In general, the squeeze puller is the most commonly used. Squeeze pullers allow for a massaging motion to work the damage out and this puts work hardening back into the panel. If necessary, the puller can be locked in position and the panel reheated then massaged back to hardness. The repair can be further smoothed by using a hammer and off dolly technique.


It is critical to prevent galvanic corrosion when working with the unique metal. The best method of prevention against contamination is to keep tools used for aluminum work separate from tools used on steel. Another factor to consider is accidental airborne contamination. Curtain walls, at a minimum, are needed to separate the work area. The enclosed tool kits keep the particles and debris out of the station and away from the tools.

Conclusion

Aluminum repair is not new, but is becoming much more prevalent. Shops can either ignore the increased demand or capitalize on the repairs. Where do you stand? 



Geoff Preston is director of marketing for Dent Fix Equipment. Previously with MotorVac Technologies, Geoff has worked in the aftermarket for more than 6 years.

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WELDING IN TODAY'S SHOP

**PERSONAL,
VEHICLE AND
SHOP SAFETY
TIPS TO ENSURE
THE BEST WELD
EVERY TIME**

BY **ALFRED THOMAS** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Welding is a vast topic in collision repair, and like many other segments in the industry, ever changing. Let's look at the most common types of welding in the shop, such as Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW) — the correct name for what most people call MIG welding (**FIG 1**).

We can review both shop and personal safety; power for the welder; weld testing; MIG steel, MIG Aluminum and MIG silicon bronze welding; and finally the types of metal transfer of MIG welding.

Safety

In the shop, you are likely using either a 110v or a 220v welder. Because of that power and the arc generated to form the

weld, welders must protect themselves and fellow workers. First, be sure that the area set up for welding is safe. Follow all equipment makers' recommendations and also check that the cables and connections are in good condition. Know and follow local electrical codes for extension cords. Never weld in a wet area or while wearing wet clothing. Keep the area clean from clutter and debris. Working with the welding helmet down restricts vision enough without being sidelined by a slip or stumble over items in the way.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a welding helmet, respirator and spark protection are necessary to prevent injury. For eye protection, a helmet with at least a grade 9 filter should be used to protect your eyes from ultraviolet





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damage. If the welding is done at a current above 60 amps, the filter must be darker. Additionally, a safety lens cover should be used over the filter lens.

Next is the respirator. Even when the weld site is properly cleaned, fumes may be harmful. Wear an approved welding respirator, even in a well ventilated area. Don't point a fan at the weld area because it may blow the shielding gas from the weld site and cause poor weld performance.

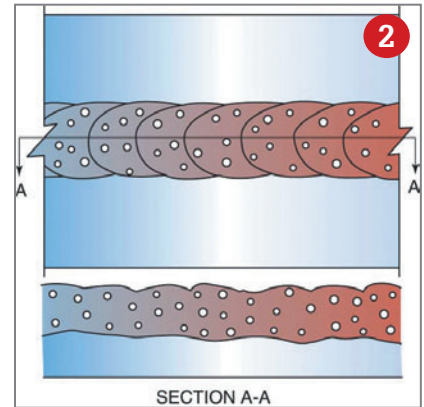
Your skin, like your eyes, can be damaged from the UV rays produced when welding. Protect yourself from these and from spark burns by covering your skin with heavy flame resistant cloth or leather. Use heavy welding gloves with a long cuff and safety glasses with side shields under the helmet. Fasten the top button of your shirt to keep your neck from being burned; and never keep a plastic butane lighter in your pocket, where a stray spark may cause it to explode. Don't weld in an area where there are flammable materials, and always have a fire extinguisher on hand.

Shop Safety: Have a spark and UV shield around the area you are welding, or signal coworkers by saying "welding cover" before you strike an arc.

Vehicle Safety: The vehicle must be protected as well. Precautions include covering glass from sparks around the weld area, disconnecting and isolating the negative battery cable, having the ignition switch in the locked position, disarming the passive restraint system and following the OEM's recommendation for removal of computer modules when welding or heating within 12 inches of the modules.

Heat affect zone

When any metal is welded or even heating during repair, the area of metal that is heated but not melted is the heat affect zone. All metals are changed by this process of heating and cooling. Unfortunately, some are affected more than others. Standard mild steel is least affected least by heating and cooling, and years ago heat was commonly used to help repair this type of steel on vehicles.



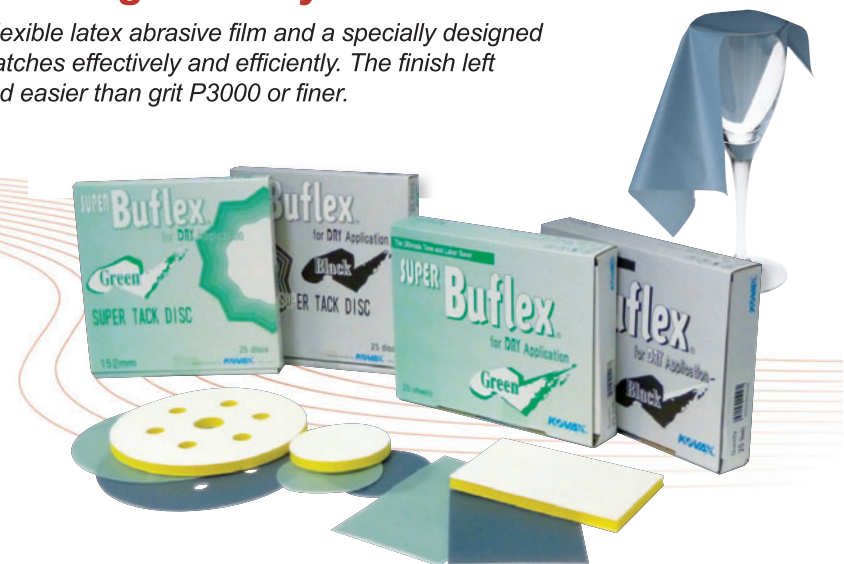
As cars evolved, high strength steel (HSS) and ultra-high-strength steel (UHSS) were used, which are not only stronger, but also thinner. These steels are much more sensitive to heating and cooling. All HSS steel is not the same, and the heat tolerance recommendations must be followed for both heating and for the type of welding used. GMAW (MIG) welding is the most common welding type of repairing for these types of metals. MIG welding of-

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fers a very fast, powerful arch that affects a much smaller area of the base metal. Steels continued to have a reduced heat affect zone, and two-sided resistance spot welding became recommended for repairing vehicles.

As vehicle construction evolved, different types of metal were being welded together during manufacturing, and the welding of choice became laser welding, or welding with a laser beam. The beam provides a concentrated heat source allowing a narrow, deep weld and high welding rate with a smaller heat affect zone.

Power needed for welder

Each welder has different power requirements to operate efficiently; and though some will operate on normal 220V single phase power, three phase for larger machines may be required. Also, the power source at the wall should be tested to confirm that the correct power requirements are being met. Additionally, the use of extension cords may not be recommended by the welder manufacturer or

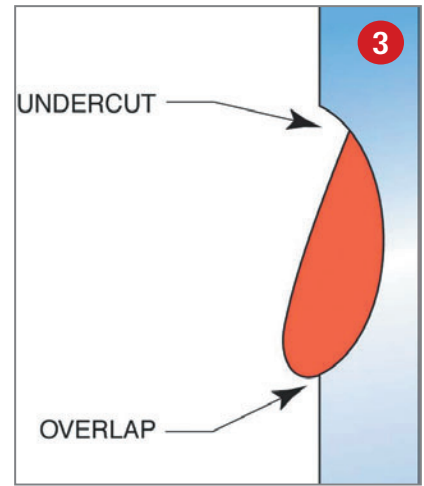
may not be code for the facility location. Cords also may diminish the current flow, which will produce insufficient welds.

Shielding gas

Shielding gas during GMAW welding protects the weld from oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen, which cause porosity (holes) in the weld. High-pressure cylinders are used to store this shielding gas, which is also a factor in controlling weld-pool heat, which is critical to controlling the heat affect zone.

There are two categories of gasses used for welding — inert gas (such as argon or helium that protects the weld but does not combine with the arc); and active gas. CO2 (carbon dioxide) is a common example of an active gas. It protects the weld, but also combines with the arc to contribute to the quality of the weld.

Shielding gas can be pure, or a mixture in various combinations can be used. A mixture of 75 percent argon and 25 percent CO2 is the most common recommended gas used in GMAW weld-



ing. Pure argon, however, is recommended for welding aluminum and silicon bronze wire. There are also tri-mix shielding gases of 90 percent helium, 7.5 percent argon, and 2.5 percent CO2. This mix is commonly used for welding stainless steel.

Follow OEM recommendations for all welding processes, the wire to be used and the shielding gas.

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Test welds

Before welding, a test weld should be performed. Visually inspect it for cracks, porosity (**FIG 2**), skips or voids, undercut or overlap (**FIG 3**), proper bead height and width for the weld. On the back of the weld, look for burn-through and good penetration. If the test weld passes the visual test, then it should be destructive-tested.

Destructive test: Place one side of the test weld in a vice and grab the other part of the test weld. By rocking the piece back and forth, break it apart. A good weld doesn't break when the surrounding base metal breaks.

Metal transfer modes

The metal transfer from the electrode to the base metal can be performed in a number of ways: globular, short circuiting, spray and pulsed spray.

Globular transfer is considered the least desirable in collision repair because of the high heat, poor weld surface and spatter. The metal transfer works by a ball of molten metal building up at the

end of the electrode; when the misshaped ball either falls to the base metal by gravity or by short circuit, the weld surface is then uneven and a large amount of spatter is produced.

The lower heat in short circuiting (SCT) makes it possible for lighter metals to be welded with less spatter and distortion, and with a smaller heat affect zone. In SCT, a ball of molten metal forms on the electrode. But instead of dropping to the base metal, a bridge is made and, for a fraction of a second, a short circuit is created, which extinguishes the arc. The arc quickly re-ignites and the process continues; the speed, about 100 times per second, makes it undetectable to the eye. In SCT welding, the amperage, voltage, wire feed and even the rate of travel are critical. Make sure the welder is set properly for each application by performing a test weld.

The first metal transfer developed for MIG welding, spray uses higher current and voltages, and the electrode forms very small droplets that eventually vaporize the molten electrode, and it is trans-



ferred to the base metal. This virtually eliminates spatter, but because of the higher power, the heat is also very high and not suited for lighter metals. Also, because of the large weld pool, it is often limited to flat and horizontal welding positions.

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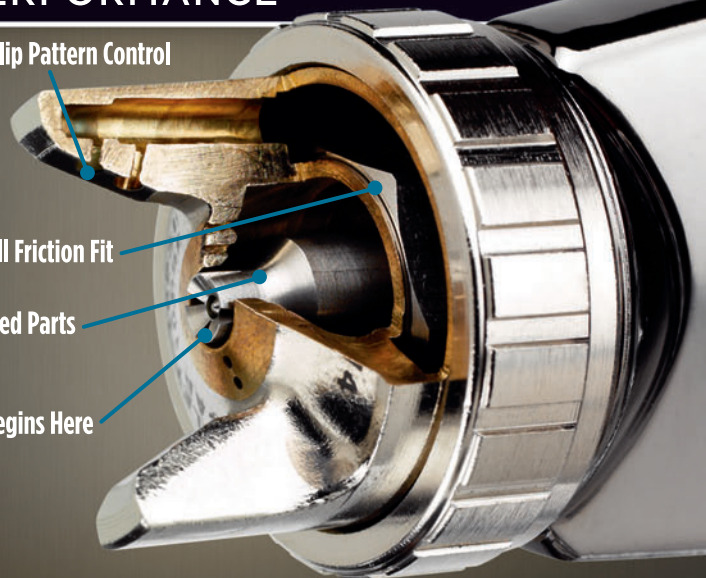
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A variation of the spray transfer method, pulsed spray uses a pulsed current, causing the molten droplets to be much smaller, allowing for lower current to be used. With less current, the heat affect zone is smaller and the weld pool is smaller; it also has a more stable arc and no spatter. These traits allow the material to be welded in all positions. Pulsed spray is somewhat slower than the others, and it does require pure argon for a shielding gas. It also requires a special power source capable of pulsing from 30 to 300 pulses per second.

Pulsed MIG welding is suited for welding steel, aluminum and silicon bronze. Many OEMs now recommend a pulsed welder for these welds.

GMAW (MIG)

Some vehicles have this now, and in the very near future, most pickups will have an aluminum body. (Ford will in 2015; GM will too, in 2018, it is rumored.) Thus the market share of aluminum repairs will increase very quickly. A tech may weld steel, aluminum and silicon bronze,

sometimes all within the same week. There is equipment set up for all three in one machine (**FIG 4**). Such welders have wire feed on one side that has aluminum and bronze feed, with steel in the other side to prevent steel-aluminum contamination. Two gasses (argon for aluminum and bronze, 75 percent argon and 25 percent CO2 gas for steel) are automatically changed when the weld is started (**FIG 5**). Some machines even have TIG and stick welding available with all five methods in one machine.


Squeeze-type spot welding

Squeeze-type resistance spot welding (STRSW), the standard welding process used during manufacturing, is the process of choice, as the newer HSS and UHSS steels were sensitive to heat. This fast, efficient process significantly reduced the heat that was transferred to the second base metal that was not being joined, thus making it a stronger weld.

The number and location of spot welds recommended vary from maker

to maker, so it is incumbent upon the repair facility to find the OEM recommendation so the welding repair can be completed correctly.

Conclusion

Welding in collision repair is an ever-changing process. Though it is often frustrating that new equipment must be purchased and new techniques learned as vehicles evolve, we as technicians must also continually seek training and practice new skills. If we quit learning, we will soon be left behind. 



ALFRED THOMAS
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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BY **BILL RICE** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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Less than three years ago, I did not think it was possible to formulate a clear coating that could be applied with a hand application — easy as wax, but with a coating similar to those you have sprayed on for years.

In the last several years, hand-applied clear coatings that can lay down as fine a finish as a spray job for restoring original color to the paint while leaving an often better-than-new shine have been developed and are being used by many detail operations. This clear coating can also make paint

swirls, light scratches and scuff marks seem to disappear and can even bring back life to a surface where the paint had gone white from a burned out clear coat.

Now that I have your attention, let's get to the details — how much prep work is required and how difficult is it to apply?

Prep work involves first cleaning the vehicle with a thorough pressure washing, then using a scuffing paste (like Presta's Scuff Stuff or Sherwin-Williams' USP 90) applied by microfiber cloth or white 3M Doodlebug scrub pad, depending on the vehicle, with water and light hand pressure. Rub in a circular motion; if you have to rub up and down or back and forth to clean a difficult area, always finish with a cir-

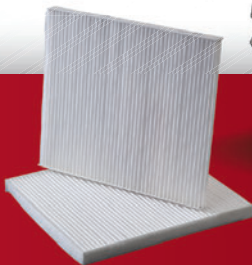


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cular cleaning motion. Rinse with water and finish the preparation by using a tack rag. To complete an average car (Toyota Camry, for example), it should take about 45 minutes.

The application process will vary depending on supplier instructions, but all vendors agree you must have a wet enough coating on the surface to allow for proper flow out. Don't try to work it in; it doesn't need that. The objective is to have enough coating over the area you are working on so that it almost runs. If you don't have enough, your finished application will have streaks. It is a learning process and may take four or five attempts before you become proficient.

Always practice on a scrap surface before attempting a quarter panel, door, trunk, hood or especially a whole vehicle. Hand application of the clear coating takes approximately 30-45 minutes. Touch dry time varies by vendor, but usually takes less than 30 minutes. Ready-to-go-out-the-door drying can take all day; but, the time can be greatly reduced by use of heat lamps.

If you have to paint over this "miracle" coating, don't worry. Most vendors



offer a coating that adheres to automotive coatings readily, and those automotive coatings can adhere to it. Painting over it, if or when it becomes necessary, is not a problem. However, there are now multiple vendors in the hand-applied category, most of whom are good at marketing but know close to nothing about the chemistry of the product they sell. Make sure you deal with an established manufacturer, not a reselling agent.

Examples of what can be done are shown in the two sets of before and after photos below. The first set shows a car about to be crushed into a block that had its clear coat completely whited out with a scratch through it. The technician cleaned the surface and hand applied a clear coating. As you can see, the whited out paint was fixed, scratch marks were no more and color/gloss were restored so you can see his reflection in the paint. In the next set, you see the scratches around the door handle before being restored to perfection with the procedure described above.


Remember that while the coating can correct a number of cosmetic flaws, it also can add a new layer of clear coat protection to the paint against sun damage, acids and alkalis, bird droppings, insect splatters, salt spray on the coasts, tree sap, industrial pollution and other airborne contamination. Also, the coat-

ing provides a great looking shine that is very dirt repellant, so it is easy to keep clean.

How much does it cost to get this unique coating technology into your shop? There are as many different answers as there are vendors — it can vary from a few thousands dollars to more than \$50,000. Almost all will not let you buy small quantities (like a quart or a gallon) to use the product only as needed. A franchise, distributor or licensee "package" must be bought from the other vendors; however, there is at least one vendor who allows you to buy whatever amount you need. The cost per gallon for all products is higher (\$550-\$650 per gallon) than the best clear coat you can buy from any of the majors. But, because hand application is more efficient, the cost per vehicle is a relatively inexpensive — \$25 to \$30 (for a typical sedan).

Because product usage of 4-6 ounces per vehicle is so efficient and hand application removes the atomization necessary from spray application, the environmental profile of using a hand-applied solvent-borne coating is almost as environmentally friendly as spraying a waterborne clear. And, the water-based problems of both poor adhesion and especially poor weathering (sun exposure) performance can be eliminated with these solvent-borne, hand-applied clear coatings.

Clear coatings now exist that can restore a paint's original color and gloss, make light scratches and scuff marks disappear and easily eliminate swirls in the paint by simply applying by hand.

As with any other decision, you should investigate the supplier before investing. But isn't it worth taking the time to seriously explore this opportunity to serve your customers better and more profitably? 



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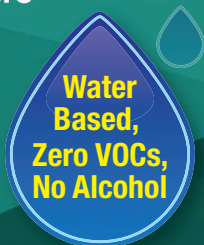
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A high voltage A/C compressor is identifiable by the orange wire loom.

BY **DAVE MACHOLZ** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Servicing hybrid air conditioning systems is either business as usual or new machines, new oils and different procedures. The trick is identifying which. Let's get the business as usual hybrids out of the way first. If you are working on a Ford Escape, Mercury Mariner or Mazda Tribute hybrid, they have a belt and are traditional A/C systems. The Saturn Vue is also belt driven. They use conventional R134A, along with PAG oil. There are not many, but if the compressor is driven by a belt, it is most likely using PAG oil and conventional service techniques.

Nearly every other hybrid vehicle I looked up has a high voltage A/C compressor (HVACC for our purposes). That includes the big Escalade and Suburban all the way down to the Toyota Yaris hybrid. Here again, if you do not see a belt driving the compressor, it is an HVACC. Another tip off is that large orange cable entering the compressor indicating a high voltage line.

The secret is in the oil when it comes to hybrid vehicles with High Voltage A/C compressors. According to Denso, who manufactures many of these HVACC, only 1 percent PAG oil can cause failure. Everything you do to service these A/C systems revolves around an absolute requirement to have pure POE oil in their systems.

Why is it so critical to have pure POE oil in the hybrid A/C systems? The answer is that the compressor houses an electric motor swimming in POE oil that is powered by the high voltage traction battery that also runs the motor/generator that is part of the hybrid propulsion system. POE and its counterpart PVE oil are specially designed to provide very high dielectric properties – they insulate electrical components. PAG oil on the other hand is conductive. A simple illustration would be one of those movies where a guy gets killed in the bathtub by a blow dryer falling in with him. Fill a hybrid HVACC up with PAG oil and you will get the same effect. Fortunately these hybrid high voltage A/C systems have voltage leakage sensors and will shut down the system if a leak is detected.

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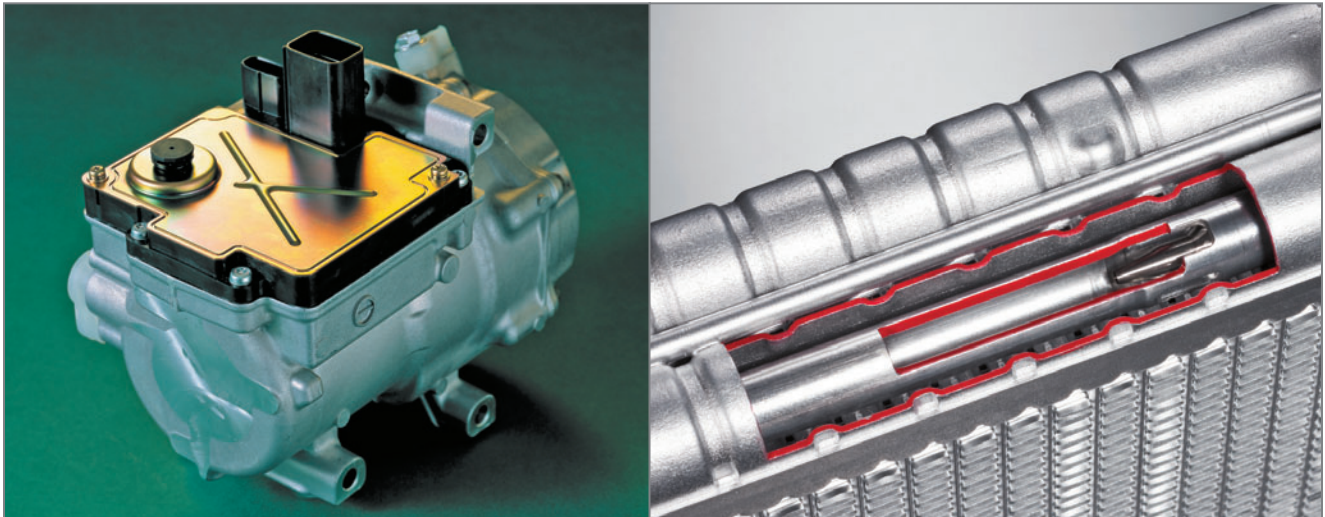
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(Left) HV compressor with integral DC to A/C inverter. (Right) A cutaway look at the ejector.

The equipment involved in servicing hybrid A/C systems is different. There is an SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) standard that dictates equipment requirements. According to the Mobile Air Conditioning Society (MACS) and A/C specialty tool maker AirSept, the key component of the SAE J2788 standard is the isolation of refrigerant oil. If the machine is a hybrid spec J2788 machine, it does not have an oil injector as do many non-hybrid A/C Recover, Recycle, Recharge (RRR) machines.


“To maintain the >.1 percent PAG oil required by the SAE spec, hybrid RRR machines cannot include an oil injection system,” say Tim Wagaman – Senior Product Manager for A/C and Fluid Products at Robinair.

Oil must be injected into the system through a separate injector. Wagaman recommends having a specific injector tool designated for PAG and POE that are only used for that oil and carefully labeled to avoid confusion. A wise practice might be to label the POE – Hybrids with electric compressors and the PAG oil – Never use in hybrids. The main reason for the concern is cost. The list price of a 2010 Escalade HVACC for example is \$3,004 and you can bet they are not sitting on the shelf at the dealer. That will have you in negative profit margins really quick on a front-end collision repair and it won't stop there because you will have to flush the entire system and replace the receiver drier to boot.

Let's talk more about the actual RRR machines. There are several options available and they all have some means to help the technician to properly service a high voltage hybrid system. The Bosch and RTI hybrid RRR machine has a sub-menu that allows you to tell the machine you are servicing a hybrid so that you can run a purge of the lines prior to service. Robinair takes it one step further and asks the technician if a hybrid is being serviced. If the answer is yes, the machine runs an internal purge with refrigerant to remove any PAG oil from the lines. Robinair's Wagaman says, “The potential for cross contamination is during recharge if there is PAG in the lines. If you have a machine you use in normal R134A/PAG services, you can still recover and evacuate a hybrid system with it.”

These machines can cost upwards of \$4,000, but most of them are not single purpose machines. You can use these machines for all of your regular A/C service too. Most are fully automatic so you can setup all your specs and walk away while it does the job. If a machine like that is not in your current tool budget, there is another way to still perform A/C work on high voltage hybrid systems. According to AirSept, “To allow the use of non-J2788H RRR machines on certain hybrids (and conventional systems as well), an add-on filter known as the “A/C charge Guard” is available. It is designed to

remove oil, dye and other liquid or particulate contaminants from refrigerant during recharge. This special filter is placed in series between the RRR machine and the vehicle. It vaporizes the refrigerant, and traps and holds the vast majority of non-vaporous materials (including oil), so they cannot enter the vehicle's A/C system. The filter eliminates the need to purchase separate equipment to recharge hybrid vehicles' high voltage A/C compressors.”

A final suggestion is if you are replacing a component of the high voltage A/C system, the service precautions are no different than any other hybrid vehicle repairs. Prior to work, you must disable the high voltage system and make sure it is all powered down. These components are very deadly and very expensive so it is mission critical to read all of the procedure before starting and make sure you have the proper tools to complete the operation safely. 



Dave Macholz is an instructor for the Toyota T-TEN, Honda PACT and general automotive programs at Suffolk County Community College in Selden, N.Y. He is an ASE CMAT and L1 technician and holds a NY State teaching certification in vehicle repair.

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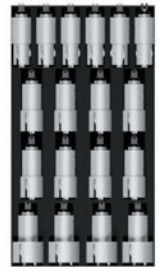
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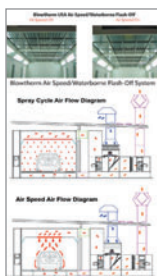
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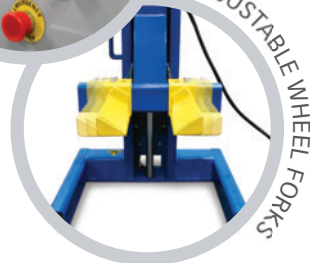
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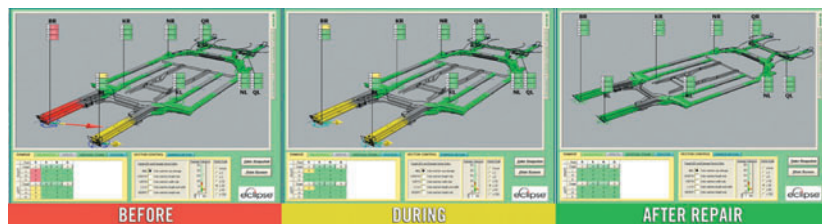


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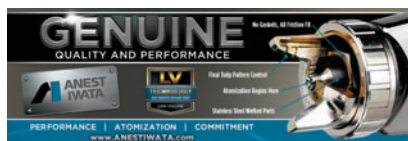
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Body repair manuals for Chrysler, Jeep®, Dodge, Ram, SRT®, and FIAT® vehicles are viewable online and cover complete panel removal and installation procedures, weld locations, the types of welds for each panel and proper sealers.

Position statements

Chrysler Group LLC Position Statements are posted on the site. They are great resources to use in discussions with insurance adjusters, covering structural repair parts usage, salvaged air bags or other salvaged restraint system component usage, use of heat during repair, replacement seat covers and seat cover repairs, and reconditioned wheel usage.

Technical references

Not sure where to cut? Refer to the Structural Sectioning Procedure Guide containing frame dimensions, a weld chart and more. The Non-Structural Sheet Metal Guide sets in motion the groundwork for repairing body panels, and the Weld Bonding Guide outlines materials, procedures and technology to help you restore the vehicle to its original OEM condition.

When dealing with paint bleeding, blistering, chipping, clearcoat erosion, cracking

and rust refer to the Paint Condition Guide for an overview on how to address these adverse conditions. A list of approved refinish paint suppliers, materials and systems to be used is published in the Refinish Paint Suppliers and Paint Materials/Systems Guide.

MoparRepairConnection.com is here to help you do the job right the first time. Because a damaged reputation is hard to repair.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Mopar

Please visit:

www.moparrepairconnection.com

MOPARREPAIRCONNECTION.COM



2014 COLLISION INDUSTRY PROFILES

EAGLE ABRASIVES

www.eagleabrasives.com

The next generation abrasives for today's paint technology

Eagle Abrasives, Inc by Kovax offers a wide selection of top quality coated abrasive products for refinishing in autobody repair, woodworking and industrial fields.

Since its inception in 1930, Kovax Corporation has played a leading role in the abrasives manufacturing industry. By adhering to rigid quality control standards and research, Kovax is now recognized as one of the most respected and reliable specialists in the industry.

As finishing technology continues to advance, quality demands in coated abrasives are higher than ever before, especially in the fine sanding area. Besides the longevity and cutting speed in sanding products, a uniform finish with shallow scratches is essential for today's New Generation painting technology. Introducing...

Super Assilex - DRY

A dry sanding medium that provides speed, uniform coverage and an extremely shallow sanding pattern. It prevents irregular scratches that can be caused by

non-woven products or the risk of over-sanding by standard abrasive sheets.

Tolecut System - Topcoat Touch-Up system - DRY

The most advanced system for removing dust nibs on topcoat finishing. Utilizes state of the art Dry Lube technology to prevent loading. Speedy and extremely uniform fine finish can be removed easily by Buflex or micro finishing compounds. Instant scratch monitoring is possible thanks to a completely dry application. Ideal for Waterborne and High Solid paint systems.

Super Buflex - DRY

An innovative dry sanding and polishing system that cuts long buffing time by 50% or more and removes topcoat-sanding scratches effectively and efficiently. The finish left behind by Buflex can be polished easier than grit P3000. Buflex has proven that compound polishing processes can be largely reduced, thus achieving the best finish in the shortest time.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Eagle Abrasives

(888) 683-2453

www.eagleabrasives.com

GOFF'S ENTERPRISES, INC.

www.goffscurtainwalls.com/abrn

Helping companies maximize space while increasing productivity and safety

Goff's has been manufacturing Curtain Walls for the collision repair industry for over 25 years! We're dedicated to helping companies maximize space and increase productivity while creating a safer work environment.

Goff's Curtain Walls

At nearly 1/3 the cost of a permanent wall, Goff's Curtain Walls are ideal for a wide variety of uses including: confining contaminants such as dust, paint & primer overspray, grinding sparks, and water/chemical mist, as well as controlling heat and cold loss; reducing energy costs. Goff's Curtains meet NFPA-701 and California State Fire Marshall standards for fire resistance. They are water repellent, mildew and rot resistant



and resistant to most chemicals. Curtains are shipped ready to install, com-

plete with a galvanized steel track and roller system.

Goff's Welding Products

Goff's welding products are designed to withstand the harshest shop environments!

Goff's Welding Curtains create a retractable barrier that contains welding fumes and contaminants, and block 100% UV Light. Goff's Weld Tough Screens also block 100% UV light and are constructed with a very strong, lightweight, extruded aluminum frame providing a stable barrier to protect against arc welding, grinding sparks and more. Goff's lightweight and flexible Weld Blankets are designed to be draped over materials and equipment to provide protection from welding and grinding sparks, and molten and hot debris.

Other Products

Other products include High



Performance Vinyl & Mesh Roll-up Doors, Manual Bug Blocking Doors, Strip Doors, Sound Control Curtains & Screens, Privacy Screens, Climate Curtains, and more.

All of Goff's products are custom made for each application!

For more information or to get a quote, go to www.goffscurtainwalls.com/abrn or call us at 800-606-7730.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Goff's Enterprises, Inc.

(800) 606-7730

www.goffscurtainwalls.com/abrn



KAESER COMPRESSORS, INC.

www.us.kaeser.com

Built to perform. Built to last. Built for a lifetime™.

Kaeser is a global leader in superior rotary screw compressors and compressed air equipment, providing the automotive market with a compressor that has a higher capacity, more stable pressure, consistently higher air quality, and much quieter operation. With thousands of collision customers, Kaeser understands that automotive shops have high standards, and with the rising cost of labor, tools, paints, and other materials, you cannot afford re-work.

Dry, clean, compressed air at a stable system pressure is essential for high-quality results. With a Kaeser air system, you get products that have proven their reliability and efficiency over and over in demanding industrial applications. Whether your concern is air quality, reducing shop noise, or reducing

time spent on maintenance, Kaeser products can help increase quality, efficiency, and productivity.

Kaeser's AirCenter is a packaged compressed air system with a Sigma rotary screw compressor, refrigerated air dryer, and optional filter—all compactly mounted on a receiver tank. Simply connect the power and air-line, and you have a fully operational compressed air system. Compressor size ranges from 3 to 20 hp with working pressures available from 80 to 217 psig.

Kaeser's Airtower gives you a reliable source of good quality air with a lower initial investment. These 100% duty cycle units are a great step up from piston compressors in tire service, general repair, and smaller painting and fabrication applications. Available in 4, 5, and 7.5 hp with single or three phase electrics.

Kaeser builds products and air systems for reliability, ease of maintenance, and energy efficiency. Built to perform. Built to last. Built for a lifetime™.



KAESER COMPRESSORS

Built for a lifetime™

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kaeser Compressors, Inc.

(866) 516-6888

www.us.kaeser.com

MARTIN SENOUR AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

www.martinsenour-autopaint.com

The single source for all your automotive refinish needs

In 1928, The Martin Senour Company became the exclusive supplier of refinish products to the National Automotive Parts Association (NAPA). Martin Senour provides a complete line of advanced technology paint and coatings systems for automotive and fleet refinishing, industrial and manufacturing customers.

Distribution

- 6,100+ NAPA AUTO PARTS Stores
- 64 distribution centers serve all states
- Over 422,000 quality parts and

accessories for automotive and industrial applications, which is the most extensive inventory in the industry



Paint Store in a Parts Store

- Your trusted parts store is now your trusted paint store
- Parts + Paint = NAPA
- NAPA is your single source for ALL your automotive needs

Products

- Vortex®; a waterborne basecoat system that is easy to apply, fast-drying and designed to perform like a solvent.
- Tec/BASE®; a premium solventborne basecoat refinish system formulated to achieve superior performance, excellent color match and high productivity.
- PRO//BASE™; a solvent-based refinish system that is National Rule & 3.5 VOC emissions compliant

Services & Programs

- EcoLean™ collision services & training help shops take advantage of productivity & profitability
- Express Scratch Repair™; Helps shops capitalize on small damage repair and generate a new revenue stream.

- Collision Repair Design Service (CRDS); Assists collision facilities in workflow efficiency and space utilization.
- Best Demonstrated Practices (BDP); Instructions and videos to show you the ideal way to use Martin Senour products
- NAPA AutoCare Collision Center Program; NAPA and Martin Senour help you build a successful repair business.

Take advantage of this partnership and build a successful repair business with NAPA and Martin Senour.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Martin-Senour Automotive Finishes

(800) 445-9262

www.martinsenour-autopaint.com

2014 COLLISION INDUSTRY PROFILES

MATRIX SYSTEM AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

www.matrixsystem.com

A perfect match is a beautiful thing.

According to Curtis Duggan, owner of Duggan's Collision Center, "We not only improved our efficiency by switching to Matrix System, but also gained savings across the board. We now have perfect color matching, while saving 35% to 40% and drastically improving our cycle times. Our painter loves that he's getting better coverage and using fewer coats of paint. The stress we were experiencing with the waterborne product is gone!"



Over 30 Years of Experience

For over 30 years, Matrix Automotive Finishes have been the painter's choice. Matrix, a global brand manufactured and

designed in the USA, utilizes only the highest quality raw materials. Matrix provides proven refinish systems, variant-based color chips and a complete range of collision repair products. Matrix's innovative LV solvent technology allows shops to meet strict VOC regulations and maintain performance, productivity and profitability.

Water Isn't the Only Way to Compliance

Matrix prides itself on being a leader in the low VOC solvent basecoat market. In 2011, the revolutionary Matrix Premium Low VOC line (MPB-LV) marked the industry's first true "premium" low VOC solvent basecoat. This line provides the performance expected from a premium system without a difference in appearance or application. MPB-LV offers compliance without complication.

Warranty that is Second to None

The quality of Matrix products allows customers to offer every vehicle a lifetime warranty. With the Matrix warranty, customers can leave feeling confident in the expertise with which their repair was carried out.

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Direct to Metal, Quicker to Color

NEW! MP-210

"Coast to Coast"

DTM Sealer is a premium direct to metal sealer that offers smooth

application over

a wide range of conditions. This product provides excellent adhesion, good corrosion resistance, productive dry times, and quick coverage.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Matrix System Automotive Finishes

600 Nova Drive SE

Massillon, OH 44646

(800) 735-0303

www.matrixsystem.com

www.facebook.com/matrixsystem

DEPO/MAXZONE AUTO PARTS CORP.

www.maxzone.com

DEPO brings you a seamless part installation experience

When it comes to replacement auto lamps, there is no better alternative than DEPO. With 4 decades of experience and knowledge in manufacturing, you can count on DEPO to provide the automotive replacement parts with the best quality and the most value. We know how seamless part installation experience can save you time and increase your ROI, and we make every effort to further enhance our product quality and service.

Vehicle test fit

We started incorporating a self-imposed Vehicle Test Fit (VTF) in the product development process more than ten years ago. Over 90% of DEPO lamps and mirrors go through the VTF process by DEPO



engineers with years of experience in manufacturing. With measurements, the necessary adjustments are made on the tooling and the process is repeated until the product prototype meets or exceeds OE fitment and function.

Third party certification

All DEPO products comply with SAE/DOT regulations. To further show our commitment to quality, we are the leader in CAPA certified lamps with the largest part numbers available, and DEPO was the first company to receive NSF Certification on lamps.

Continuous improvement

A major component of our continuous improvement process is requesting that all defective products be returned at our expense for individual inspection. This enables our QA team and Engineers to quickly identify the root cause of any quality issues and correct it. DEPO/Maxzone offers OE replacement lamps, performance lamps, mirrors, blowers, radiators, cooling fans, door handles, and window regulators. Please contact your local distributor for more information.

MAXZONE is a subsidiary of



CONTACT INFORMATION:

DEPO/Maxzone Auto Parts Corp.

(909)822-3288

www.maxzone.com



PPG AUTOMOTIVE REFINISH

www.ppgrefinish.com

Bringing innovation to the surface

Under its guiding mission to continue to be the world leader in coatings, PPG has served the automotive refinish community for over 111 years, with a complete range of products, services and expertise. Today, PPG continues to play an indispensable role in serving collision centers worldwide.

Technology, Training & Color Support

PPG offers a results-driven portfolio of refinish technologies to help customers meet high expectations for color matching accuracy and throughput performance. As the industry moves forward with environmentally progressive refinish systems, PPG's innovative waterborne technology leads the way. Its AQUABASE® Plus and ENVIROBASE® High Performance brands, featuring anti-settle toners, have become the systems of choice for 10,000 shops across North America, and some 31,000 worldwide.

Technician training and collision center operational improvement are also important components of their mission. Last year PPG trained 15,000 painters

in the latest application techniques and coatings technology. The PPG MVP Business Solutions team has educated thousands of owners and managers on how to effectively increase their shop productivity and profitability, and leads the way in the practical application of Lean Six Sigma for collision repair.

To ensure accurate color matching across all product lines, the PPG color network manages a color documentation program spanning four continents. Each year over 40,000 entries are added to their database that already contains more than 2,000,000 prime and variant formulas. Supporting this robust color database, PPG is continually advancing its paint management and color tools, such as the comprehensive PAINTMANAGER® software.

Investing in Tomorrow

With performance coatings as its core business, PPG is committed to ongoing investment in coatings research and development to ensure the long-term success of its refinish partners.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

PPG Automotive Refinish

(800) 647-6050

www.ppgrefinish.com

PERFORMANCE GATEWAY

www.performancegateway.com

Do you know your shop's performance gaps?

You should. Performance directly impacts referrals and profitability. When you're operating at peak performance levels, customers are happy and much more likely to send referrals your way.

Do you know how easy it is to track performance?

It's incredibly easy. Gateway Industry Scorecard automatically tracks measures that are important to your operation and displays them on an easy-to-read scorecard in near real time.

And to interpret?

Tracking data is one thing. Knowing

what to do with it is another. Gateway Industry Scorecard highlights areas that don't meet expected targets. You know immediately what to target for improvement in performance.

Reach peak performance by tracking and targeting for free at PerformanceGateway.com.

About Performance Gateway

Performance Gateway is a worldwide vendor of powerful web-based platforms aimed at bringing transparency, efficiency and control to the collision repair industry. Our goal is to drive shop performance via our

scorecard technology and to help MSOs manage their shop networks via our network management tools.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Performance Gateway

(877) 933-2063

www.performancegateway.com



**PERFORMANCE
GATEWAY™**

Automating Performance Management

2014 COLLISION INDUSTRY PROFILES

PRO SPOT INTERNATIONAL, INC.

www.prospot.com

Quality welding products

Pro Spot International, Inc., which began in 1989, manufactures welding equipment specializing in resistance spot welding and other welding related products for the collision repair industry. Pro Spot Headquarters recently moved to Carlsbad, California, with European divisions in Sweden and Italy to better accommodate our worldwide distribution. The Pro Spot manufacturing facility in Carlsbad includes R&D, Engineering,

Sheet Metal Fabrication, Machine Shop, Automated Powder Coating System, Production, Assembly, Testing, as well as a Training Center. It is a full turnkey facility; from concept to shipping to training under one roof ... MADE IN THE USA.

Pro Spot training and service

Pro Spot provides on-going training to all of our distributors and their technicians, therefore, all owners of Pro Spot products receive complete training first

hand. Pro Spot has two ASE certified training programs that are I-CAR alliance approved. Pro Spot also has a fully equipped training facility at their Headquarters in Carlsbad, CA for groups to come in and train on any and all products. Pro Spot also offers their unique My.prospot.com which includes interactive training courses for

shops and technicians to access online, and is an ongoing source of information on the industry.

Pro Spot helped to pioneer Resistance Spot Welding in the collision industry. Today, Pro Spot manufactures a variety of welding equipment including their famous Resistance Spot Welders, MIG Welders, Aluminum Repair Equipment, tools, and more. Pro Spot has mastered designing welders for bodyshops and technicians.



PRO SPOT
QUALITY WELDING SYSTEMS

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Pro Spot International, Inc.

(877) PRO-SPOT

www.prospot.com

PRO-SPRAY AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

www.prosprayfinishes.com

Serious color. Smart business.

"The changeover to Pro-Spray H2O has trimmed our cycle times and the finished product is impressive. We ran some tests and timed the process... we're saving 10% time-wise on every paint job and 40% on materials."

— A-Shop, Iowa

A new breed of paint company

In today's economy, there's no room for waste. Pro-Spray understands this new rule of business because we've been abiding by it all along. We're lean. Agile. Driven. Customer focused. And always believe that quality, technology and performance shouldn't break the bank.

A complete, efficient and profitable system

Pro-Spray offers a complete line of European technology sur-

face prep products, plastic repair products, undercoats, sealers, single stage, solventborne and waterborne basecoats, clearcoats, universal activators and thinners, low VOC coatings and color tools, all at a savings of up to 40% off the major paint brands.

Exceeding waterborne expectations

Painters that use Pro-Spray® H2O say the color match and performance exceeds their expectations. Our premium system of 70 shake-and-pour toners provide quick coverage, amazing blending, fast dry times, superior metallic control and extensive import and domestic color formulas.

Color support

In the world of collision repair, color is critical. And Pro-Spray has the tools to make your shop more efficient. The Navigator™ Precision Color Selection System features over 5,200 actual color spray outs and the Paint Xpert™ Color Management Software delivers formulas,

reports, inventory management and more.

Test drive and learn

Pro-Spray's Global Technical Training Center boasts 4,500 square feet of integrated hands-on training; training classes are free of charge to our customers.

Seeing is believing.

Pro-Spray
AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

CONTACT INFORMATION:

**PRO-SPRAY®
Automotive Finishes**

(800) 776-0933

www.ProSprayFinishes.com

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RBL PRODUCTS

www.rblproducts.com

Bringing one-of-a-kind products to the market

RBL Products takes pride in bringing “one of a kind” products to the aftermarket. “We will only offer our customers something that they have never seen or used before,”



stated Ron Lipson, RBL president. By sticking with this philosophy, our customers become very enthusiastic when we announce a new product is being offered.

2013 is a special year for RBL Products. Never in the history of the company (started in 1991) have we launched 8 products. At SEMA, RBL launched the Soda Blaster, Highlighter Wipe, Restoration Plus and Super Sponge.

RBL is especially excited launching in mid-year the water-based foaming Pre-Cleaning System. Lipson stated, “the Pre-Cleaning System is a first for RBL. We have never offered a complete system before.”

What makes this a unique industry game changer is the foamer. Never have chemicals been applied via foam.

The foam is applied using a hand-held foamer. The only method to date has been liquid. In addition, the Pre-Cleaning wax and grease remover is zero VOC and contains no alcohol.

Lipson stated, “how do we know it works?” It passes one of the most difficult tests. We apply a grease pencil to a painted surface, after foaming the area, you just wipe it clean effortlessly.

Our goal is to continue launching foam-based products. The next one we are working on is a detail foam that will clean off rubbing compound and wax the painted surface.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

RBL Products, Inc.

(800) 584-8111

www.rblproducts.com

ROME TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

www.rometech.com

Rome Advanced Process Management — See a 30-50% increase in efficiency and an 8-12% increase in net profit for your body shop

Your solution for running the very best body shop

Rome Management software allows you to realize the full potential of a process-driven, factory-based solution in your dealership or independent collision center. Rome distinguishes itself from the competition by offering more than just collision management software, including business consultation, on-going education and training, outstanding technical product

support and continuous product development. As a result, Rome promises shops will see a 30-50% increase in efficiency and an 8-12% increase in net profit.

Why Rome?

Fast and user-friendly, Rome is wireless, paperless and accessible from anywhere. Rome integrates with all major estimating and accounting systems to ensure your body shop operates as efficiently as possible. Rome's development department continues to program new features based on user feedback to implement state of the art technology such as Easy Check-In at the car using an iPad and much more.

No contract required

Our business model recognizes “delivering what you

sell and standing behind it” is the key-stone to good business.

Call or visit us online to learn why so many body shops are improving efficiency, raising their bottom line, and expanding their operations using Rome Management as their model for success. Let Rome help you and your business maximize potential and reach goals.

ROME

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Rome Technologies, Inc.

(800) 373-ROME

www.rometech.com



2014 COLLISION INDUSTRY PROFILES

SEM PRODUCTS, INC.

www.semproducts.com

The Right Choice

A leader in repair and refinishing products for over 65 years, SEM Products, Inc. manufactures innovative and superior professional products for the automotive market.

SEM made its mark on the automotive industry with the introduction of the first automotive vinyl-top refinishing product, Topper. The company broadened its interior refinishing lines with category defining flexible coatings, in both aerosol and intermix systems.

Furthering the company's reach into the automotive space, SEM redefined exterior repair and refinishing procedures with a broad range of labor saving specialty



aerosols and adhesives. "Labor is typically the highest cost associated with a repair. By reducing labor, through smart product design, we help our customer's profitability. Then we back our brands with comprehensive warranties." Andy Lewis, Director of Marketing. SEM's Dual-Mix™ line of repair materials (adhesives, plastic repair, sealers and sound dampeners) offer the strongest warranty in the industry.

Along with SEM's dedication to quality they offer industry leading technical support and I-CAR certified training. I-CAR classes include: metal bonding, plastic repair, corrosion protection, automotive foams and sound dampening. Additionally, SEM created the comprehensive "SEM School" which provides all 4 certifications plus a certification on "materials identification". SEM School is offered 20-30 times per year. Typical attendance is 25, with some remote schools seeing upwards of 100 attendees.

SEM is an employee-owned company, meaning each employee has a vested

interest in producing an exceptional "SEM experience". From manufacturing to customer care, everyone is on-board with delivering high quality products and exceptional customer experiences.

Made in the USA, SEM products are manufactured in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Connect with SEM on Facebook or Youtube.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

SEM Products, Inc.

(866) 327-7829

www.semproducts.com

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

www.sherwin-automotive.com

Ask about the direct distribution difference

Direct Distribution provides a standardized platform (e.g. Billing, Replenishment, Product Offering, Training, etc.) for all MSO locations and a consistent, repeatable and reliable experience across all markets.

With over 190 company owned branches in North America, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes can directly support the needs of your collision repair locations – whether you have one shop, or 100.

As the only paint manufacturer that is also a full service PBE distributor, we have everything you need — prod-

uct, service and expertise — and we bring it right to your door. If your goal is to standardize operations at all of your locations, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes has the platform and expertise to get you there.

In addition, we have company trained Sherwin-Williams professionals who directly manage your business. This means it's a Sherwin-Williams employee delivering product, training your employees and providing consultative service. This ensures a consistent and repeatable experience, across all your locations, that will generate profitable results.

All told, this combination of direct distribution and company trained employees is a really powerful difference. In terms of speed and consistency, we are the one-stop shop providing standardized processes for all of your locations.

This difference will allow you to have a single, consistent, trainable experience for all your facilities.

Only Sherwin-Williams company-owned branches are able to act quickly to serve customers specifically by community so that not only your paint, but all your associated product needs, can be met from one provider and delivered with unquestioned service.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes

(800) 798-5872

www.sherwin-automotive.com



STECK MANUFACTURING

www.steckmfg.com

Soft-strike 4-piece aluminum conversion kit



Steck Manufacturing Company has released another winning tool kit: With many vehicles using aluminum now, including the new Ford F-150 body, using your everyday steel tools can cause galvanic corrosion on aluminum components. Many rubber dollies are not heavy enough to work effectively doing body repair.

Maximize your existing steel body tool investment by using Soft Strike Aluminum Covers to also work on aluminum body components.

Soft Strike Rubber Dolly Body Covers and the Soft Strike Dinging Spoon Cover are made from Buna rubber for use on a steel heel dolly or a dinging spoon.

The Soft Strike Dolly Body Cover also eliminates the problem of a rubber dolly not being heavy enough to work effectively by allowing a technician to simply add the cover to his existing steel dolly.

The Soft Strike Hammer Cover, made from vinyl, allows the quick and

easy transition from using the body tools on steel to aluminum, without the worry of cross contamination and galvanic corrosion.

The Soft Strike Covers eliminate the need to invest in redundant, special aluminum application tools. They allow the safe and uncomplicated conversion of existing steel tools to work on aluminum; the removable covers prevent cross contamination and galvanic corrosion.

Check out the Soft Strike 4-Piece Aluminum Conversion Kit, which retails for \$75 on Steck's web page at www.steckmfg.com.

See your Steck dealer and pick up your Soft Strike Cover Kit today!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Steck Manufacturing Company, Inc.

(800) 227-8325

www.steckmfg.com

U.S. CHEMICAL & PLASTICS

www.uschem.com

The collision repair product experts

ISO-CERTIFIED U.S. CHEMICAL & PLASTICS OFFERS EVERYTHING FROM FILLERS AND PUTTIES TO 2K SPRAYMAX AEROSOLS AND INNOVATIVE ORION ABRASIVES.

With over six decades of experience, U.S. Chemical & Plastics sets the standard for high performance body repair, refinishing, masking and accessory products. Professionals depend on USC for premium fillers, putties, fiberglass repair, masking products, refinish coatings, truck bed liners, abrasives, aerosols and more.

Quality is more than a word to us, it's a commitment. Our quality control systems have delivered satisfied customers around the globe for over half a century and our ISO 9001:2008 Certification proves



our commitment to consistent quality, improvement and satisfaction.

We develop new, innovative products that help you succeed. And our best-selling products, like Icing and Duraglas, are trusted worldwide.

Featured products

AG47™ Lightweight GRIP Filler is formulated with a proprietary resin blend for maximum adhesion, sanding and performance. **Z-TEK™ Adhesion Booster** maximizes bonds to bare steel, galvanized metals and aluminum. And **INVISX™ Micro-Perfecting Surface Technology** provides a smooth, pinhole free finish.

ORION™ Advanced Film Technology by USC Abrasives is a premium bright-orange film, with the most advanced backing, grit, resin and engineering. It has been proven to outperform competitive film by up to 20%.

ORION Patented SynWave™ Technology Discs simultaneously sands flat and



curved surfaces without gouging – reducing finish sanding by as much as 50%. **DEFENDER®-PRO Epoxy Truck Bed Liner** with Kevlar® delivers adhesion, durability, chemical resistance, toughness and maximum fade protection with easy shake and spray technology.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

U.S. Chemical & Plastics

600 Nova Drive SE
Massillon, OH 44646
(800) 321-0672

www.uschem.com

www.YouTube.com/USCAutomotive

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THE LAST DETAIL [✓]

After teaching a seminar recently, I received an email from an attendee who works in a shop in Mississippi. I had reminded attendees that the automakers recommend (and I-CAR teaches) that before technicians do any welding on vehicles, they should first disconnect the vehicle battery and remove (or pull back) any wiring harness or electronic components that are within 12 inches of the weld area.

The gentleman from Mississippi asked about some of the electrical issues if the technician is using a "memory saver," which is a low-cost device that typically uses a 9-volt battery plugged into the car's auxiliary power outlet (or cigarette lighter) to keep power directed toward the car's radio or other components to maintain their memory settings. He wondered if a memory saver was a good alternative to disconnecting the battery and losing some electronic memory information.

I was pretty sure I knew the answer, but decided to put it out to some technical experts I know and respect in this industry. Their unanimous conclusion: They don't recommend the use of memory savers.

"We do not use memory savers," said Will Latuff, manager of the fourth-generation Latuff Brothers collision repair business in St. Paul, Minn. "They are not effective or worth the risk."

Jeff Peevy, I-CAR's director of field operations, concurred. "A memory saver can complete circuits that removing the battery opens in order to protect the system, and so a memory saver could put systems at risk," he said.

George Hogan, a business development manager with Axalta Coating Systems, agreed that welding has the potential to expose vehicle electronics to overly high voltages and amperages. "There is also likely increased risk of fault codes being stored if the circuitry is exposed to unexpected signals if the modules are 'awake,' powered up from either a connected battery or a memory saver installed," he said.

Hogan said he recently spoke with an automaker engineer who noted that some vehicle electronic systems stay powered-up, even with the key off.

"Think of keyless entry systems, as they are always looking for a signal from the electronic key," Hogan said. This could put these systems at additional risk if welding is done on the vehicle without appropriate steps being taken first.

"I agree with the others," wrote Chuck Olsen, director of advanced diagnostics and technical support for Collision Diagnostic Services, the company that can remotely read and reset diagnostic codes on

MEMORY SAVERS NOT ENDORSED

Question from a shop receives unanimous response from industry technical experts

“A memory saver installed while making repairs provides an electrical path and defeats the purpose of removing the battery.”

a vehicle anywhere in the country using a tool a shop connects to the vehicle and the Internet. "A memory saver installed while making repairs provides an electrical path through the system and defeats the purpose of removing the battery. They may be OK to use for a simple battery replacement procedure, but not during other repairs."

Larry Montanez is a former I-CAR instructor and area training coordinator in the Northeastern United States and a collision damage analyst with P&L Consultants, LLC, and Lange Technical Services, Ltd. He also weighed in on the topic.

"I do not recommend memory savers, nor does I-CAR," Montanez said. "Memory savers can allow airbags to deploy or allow some sensitive electronic components to become damaged. Electro-magnetic induction (EMI) can damage electronic modules. EMI can occasionally occur with MIG welding, but is very common with squeeze-type resistance spot welding, regardless of whether the battery is connected or not."

Montanez also noted that many OEMs require the supplemental restraint system (SRS) modules be unplugged during welding to prevent a short to ground in the system.

"Memory savers are just a risk not worth taking," he said.

I wasn't surprised by the answers I got to the question, but it was good to confirm it from multiple reliable sources. Don't take a chance on damaging expensive vehicle components by using a low-tech memory saver.

But also avoid work billed but not performed. Don't charge to R&I something if you just set it back, and don't charge to R&I the battery if you just disconnect it at the terminal. If you do it, charge for it; and if you charge for it, do it. 📧

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