

# ABAC NEWS

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*The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut*



## **Customer Service (CSI)** **Tony Ferraiolo** **A&R Body Specialty - ABAC President**

Remember when there used to be customer service? Businesses took pride in satisfying a customer. They went out of their way to make sure the customer returned, and referred others to their door. Somehow we lost this and we need to get customer service back into our business plan.

Ever had a problem with a product you purchased? Then you called their 1-800 number for customer service? The person you talk to on the line is someone from the other side of the world. When you are on the phone with that person, do you feel like the company you did business with really cares about you or your problem?

Everyone needs to learn from bad customer service. That feeling of someone not solving your problem, or caring about you could be the way your customer might feel. Once you have experienced poor customer service you will know what not to do in your business. There are a lot of CSI training courses out there. Ask your paint manufacturers that you purchase your supplies from, if they offer Business management classes. If you believe and understand that customer service is vital to your business success, you can start on a plan to increase, monitor and succeed in CSI. In our shop we value customer satisfaction. We pick up and deliver customers if they need a ride. We set up rentals, appraiser inspections. We explain the repair process and let

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them know their options on parts used. Communicate with them throughout the whole repair. Explain why the insurer's estimate is different from your final invoice of repairs. Update the rental company, so they don't tell your customer that their rental is up. Explain the final invoice and unpaid balance. Final inspect, clean and detail the vehicle for delivery. So the customer's vehicle has now left the shop. The customer was very happy and all is good. This is where CSI really kicks in. Remember, your customer expected their vehicle would be repaired properly and that is why they brought their car to you. Follow up a week or two after vehicle has left your shop. Call; send a letter, an e-mail or whatever you feel comfortable to do. In follow up, ask your customer if everything is ok with the repair. If something is not to their expectations, please tell them to call or stop by. A customer that is not satisfied will tell more people than a customer that was satisfied with your service.

***Don't let that happen to you.***

A satisfied customer is your best advertisement. They will refer you to everyone that asks them for a repair shop. Soon your business will be steady with all those happy customer referrals. Ask a customer that you don't know how they got your name. This is very important. You need to know how your new customers are finding you. What advertisement works for your company? I do this and much more in my business. We are in our 24<sup>th</sup> year of business. We have steady flow of work all the time with a great customer base. We have no Insurance company contracts. We do the best work we can for our customers. Without satisfied customers your business will not succeed. Earn your customers one by one, and keep them.

The ABAC is working on education meetings, that will cover management training, advanced estimates, marketing your business and much more. Get involved in your Association, attend meetings. If there is anything you want from your ABAC visit our website [www.abacomm.com](http://www.abacomm.com) or please contact us at 203-592-6846

*Tony Ferraiolo*

ABAC President

## ***ABAC Membership Alert!***

**To all ABAC Members:**

**If anyone gets a letter from the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) proposing to change your shop's classification code, you should immediately contact your insurance agent and/or file an objection to reclassification. NCCI has shown an intention to change repair codes from "Automobile Body Repair" (8393) to "Automobile Service or Repair Centers & Drivers" (8380). This change could result in a large premium increase. It should be emphasized that a shop's right to challenge a classification code must be done immediately, and in some cases within 30 days of notice from NCCI.**

# Unique New Industry Web Site Launched

Press Release  
12-18-2013

Headline: Unique New Industry Web Site Launched

Florida: GBSM Enterprises, LLC announced today the launch of their new web site designed specifically for the Collision Industry [www.gobodyshopmanager.com](http://www.gobodyshopmanager.com).

GBSM spokesperson said "The idea for the site came from a conversation with a frustrated body shop manager after he had been trying to find something on the web for his business and had spent way too much time in the attempt with little or no results. He said, "There's got to be an easier way to find the things I need for my business." From that comment came the idea for Gobodyshopmanager.com.

The site was designed to give shop owners and managers one place to go to find anything and everything they need for their business. In the past, finding something specific to the collision industry on a normal web search could be a very challenging effort for the average person. In order to give body shop owners and managers the choices they need we have incorporated a large variety of vendors, service providers and related businesses in the site. There are over 40 different business categories and hundreds of sub categories for owners and managers to choose from. Adding new and updating vendors and suppliers will remain an ongoing process for us. We want the site to remain as fresh and current as possible at all times."

The spokesperson continued, "Industry vendors and suppliers that have an interest in continuing to be found on [www.gobodyshopmanager.com](http://www.gobodyshopmanager.com) and have already been pre-enrolled on the site can become an annual member simply by logging on and following the prompts to claim their profile page. From there they can personalize their profile page to best reflect the products and services they provide, If someone is not pre-enrolled they can do so by clicking on register now on the home page.

The site will also give body shops the opportunity to be found by vehicle owners. We are currently developing GBSM so in the future when a vehicle owner is in need of collision related services our site will come up in a web search and simply ask them for their zip code. Once on the GBSM site the vehicle owner can refine the search. We give them a choice of five different types of shops, and over 35 different services that might be provided by a shop like DPR or aluminum repair.

Additionally the site will provide members both body shops and vendors a place to create a Post, like a training event or a meeting they are planning, employment opportunities in their business, equipment they have for sale or a business they may want to sell.

We have also made it possible for an individual looking for employment either locally or across the country to post them self on the site. It's important to remember that an entire industry will have the ability to see the details of all posts on GBSM 24/7 even if they are not a member.

The site is the first of it's kind and we have no direct affiliation with any single industry product or service provider allowing us to serve the collision industry from a neutral, non-biased position.

We have spent over a year developing the site and creating a pre-enrolled database of over 50,000 body shops and 10,000 vendors, suppliers and related businesses and we look forward to all of them becoming members."

Should anyone have a question or need more information please contact us at [admin@gobodyshopmanager.com](mailto:admin@gobodyshopmanager.com)

## OEM Collision Repair Roundtable Website Seeks to Educate Consumers on Collision Repair Topics

***Gary Ledoux, chairman of the Roundtable, explains the details behind the creation of the organization's consumer outreach website.***

At the most recent Collision Industry Conference (CIC) meeting held in January in Palm Springs, Calif., the OEM Collision Repair Roundtable announced it had launched a new website designed to educate consumers on collision repair issues. The site, [crashrepairinfo.com](http://crashrepairinfo.com), presents information from the eleven vehicle manufacturers who are members of the Roundtable including: American Honda, Audi, Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Hyundai, Mazda, Nissan, Toyota, Volkswagen and Volvo.

Formed in 1998, and incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)(6) corporation in 2012, the Roundtable is a collision repair industry association composed of representatives from Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) vehicle manufacturers. Its mission is to continuously improve the quality of collision repair available to vehicle owners.

*CollisionWeek* asked Gary Ledoux, assistant national manager, Collision Parts and Service Marketing for American Honda Motor Co., Inc., who recently took over as chairman of the Roundtable to explain why the group decided to create the site, the types of information consumers need about collision repair and how it will evolve.

***CollisionWeek:*** Why did the Roundtable create the site?

***Ledoux:*** The average driver gets into an accident once every seven to ten years. It's a traumatic experience. And, because of the infrequency, many don't know where to turn for help or advice. Our site helps bridge that gap.

In the past, some auto manufacturers have placed "In Case Of Accident" folders in the glove box of every new car sold. This was very expensive and its effects were dubious. With a web site, supported by many of the largest OE's in the US, the information is more easily shared, more easily accessible at time of need, and more easily updated as new information becomes available, and old information is no longer valid.

***CollisionWeek:*** Specifically what are the most important or frequent types of information that your research shows consumers are lacking when it is necessary for them to have collision repair? How does the site help to inform consumers about these issues?

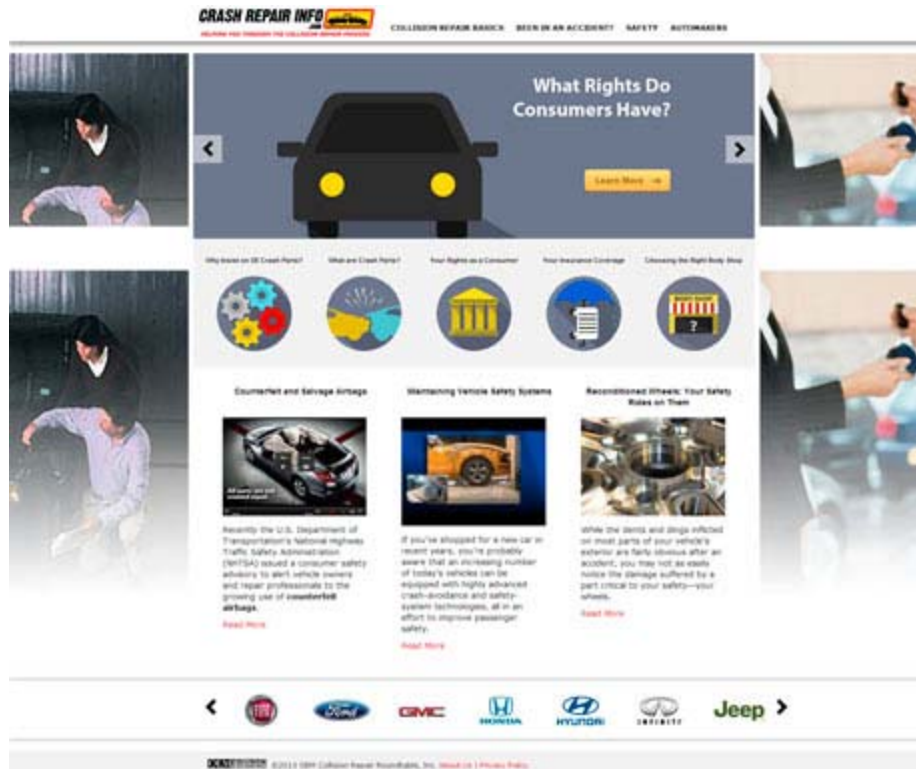
***Ledoux:*** Most people have no idea that anything other than OE collision parts exists for collision repair. Most assume that OE collision repair parts will be used on their cars and then are stunned when

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they learn that OE parts are not always used. They all know about aftermarket mechanical parts because they drive by auto parts stores all the time and they see ads on TV for things like oil filters and shocks but have no idea about collision-related parts. Our site spells out the difference between the various types of collision-related parts enabling the consumer to make an informed decision about the repair of their car.

We also want consumers to know there is a right way to repair a car and they should demand a proper and safe repair. Their lives may depend on it in a subsequent crash. Trained, competent technicians, using factory recommended procedures is the consumer’s best assurance that the job will be done right.



**CollisionWeek:** How will the site be marketed to consumers?

**Ledoux:** This is something we are looking at right now; the most effective, and yet cost-efficient way to get to consumers. It’s a real challenge to get people to look at something that may only affect them once every seven years or so. We are hoping that shops will use the site as a resource, and direct their customers to the site for information.

**CollisionWeek:** Beyond the current content, are there any plans for expansion or additions to the site?

**Ledoux:** As you might imagine, with about 25 people representing eleven different car companies, we are not at a loss for ideas about content. The biggest challenge right now however, is getting consumers to see what we already have up there, and that’s our current focus.

**Source:** [www.collisionweek.com](http://www.collisionweek.com)





## Reflecting on Aftermarket Parts

So I have good news and bad news. The good news is that everyone in the Association has apparently figured it all out. Or at least no one has any questions for me this quarter. The bad news – obviously – is that I am now back to musing about whatever I feel like.

Here's what's on my mind at the moment: aftermarket parts. It seems that no matter where I go or what I read, the topic of aftermarket parts comes up. It came up in our recent meeting with the DMV Commissioner and her staff; it came up in our recent meeting with Senator Blumenthal's staff; it came up at our recent board meeting; and it seems to be likewise catching the attention of the national and regional trade associations and industry publications.

So why is everyone so worked up about aftermarket parts? As best as I can tell, the consensus among most everyone outside of the insurance and aftermarket parts industries is that these parts have the potential to compromise the safety of repairs, including safety systems such as air bags; they risk voiding a manufacturer's warranty; they potentially violate the terms of your customer's lease or financing agreement; they may cause premature corrosion, paint problems and often fit poorly; and they likely cause the vehicle to have further diminished value at resale. There are, as such, many reasons why a repairer may prefer O.E.M. parts, particularly on newer vehicles. That's not to say there is no place for certain aftermarket parts, particularly where cost savings do not come at the expense of safety.

But what we have now, and why I believe everyone is getting so worked up, is an industry-wide push toward exclusive use of aftermarket parts, including structural parts, and even on newer vehicles. What is worse, it would appear that the driving force behind this movement is the insurance industry, with some companies apparently instructing its appraisers to write aftermarket parts on all repair estimates. This strikes me as one more example of oppressive insurers jamming something unsavory down this industry's throat in the name of cost savings.

It's no wonder the auto body industry is up in arms. You are being asked to put your reputation and seal of approval (and ultimately your legal liability) on each and every repair job. At the same time, you are being told to do so with inferior parts. Those two tasks are often incongruent. At the risk of being redundant: as a licensed professional, the quality and safety of your product rests entirely on your shoulders. It is not a defense at law to argue that the insurance company would not pay for O.E.M. parts.

In short, I can appreciate everyone's frustration and rightful attention to this issue. With the expansion of products like PartsTrader, the auto body industry cannot afford to fall asleep on this one.

The ABAC is in the process of compiling a consumer awareness bulletin. I would encourage you to review it, and share it with your customers and friends. It is a small step in the right direction. A well informed consumer is one of your best tactical defenses.

Stay warm.

***John Parese***

**Buckley & Wynne - Attorneys at Law**



# In The Headlights

*John M. Parese - Buckley & Wynne*



**John M. Parese**

**Buckley &  
Wynne**  
Connecticut Personal Injury Attorneys

**Buckley & Wynne** is pleased to announce that **John M. Parese** has joined the firm as a Partner. John will continue to focus his practice on personal injury litigation, insurance litigation, professional malpractice, and representing auto repair facilities. John has demonstrated a commitment to professionalism and competency, successfully trying many difficult cases and structuring countless other important settlements. In 2012, his peers voted him as an Officer of the New Haven County Bar Association (one of the youngest in the Association's history). Moreover, John has been recognized as a leader in the law by several professional associations, including Connecticut Magazine, the Connecticut Law Tribune, Connecticut Super Lawyers, and the National Trial Lawyers. John brings enthusiasm, compassion and zeal to the firm; and we are delighted to welcome him in as our partner.

**Phone: (800) 445-2278, (203) 776-2278 | Fax: (203) 776-3368**  
**685 State Street — New Haven, CT 06511**  
[www.buckleywynne.com](http://www.buckleywynne.com)

The ABAC also congratulates John on his personal achievement. John's professionalism, knowledge, legal counsel, and great article writing ability makes him a great asset to the Auto Body Association and our industry. Thank you John for all you do!

## LKQ Issues Aftermarket Wheel Recall Focus is on State of Connecticut

On October 30, LKQ Corporation and Keystone Automotive Industries Inc., collectively known as LKQ-Keystone, initiated a recall on a specific aftermarket replacement aluminum wheel, part number ALY63934U20N, identified on the inside of the wheel's casting as ALY99435U20N, likely sold between September 1, 2010 and April 30, 2013.

The recall is being conducted because of potential defects that could cause the wheel to fail and which could, in turn, lead to an accident resulting in serious injury or death.

The recalled part is a 7-spoke wheel design, containing the TWC logo, and the inside of one of the spokes will reflect part number ALY99435U20N.

LKQ-Keystone sent letters to consumers and collision repair shops that purchased this wheel to alert them to the recall. The company will replace the wheel on consumers' vehicles at no charge, and they have also informed shops that are affected that the company will replace the part and reimburse them for the costs associated with this replacement.

Thus far, the recall only seems to have affected shops and consumers in the state of Connecticut, and Tony Ferraiolo, President of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut (ABAC), feels that dissemination of information pertaining to this hazard is "extremely important to the consumer and the shop that installed this wheel. National attention to the potential dangers of using inferior wheels is also important at this time since wheel failures such as this can result in serious injuries or death."

Though the specific reason for the recall has not been released, ABAC is trying to determine what prompted the recall. Shops that may have installed one of these wheels should contact their customers to inform them of the recall.

Questions and concerns about the recall should be addressed with LKQ-Keystone's Milford location at 800-330-3745. For general questions regarding this recall, please contact LKQ at 877-539-7322.

*Source: [www.autobodynews.com](http://www.autobodynews.com)*



# Chrysler Sues LKQ Alleging Patent Infringement

***Suit alleges some aftermarket parts sold by LKQ Corporation infringe Chrysler design patents. LKQ believes suit without merit.***

On Thursday, January 16, Chrysler Group LLC filed a lawsuit against LKQ Corporation and Keystone Automotive Industries, Inc. in the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Michigan. The complaint alleges that LKQ and Keystone infringed upon 10 design patents owned by Chrysler covering Ram brand vehicles.

As evidence that LKQ knowingly infringed upon Chrysler's patents, the complaint cited LKQ's 2012 10-K Annual Report that stated, "U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Records indicate that OEMs are seeking more design patents than they have in the past. To the extent that the OEMs are successful with intellectual property infringement claims, we could be restricted or prohibited from selling certain aftermarket products, which could have an adverse effect on our business."

Lawsuits involving automotive design patents started over nine years ago. In December 2005, [a similar suit was filed by Ford](#) with the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) claiming that certain aftermarket parts violate patents held by the automaker. Keystone Automotive Industries, Inc. was identified as a respondent in that action. Ford's patents were upheld and in April 2009, [LKQ reached a deal with Ford](#) to sell copies of Ford patented crash parts.

Last November, the [Automotive Body Parts Association \(ABPA\) filed a lawsuit](#) in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas against Ford Global Technologies, LLC that seeks to have design patents for body parts ruled invalid.

Chrysler is seeking a permanent injunction against LKQ from further infringement along with an award for profits earned by the sale of parts covered by the patents, or Chrysler's lost profits "...and/or a reasonable royalty and other damages arising from Defendants' infringement of the Ram Design Patents, in an amount to be proven at trial, together with prejudgment and post-judgment interest and costs."

The complaint seeks triple damages and attorneys' fees as provided by law.

In a statement released Jan 20, LKQ states, "We believe that the lawsuit is without merit and will defend it vigorously. Moreover, the parts we sell that allegedly relate to these design patents represent an immaterial amount of our revenue. They represent less than one-tenth of one percent (0.001) of our estimated 2013 total revenue and less than one-half of one-tenth of one percent (0.0005) of our estimated total revenue for all the years since the first patent was granted (2009 through 2013).

LKQ continued referencing its agreement with Ford, "We have forged mutually-beneficial business relationships with other auto manufacturers. As previously disclosed, we have had a license arrangement with Ford since 2009. The license arrangements allow us to sell aftermarket parts covered by certain patents in exchange for a license fee."

***Source: [www.collisionweek.com](http://www.collisionweek.com)***

## Fourteen Ft. Wayne, IN, Shops Opt out of Select Service Citing PartsTrader

In December 2013, State Farm experienced a dramatic reduction in the number of shops participating in Select Service (their direct repair program) in the Fort Wayne, IN, area due to the implementation of PartsTrader. Of the 22 local shops participating in the DRP, 14 (over 60%) opted out of the program, though some of these shops had been on the program for decades. Several shop owners and managers were willing to discuss their reasons for being removed from the Select Service.

Todd Bonecutter, General Manager at Glenbrook Collision at 100 W. Coliseum Blvd in Ft. Wayne, said he opposes PartsTrader as a mandated tool. "We don't like being told where we can buy our parts or being prevented from buying parts from our usual vendors. This is just a stepping stone for the insurers to dictate other things in the collision industry. They start with parts, but it's only a matter of time before they move on to paints and other materials."

Jeff Rice, Estimator at Koester Body Shop at 6818 SR 930 East, also in Ft. Wayne, agrees that the changes to the Select Service program are a bad thing which is why his shop opted out when use of PartsTrader became mandated. He also notes that since being removed from the program, there have been big delays in getting State Farm to get out to the shop to look at new jobs.

The owner of Dan T. Gratz Body Shop, Dan Gratz, said PartsTrader is "just another way of keeping us under State Farm's thumb and having them dictate how we run our businesses. They are looking for a way to make more money off the little guy, the collision shops... Insurer interference is getting worse and worse. If we don't take a stand now, when will we? State Farm needs to learn that there are shops who will take a stand for the right thing."

Since the removal of these shops, State Farm has been using small, sometimes uncertified, shops that don't have the proper training and equipment, according to Gratz who sees this as a "lawsuit waiting to happen... State Farm doesn't seem to realize that they are running shops out of business by doing things like implementing PartsTrader which reduces our profits. If we can't make money, we will have to close our doors. Who is going to repair cars then?"

Eric Knipscheer, owner of Knipscheer Collision Center at 747 W Superior St in Fort Wayne, opted out of the Select Service because PartsTrader did not offer parts from any local suppliers. He prefers buying locally for the benefit of his local economy and "really doesn't appreciate someone telling [him] where to buy his parts."

All four of these shops currently participate in four to six total DRPs, and the consensus seems to be that the Select Service program wasn't particularly problematic until the use of PartsTrader was enforced. All of these gentlemen agreed that they'd be willing to renegotiate their DRP contracts with State Farm if the insurer ceased to mandate the use of PartsTrader.

When asked about the advice they'd give to shops on the Select Service in areas where PartsTrader is not yet mandated, everyone agreed that whether a shop should remain on the program after PartsTrader is implemented is a

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personal decision each shop must make. Bonecutter suggests that “you understand the ins and outs of the program so you can evaluate your options and make an educated decision in the best interests of your business.”

Gratz believes that shops should also consider contacting some of the shops in Fort Wayne that opted out to learn more about the program and why they made the decision to withdraw from the Select Service. Knipscheer cautions that if PartsTrader is not resisted, “other insurers will adopt similar programs if we allow it, and shops will lose the freedom to choose their suppliers and to make a profit.”

Mike Hartman, former president of the Indiana Auto Body Association (IABA), is also paying close attention to this situation. Though Hartman Auto Body still participates in Select Service since he is located in an outlying rural area where PartsTrader is not yet mandated, once this changes, he will “probably bail out. My sign says Hartman Auto Body, not State Farm Auto Body! I’m not willing to be forced to use PartsTrader because I see no benefit to it whatsoever, especially if there are no local vendors on the system.”

From his conversations with some of the shops that chose to opt out, Hartman has found “the shops are not opposed to using parts procurement systems, but they are opposed to having it shoved down their throats. Owners don’t like someone coming in and telling them how to run their shops.”

Another problem cited is that since parts vendors in Fort Wayne are not participating in PartsTrader, shops have to order parts from outside their area, from suppliers they don’t have relationships with. This negatively impacts the shops’ cycle times as they’re forced to wait to receive their parts, and this affects their scorecard with State Farm.

One Fort Wayne dealership opted out of Select Service because the program forbade them from purchasing parts from their own parts department since it wasn’t on PartsTrader, and they didn’t like the loss of control in choosing their parts, particularly in being unable to supply their own body shop.

Yet another criticism of PartsTrader is that it cuts the collision repair facility out of the parts profit. In New Zealand, the parts procurement program has progressed and expanded to include paints and materials also, and Hartman fears this happening in the U.S. because “you can’t sustain your business on labor rates alone.”

Hartman also notes that the shops that opted out are seeing State Farm take longer to write estimates, sometimes taking as long as a week to even visit the shop. Because of this, longtime customers are being steered to shops on the Select Service where estimates are being written immediately. In one such instance, a shop waited eight days for an appraiser to come out to view a claim; meanwhile, several appraisers from State Farm visited the shop for supplements, yet they refused to write an estimate on the new job, according to Hartman.

Though State Farm is making it difficult on the shops that opted out, Hartman believes these shops are doing a fabulous job with explaining the reasons for the delays and educating consumers on their right to choose. Customers have been pretty understanding, and some even dropped State Farm because they were displeased with how the insurer is treating the shops and their customers.

The 14 shops, many of them larger facilities and dealerships, which opted out of Select Service were doing approximately 80% of State Farm’s business in Fort Wayne before PartsTrader was mandated. The shops that remain are

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struggling to keep up with the increase in volumes while State Farm presumably seeks new shops in the Fort Wayne area to join Select Service.

IABA continues to monitor the situation closely. In October, Mississippi's John Mosely and Lloyd Bush attended IABA's meeting to discuss PartsTrader, and this topic will certainly be pursued at the association's next meeting. Members of IABA include shops that opted out, as well as those who stayed on Select Service. Hartman thinks "it's really cool to see so many Fort Wayne shops sticking together. This is a really competitive area, and it's amazing to see these shops supporting one another. I've never seen such solidarity."

State Farm's has issued the following response: "Repairers who want to leave our Select Service program can inform State Farm and remove themselves. We are aware that some repairers in the Ft. Wayne area have recently done that. Our priority is to continue to meet the needs of our customers in the Ft. Wayne area, and we continue to do all we can to do that."

Source: [www.autobodynews.com](http://www.autobodynews.com)

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