

# ABAC NEWS

September  
October  
2016

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut



**UPDATE: Hyundai announces new video attacking 'counterfeit' parts**

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**President's Message**  
"In the Blink of An Eye"

**An Inside Look:**  
**Shop of The Month**  
&  
**Meet Your Board**

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# Live Training & Education is the Focus at Latest ABAC Meeting

It’s now become the norm that when the ABAC announces their Quarterly Meeting they can depend on great turnout along with tremendous support.

The September Meeting of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut was not an exception. Over 140 shop owners, members and guests gathered at the Country House Restaurant for the latest offering of education and training from this expanding association



ABAC President Tony Ferraiolo began the evening by thanking everyone for the tremendous turnout for the first meeting of the season for the ABAC. He then continued by announcing the sponsors for the event:

### Primary Sponsor:



Kevin Lombard & Nick Fontaine

Co-Sponsors:

- Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Designer Office Systems
- Paint World

Tony then announced the new ABAC Members

- Traynor Collision – Milford
- Dulin Collision – Milford
- Powsner Auto Metal Works – New Haven
- Giovanni Auto Repair – Branford
- Unlimited Auto Body – Stamford
- Monaco Ford – Glastonbury

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Tony then thanked Supporting Advertisers and Corporate Sponsors of the ABAC News. Said Ferraiolo, ***“Our Vendors are finding the value of supporting our association. Let’s remember that these vendors play a significant role in the financial operation of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. I ask all shop owners to remember these vendors when looking to purchase parts, supplies, paint etc. for your shop needs. If you are using a vendor who is not a supporting advertiser, ask them why not and tell them to get on board!”***

Ferraiolo then brought up the next meeting that will be held on **Monday November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 with special guest speaker, Mike Anderson.** This will be a **“sold out”** event with close to 200 people in attendance so make your reservations early. More information will follow!

President Ferraiolo mentioned a few subjects before getting the presentations rolling. Current events including, meeting with the DOI, lawsuits, meeting with Senator Blumenthal about CAPA Certified parts, the ABAC “What Now?” mobile app, among other events and issues. ***“Listen to what your customer wants! You don’t have to do what the insurance company tells you to do. Get involved, get your customer involved,”*** added Ferraiolo.

ABAC Board of Director Bill Romaniello then read the Anti-Trust Law for everyone.

The first guest speaker for the evening was Ed Rachwal, President of Designer Office Systems, Inc. Mr. Rachwal covered the Mitchell Refinish Materials Calculator, including proper usage, common mistakes and how you can try the RMC. Great product, great information. Ed then provided us more information on Toyota’s Adaptive Estimating Program. You can reach Ed Rachwal at 508-278-7839.



After dinner we welcomed our feature speaker for the evening, Kevin Lombard, Owner/President of Lombard Equipment. Kevin was joined by his team: Michelle Caron, Office Manager; Mikayla Mallard, parts and service, Nick Fontaine, Joe O’Neill, Tim Cranfill and Ray Stateham, Sales/Service techs.

Members and attendees were offered a thorough and detailed presentation covering the many products offered by Lombard Equipment along with history of vehicles and the advancement of repairing these vehicles. They gave a detailed explanation on why aluminum is becoming more and more popular in today’s vehicles. They also explained how to weld aluminum, **did live demonstrations** on how to straighten and rivet/bond aluminum panels, and did a live demonstration on Squeeze Type Resistance Spot Welding and Plastic Welding.

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The equipment that was set up in the meeting area was:

- Pro Spot SP-5 MIG Welder
- Pro Spot Aluminum Work Station
- Pro Spot PR-5 Rivet Gun
- Pro Spot i4 Spot Welder
- Pro Spot Hybrid battery operated spot welder
- Pro Spot NP-3 Plastic Welder



Lombard Equipment has over 30 years' experience in the Collision Repair Systems industry with **over 50 million dollars in equipment sales**. Their technicians are factory trained to answer all your questions and fully service every system they sell. Their Factory Certified Instructors offer training at your business or our facility class rooms. If you are deciding on a complete new collision repair system or looking to enhance your existing system, Lombard Equipment will help you to determine what's right for your business. Lombard Equipment can **service any brand** of collision repair equipment and we recondition, service, and sell complete pre-owned systems too.



Lombard Equipment is one of the most well recognized and respected collision repair system suppliers in the business, serving the industry since 1991. Their commitment to quality and service is second to none.

They offer top of the line equipment, cutting edge technology, and a full training package to keep your business running efficiently and cost effectively. Their Techs can train your staff at your facility or in their training center. Lombard Equipment Repair Techs can travel to your shop for service, sales and help you with certification. **Did you know Lombard Equipment offers TRADE INS when you purchase new systems?**

Give them a call, they will be happy to answer any questions you have and help you acquire just the right collision repair system for your business!

Kevin and his staff then ended their video presentation with a Q&A session and all in attendance were then invited to see Lombard Equipment's products live and in use. Lombard Equipment had all of the rooms in the event center set-up with the different products in real time!

**You can contact Lombard Equipment at 800.422.PULL (7855) or by email: [lombardeq@yahoo.com](mailto:lombardeq@yahoo.com)**

The ABAC continues its education and training with the next meeting being held on Monday November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Country House Restaurant. The guest speaker/presenter will be Mike Anderson of Collision Advice and the CRASH Network. **Make your reservations early. This will be a sold out event.**





## ABAC President Tony Ferraiolo In The Blink of an Eye

***They say "In the blink of an eye life changes."***

I can tell you that is true. On August 29<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm life changed for my family. A Monday like every other. Shop's busy, and looking forward to winding down and going home. A phone call from a neighbor, saying that my son Lucian has been hit by a car crossing the road.

***Life changed in the blink of an eye.***

Thirty-nine days later, I can't think of anything more important than spending time with my son. He lays in a hospital bed working hard every day to get rehabbed to be able to return home with his family.

Life has changed for our family. If not for our faith, health care professionals, Bicycle helmet and a lot of prayers, we may not have been so fortunate.

If you are to take something positive from our family tragedy, please take time for your family, enjoy your children appreciate them and Cherish the time you have with them. You may not get a second chance.

We all work long and hard in this industry, our businesses are a huge priority, but remember ***"In the blink of an eye life can change."***

I would like to thank everyone in this association who have expressed concerns, support and prayers for my family. A very special appreciation to my wife who has not left his side. His wellbeing and updating the many friends and family who have been so concerned has become her full time job.

**Thank you everyone.**

Hope to see you all at the November 7<sup>th</sup> (Monday ) membership meeting with special guest speaker Mike Anderson.

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

## UPDATE: Hyundai announces new video attacking 'counterfeit' parts

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Hyundai has added another video to its campaign promoting new OEM collision parts, the company announced Thursday. The video "Good to Know – Counterfeit Parts" on YouTube and Hyundai's Consumer Awareness site points out serious deficiencies in a counterfeit airbag installed in a 2011 Honda Sonata. Posted on YouTube on Sept. 7, it had 925 views as of Friday afternoon. In the film, a Hyundai interviewer asks "Scott" (actor Jason Adler) to evaluate two airbags, both stamped with the Hyundai logo. "Aren't they both airbags?" Scott asks. "Yes, you're right. But they're not the same," the host replies.

Both men then agree that neither would like to get into a car crash needing an airbag. (The dialogue overall is a bit infomercialish, but not to the wonderful degree of Howie Long learning about the F-150 from Chevy.) If an airbag deploys that's not "a Hyundai genuine part that's been tested to meet safety requirements, you risk injury, or worse," the interviewer states.

Crash-test footage shows the fake Hyundai Sonata airbag failing, and a narrator warns that customers won't always get a Hyundai part in a repair. "I didn't know that two parts that look so similar could make such a huge difference," Scott says. "Did you know that often times, you have the choice to request Hyundai Genuine Parts if you've been involved in an accident?" the interviewer asks. "No, I had no clue. That's good to know," Scott says. Since the airbag referenced is truly counterfeit — it is fraudulently representing itself as the real deal, including the Hyundai logo — the video is a little confusing. Seen alone on YouTube, the film seems to imply body shops are abetting the *criminal* copies, putting them on cars willy-nilly unless the vehicle owners think to ask for a non-counterfeit part. That's not exactly Hyundai's point. Besides truly counterfeit parts, Hyundai is criticizing the legal but still controversial practice in collision repair and DIY fixes of imitation aftermarket parts. (And remanufactured and used parts, too, though those were at least from Hyundai when they were new).

"Hyundai Motor America's intention is to let our owners know that counterfeit parts are being used, no matter where they are sourced," Hyundai parts sales and service senior manager Tiffany Stroupe said in a statement. "It is important that Hyundai vehicle owners know that unless they request Hyundai genuine parts, they may be subject to the parts that the insurance companies have requested or that the body shops source. Owners need to be actively involved in that part of the process." Aftermarket parts aren't illegal — they're not representing themselves to be *from Hyundai*; each is sold under its own brand. But they are representing themselves to be "like kind and quality" to Hyundai and fit on a Hyundai vehicle. (Whether they infringe on design patents is another debate.)

The OEM is arguing that based on the illegal counterfeit Sonata airbag that looks identical to a Hyundai part but malfunctions, a legal generic (or salvage) part that fits on a Hyundai might not work well either, and it's warning customers that insurers and shops might not have their best interests at heart.

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“Yes, the point of the video is to educate customers about their right to demand Hyundai genuine parts and the consequences of not doing so, as any non-Hyundai genuine part is not going to perform as intended and will not have the same the fit, finish and quality as Hyundai genuine parts,” Stroup said.

“Due to perceived high costs, motorists sometimes choose, or are told by their insurance company, to visit independent repair shops that are not recognized by the automakers for collision repairs,” Hyundai wrote in a news release for media accompanying the video. “Some of these shops offer copies of original parts or recycled components from existing collision-damaged vehicles at a lower cost. Often these parts are unsafe for long-term use and pose a great danger to safety. Counterfeit and recycled crash parts also affect the vehicle’s appearance and decrease its resale value. Hyundai encourages the use of OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) parts on all Hyundai vehicle repairs because they are designed and manufactured to meet Hyundai’s engineering specifications. Hyundai does not recommend the use, or re-use, of components removed or recycled from an existing collision-damaged vehicle. Owners need to be aware, it can be hard finding out if their repair facility is using non-original equipment parts or parts that have been damaged due to a prior collision or element exposure.”

OEMs over the past year have campaigned against aftermarket and recycled parts, including Hyundai’s earlier film an done from GM this summer.

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

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## Millions of State Farm Insured with Non-OEM Parts Get Class-Action Status in \$7.6B Judge Conflict Case

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Millions of current and former policyholders now have a stake in a lawsuit alleging State Farm conspired to elect a judge which helped overturn a \$1.05 billion decision over non-OEM auto body parts used on the customers’ vehicles. U.S. Southern District of Illinois Judge David R. Herndon on Friday approved class-action certification to what could be more than 4 million policyholders in *Hale et al v. State Farm et al*, making them eligible for a piece of the \$7.6 billion lawsuit if successful.

More than a decade ago, an Illinois jury found and an state appellate court mostly upheld that State Farm had misled policyholders nationwide about the “like kind and quality” nature of the parts used on their vehicles, and class-action status of the nationwide victims was appropriate.

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“In regard to the consumer fraud claim, the record contained evidence that State Farm engaged in an ongoing course of conduct nationwide, in which it specified inferior non-OEM parts whenever those parts were cheaper and available, that State Farm knew those parts were inferior, that State Farm did not inform its policyholders of the problems with those parts, and that State Farm affirmatively misrepresented the condition of those parts by assuring policyholders on the damage estimates and in brochures that it specified only ‘quality replacement parts’ and that it guaranteed the parts at no additional cost,” the appellate court wrote of the original Williamson County, Ill., circuit court proceedings. “ ... There was also evidence that State Farm’s guarantee that it would replace non-OEM parts at no cost to the unsatisfied policyholders upon demand was bogus. If the aftermarket part was warranted by the part manufacturer, the policyholder was required to contact the manufacturer for relief. In most cases, these part manufacturers were located outside the United States in Taiwan or another country. If the policyholder demanded replacement of the non-OEM part, a State Farm adjuster was required to investigate the claim, and if it was approved, an OEM replacement part was installed but the cost was charged to the policyholder as an indemnity payment.”

State Farm appealed the *Avery et al v. State Farm* decision to the Illinois Supreme Court, but no decision was made until 2005. By then, Judge Lloyd Karmeier had been elected to the court, and subsequently joined the majority in ruling in favor of State Farm and reversing the verdict and class-certification for the policyholders. Ironically, on Monday, the court announced that Karmeier had been elected chief justice on Sept. 12. His three-year term starts Oct. 26.

The new *Hale* lawsuit argues that Karmeier (who is not a defendant but will be deposed) should have recused himself or been prevented from hearing the case, as State Farm allegedly played a huge role in his campaign and contributed more than \$4 million of Karmeier’s \$4.8 million war chest. State Farm denies those allegations. Karmeier denies any bias, Saint Louis Public Radio reported in a comprehensive 2015 piece on the case, part of which first appeared in Illinois Issues.

“According to a timeline provided by Karmeier, he initially wasn’t going to participate in the case,” Saint Louis Public Radio wrote. “But when his colleagues were still deadlocked in January 2005, Karmeier stepped in, voting to join the majority opinion overturning the billion-dollar victory. Eight days later, lawyers for the plaintiffs filed a motion asking that Karmeier not participate in *Avery*. The full court initially denied the motion, but eventually ruled it was for Karmeier to decide alone. He stayed in. On August 18, 2005, the justices issued a 4-2 decision in favor of State Farm.” In 2009, however, the U.S. Supreme Court — which declined to hear *Avery* in 2006, according to Saint Louis Public Radio — threw out a West Virginia case “involving a party’s political and financial influence to elect a justice whose vote it sought for its appeal,” according to the *Hale* suit. Because of *Caperton et al v. A.T. Massey Coal Co, et al*, the plaintiffs argue, it’s fair to raise the same federal issue with the State Farm non-OEM parts decision.

Before going federal in 2012, the plaintiffs had petitioned the Illinois Supreme Court in 2011 to reconsider the case based on the West Virginia *Caperton* ruling.

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However, the Illinois Supreme Court refused without discussion. (Saint Louis Public Radio wrote that Karmeier sat out the 2011 decision.) The class-action certification doesn't mean State Farm has lost the case, but the certification raises the stakes should it and the other defendants fail. The new class is basically that of Avery, which means there's a lot more to lose from the insurer.

"Plaintiffs' expert Thomas Myers testified that plaintiffs' damages are \$7,612,643,917.00," Herndon wrote. "Myers performed the calculation based on the formula supplied by plaintiffs' lawyers. Understandably, defendants dispute this figure and the method used to calculate this figure." Of course, it also means the gigantic class wouldn't be able to pursue their own actions, either. But logistically and from a "clout" basis, that's probably not realistic either. State Farm had argued that the different class members would have suffered different degrees of injury, but Herndon agreed with the plaintiffs that the damage here wasn't actually related to the parts on their specific cars but to their right to an impartial judge.

"There appears to be no differences among class members with respect to proving liability, causation and class-wide damages," Herndon wrote. "According to plaintiffs, defendants did not take different positions/actions as to the individual class members. The claims are for an independent legal wrong: the illegal acts or omissions by defendants. Plaintiffs' theory of liability is based on defendants' alleged conspiracy to secretly subvert the judicial process and deprive plaintiffs of an impartial forum. All the members of the class will prove the loss of something of value – the Avery judgment – through common evidence. Whether plaintiffs' theory fails or prevails, it does so for the entire proposed class."

If you're part of this group, you're (again) a plaintiff: *All persons who were members of the certified class in Avery v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., No. 97-L-114 (First Jud. Cir. Williamson County, Ill.), more specifically described as:*

*All persons in the United States, except those residing in Arkansas and Tennessee, who, between July 28, 1987, and February 24, 1998, (1) were insured by a vehicle casualty insurance policy issued by Defendant State Farm and (2) made a claim for vehicle repairs pursuant to their policy and had non-factory authorized and/or non-OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) 'crash parts' installed on their vehicles or else received monetary compensation determined in relation to the cost of such parts.*

It's unclear from that whether some Illinoisans and Californians the plaintiffs had proposed for exclusion will make the cut or not. The plaintiffs had suggested excluding anyone with an Illinois policy before April 16, 1994, and with a California policy before Sept. 26, 1996. State Farm had argued there was no good way to figure out the identities of the folks allegedly harmed decades ago, but the court disagreed.

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

## Using Courts to Level the Playing Field



I just finished a jury trial in a car accident case. Every time I try one of these cases, I get to speak with individuals regarding their feelings about the legal system, lawsuits, money damages and so forth. I am regularly disappointed in the collective skepticism and cynicism of our neighbors. Most people I talk to during jury selection think lawsuits are out of control, too many people are abusing the system (i.e. taking advantage of insurance companies and thus causing them to have higher insurance premiums), and that giving money for pain and suffering just doesn't make sense. Yikes.

I was thinking about these jury selection interviews when recently attending Dave Fogarty's Town Hall discussion on the value of utilizing the Small Claims court system to garner a greater degree of fairness in the auto body repair market. I was thinking about these cynical sentiments because they don't seem to pervade Small Claims in the same way they pervade Superior Court jury trials. To this end, shop owners discussed taking cases to Small Claims Court by themselves and winning – a lot. I credit this degree of success to two things. First, Small Claims court utilizes a magistrate judge rather than a jury system. Many of the magistrates are already familiar with unlawful insurer tactics designed to suppress consumer rights in the name of bigger profits. This is true in the auto, home and health markets. Thus, insurer efforts to justify unlawful practices based on "custom" or a false market tend to fall on deaf ears. Second, auto body shops truly are being unlawfully manipulated by a rigged system exploited by insurers, and this generally comes out one way or another during trial.

Back to Dave's Town Hall: As usual, Dave did an amazing job assembling a great cast of industry leaders to discuss the process and what needs to be done to succeed in court. In short, one cannot do well without utilizing proper paperwork, being honest and transparent with customers, and structuring the business to succeed. Moreover, you can't simply follow the old rules (i.e. the insurance company's rules) and hope to run down to court looking for protection. It won't work. But, you can find success with proper guidance and thinking outside the lines. Following these practices, you can not only meet your legal obligations and serve the best interest of your customer, but enable success in court. In other words, you can start to level the playing field.

If you are interested in learning more about utilizing the court system to help defend your business, you should reach out to one of the ABAC Board of Directors or industry consultants. The more you understand about your legal rights and obligations, the stronger and more profitable you can make your business.

***John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley & Wynne and serves as General Counsel to the ABAC. Buckley & Wynne maintains offices in New Haven, Hartford and Stamford, and services clients throughout all of Connecticut. The opinions set forth in Attorney Parese's articles are for education and entertainment purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or legally binding. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this or any of Attorney Parese's articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Parese directly.***

## Meet Your Board of Directors



### ***This issue we feature Dean Autoworks, Durham, Ct.***

Dean Autoworks Inc. has been a long standing member of the ABAC for decades. Board Members Dean McCoy and Steve Sbalcio have given the customers quality collision and mechanical repairs that have earned them a reputation to be proud of.

Dean's passion for autos started in his early teens as many a dismantled vehicle found their way into his parents' garage before he could even drive them. He quickly learned, with the encouragement of his engineer father, how understanding the machine from the inside out would make him a master at his craft. He educated himself with a degree from Central Connecticut State University in automotive technology. In 1990 he opened his own establishment. As the years came, a thriving business emerged. A friend since high school, Steve Sbalcio, came in for some assistance in the daily operations. That left Dean more time to have hands on in the repair side of the operations, controlling quality and enhancing what would inevitably be the success it has become today.

Their experiences over the years led Dean and Steve to want to become more involved in the association future. ***"This industry has changed for the good and at the same time for the worse. We wanted to become a voice of our industry on a different level. Our hopes for a less intrusive insurance presence and more consumer awareness is what led us to become board members,"*** said Steve Sbalcio. ***I have mixed feelings on where the collision repair industry is heading with cutbacks at the State level in Tech Schools and the lack of a good starting pay. The attention to our industry is slipping away. I think with the help of auto manufacturers there needs to be an intervention early in high school or earlier to attract more of our younger generation into this field. Without their help, a generation that needs to keep this industry alive may not be aware of what it has to offer,"*** continues Sbalcio.

Says Sbalcio, ***"As many of us have come to realize, our industry is ever changing. There becomes not just a necessity to perform specific operations in a collision repair but an ethical obligation to our customers. The level of safety that a properly functioning restraint system provides for that customer's family is immeasurable. If you are not currently scanning a vehicle for diagnostic trouble or fault codes, pre and post repair, you should be aware that you are putting that family's safety at risk. I encourage every shop in our association to ignore insurance company's refusal to pay for this necessary operation and do the right thing. Bill the customer separately and let them get reimbursed. They will thank you for putting their safety first even if their insurance company is threatening to not pay for the scan."***

Dean is also joined in his business by his son Spencer and daughter Serena. Spencer, 18, has been attending Gateway Community College in New Haven studying to be an auto technician. Serena, 16, works "in the wings" helping in the office with the accounting portion of the business. "Following in the Footsteps".....a never ending story!

New committees and new faces with bright, fresh ideas are always a positive influence of our association. Our Board meetings are based on round-table discussions and current events that impact our members. Dean and Steve are proud to be included in the positive changes that the Auto Body Association of Connecticut has on our industry. They encourage all members to email them anytime for problems they may have or situations in which they may be unfamiliar with. You can reach them at [steve@deanautoworks.com](mailto:steve@deanautoworks.com)



We thank our valuable Board of Directors, Dean and Steve for their time in sharing their thoughts with us and wish them continued development of their business!

## Shop of the Month: Fairfield Collision Center

Our Shop of the Month is Fairfield Collision Center in Fairfield, Ct. A Penske Automotive Company. We had an opportunity recently to catch up with two gentlemen integral to the operation of this ABAC member shop.

Gene Crutchfield is the Fixed Operations Director for the Penske Auto Group and he was joined by Michael Joyce, Body Shop General Manager for Fairfield Collision. Michael has been in his role for one year since being recruited by Gene to run the collision center. He was managing 4 shops for Castle Collision on Long Island before making the move to Fairfield Collision. Michael tell us that he has always been involved with working on cars since he was 16 and living in Virginia. After college he decided to become a police officer in Virginia and was able to continue his passion with cars by using his "4 days on/4 days off" work schedule to stay involved. He would run his own repair business during those times. Eventually he decided he really didn't want to be involved with police work so he left the force to chase his passion. Says Joyce, ***"I learned how NOT to do things at one of my places of employment. So, I learned new skills and got trained by taking the proper courses for repair, customer service and business management. I took some classes from Mike Anderson of Collision Advice and I've been dedicating my time to make sure our shop is the best it can be!"*** He continues, ***"I'm focused on finding the right people with the right attitudes. What's our future going to look like? How are we going to get techs educated? Where can we get our techs from? The schools that these kids come from need to teach good habits."***



Crutchfield tells us, ***"We go through extensive interviews to make sure we get the right people. We give new hires all the tools, training and resources to be successful. All we ask for is that an employee show up, bring their good attitude and bring your passion."***

Mike Joyce has implemented many processes and "live action" dashboards to make sure the workflow is steady and that there is accountability. He tells us that the rewards are great and ***"if you're ever bored at this job, you're doing something wrong!"***

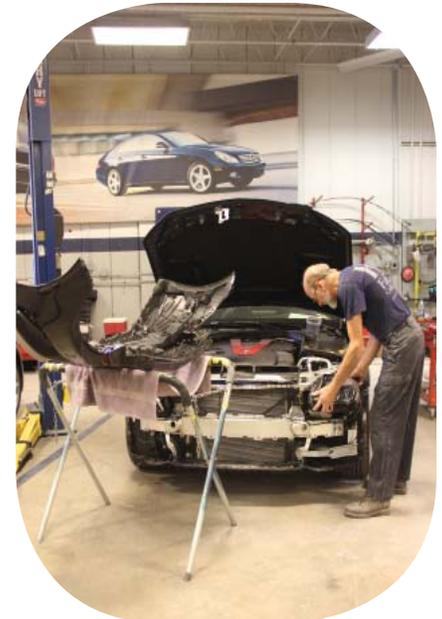
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Fairfield Collision became involved with ABAC by first becoming a member and now their dealerships have become Supporting Advertisers in the ABAC News. The believe in the ABAC and hope they can help with their input. As of this writing Gene tells us that he is working on getting Mercedes-Benz to make a presentation on training in the very near future.

Some specifics of the Collision Center:

- 40 Total Employees
- 13 Techs
- 4 Painters
- 43,000 S.F. Building
- Certified by 6 OEM's
- 4 Car-O-Liners
- 1 7XL Celette Frame Machine
- 4 Shop Advisors – 1 Internal Advisor
- 4 Spray Booths
- 2 Paint/Prep Mixing Stations
- Plastic Repair Area
- 2 Parts Technicians that handle Parts Distribution to the Techs run by Carl Bauer, Parts Manager



The Auto Body Association of Connecticut would like to thank Gene and Carl for their time in putting this article together and would like to wish them much success in the future of their Collision Center.



## Ask the Expert: Is Certification Worth It?



*We are Ford qualified, and in one more week, we'll be GM qualified (I-CAR). I'm just not sure if I should pay \$3,000 a year to be "certified" by an outside agency. What are your thoughts?*

I suppose when you refer to an "outside agency," you're referring to organizations other than the OEMs themselves?

That, of course, depends on the costs involved in securing your own certifications through the various manufacturers. Some can be extremely costly when you look purchasing the required equipment, tooling and training (sending techs to the manufacturer's training locations, lodging, travel, meals, pay, loss of production, etc.) versus if it can be done in-house.

The first thing you should do is put pencil to paper to determine how many repairs it may take to earn a return on that investment. Then, to try to determine what the future holds and what being certified may mean to your company's future. In my opinion, a repairer should strive to attain all the viable certifications they can that would prove beneficial to the company.

If it were me, I would seriously consider doing some research and finding out how many of each manufacturer's vehicles (Toyota, Nissan, GM, Chrysler, Volkswagen, etc.) are currently registered in your market area. If possible, identify them by age as to see which has the highest concentration of later models (newest) as they'll likely be repaired versus older ones being totaled. Also, newer vehicles have insurance coverage for both comprehensive and collision, where older vehicles generally do not. You may find such assistance through your paint rep/supplier, local dealer or even your state department of motor vehicles or other data collectors.

I would then list the manufacturers with the highest concentration of late-model vehicles from the highest to the lowest and use this as a priority listing, taking into consideration which local dealers don't have body shops and which manufacturer certification calls for the least investment in training and equipment, and work my way down.

Since you're in a rural area, the last ones I'd likely be seeking would be Bentley, Tesla, Audi, BMW, Porsche, Land Rover, Maserati, etc. The ones I'd likely gravitate towards would be those manufacturers such as Ford, GM, Chrysler, Honda/Acura, Toyota/Lexus, Nissan/Infinity, Volkswagen, etc. My primary targets would be those local dealers that do not have in-house body shops. Of course, if you're in a large metropolitan area where the volume allows, you could become a specialty shop providing services to one or more specific manufacturers.

I would then determine which manufacturers require the same tooling, equipment and facilities to be certified. This may enable you to make minimal investments to meet the requirements of two or more several manufacturers. I would then develop a top-three target list and, as I accomplished and secured one certification, I would add the next and continue. I would set both short-term and long-term achievement goals.

### **Big Advantage**

There is little question that, when marketed and promoted effectively, having OEM certifications will be advantageous to most any collision repairer and even more important to those who may be steered against by insurers trying to get consumers to take their damaged vehicles to their selected repairers.

For any repairer who's a DRP provider and hopes to keep his market share in the event the DRP relationship is ever discontinued, being manufacturer certified could prove to be a very effective insurance policy.

Regardless, being OE certified provides a great opportunity for the quality collision repairer to "strut their stuff" when it comes to marketing and building a trusted relationship with their local community members, local businesses and new car dealerships.

This will also likely safeguard the repairer in the event OEMs begin mandating that only those repairers with current certifications will be able to buy their replacement parts. This has begun with some manufacturers with structural-unibody related components, and will most likely expand over time to suspension, mechanical, electrical and welded/bonded body panels. The more hybrid metals and composites, accident avoidance and autonomous driving, lane departure and braking systems become prevalent, the more likely the OEMs and their dealers will take special interest in which repairers have access to their parts and the knowledge and ability to properly employ them.

I have several coaching/consulting clients who have been able to secure numerous certifications, and I recommend that all quality repairers make every effort to do so over the years ahead...not only to be proactive from a marketing standpoint, but to be prepared to meet not-so-distant mandates and requirements by the OEMs and consumers. Insurers are pushing their DRP shops to become certified for this very reason. It's better to start eating that elephant now, in manageable bites, versus trying to eat it all in one sitting!

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



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[www.cttech.org](http://www.cttech.org)

To the membership of the Auto Body Association of CT,

On behalf of the nine Collision Repair programs in the CT Technical High School System (CTHSS), I would like to thank you for making arrangements to have supplies and materials donated to our programs through five suppliers. As everyone is aware, budgets are tight these days, and any additional resources certainly help provide our students with the quality education they need.

We are very appreciative of this gesture, and we hope to continue strengthening our relationship with the ABAC and all of its members. We realize that the businesses in Connecticut are our customers, and we are here to help provide you with good entry level technicians.

This would be an appropriate time to also thank you for inviting us to your meetings to collaborate with your members, and share new technology and industry updates.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DKapitulik".

**Dave Kapitulik**  
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