

Pandemic Grasps the Collision Industry; Makes for Challenging Times



Also In This Issue

President's Message:
Continue Being the Leaders
That You Are..... 2-3

Notice from the ABAC 3

ABAC March Meeting Fea-
tures Local Tech School
Department Head; LiftNow
Presentation..... 4-6

Special Thank You to Our
Vendor Partners..... 7

COVID-19 Estimate Review.. 8

Attorney John Parese:
:Operating in Times of
Uncertainty” 9

Vice President's Message:
Customer Service During
Turbulent Times 10

Opinion: Insurance companies
ignoring a consumer
protection statute..... 10-11

From the Desk of Mike
Anderson 12-13

OSHA uses employers to
consider alternatives to N95
masks 17

Uber for Business offers
Collision Shops Alternative
Transportation..... 18-19

ABAC Officers & Board of
Directors..... 20



President's Message

Bob Amendola

Continue Being the Leaders That You Are!



To all our ABAC Members,

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, closures and social distancing, I would like to extend my support to our membership and your families.

As a fellow business owner, I understand how stressful this time of uncertainty is.

While it is a time for concern both personally and professionally, we cannot be consumed by this. As we have faced so many other obstacles in our past, this too shall pass.

With that said, I want to encourage each and every one of you to continue to be the leaders that you are. As business owners, everyone looks to us for answers and it is up to each and every one of us to continue steering our ships. While this is not “business as usual”, there are a host of ways to do our best to help keep ourselves, our employees, our customers and vendors healthy while continuing to run our businesses.

First and foremost, please regularly monitor WHO (World Health Organization) and CDC (Center Disease Control) guidelines to ensure that you are upholding sanitary standards on surfaces and high-touch surfaces etc.

Additionally, here are a few ideas to consider that may help you during this time:

- Limit in person interactions by utilizing a key drop box and obtain repair authorization over the phone or by email.
- Pick up and deliver vehicles to customers. Contact your local rental branch and see if they are willing to pick up and deliver rental vehicles for your customer as well.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

- Disinfect vehicles thoroughly before and after repairs; you may wish to charge for it.
- Up your marketing game to ensure your customer base that while you are still open, you are also taking every precautionary measure to ensure health and safety.

Aside from these suggestions, I'm sure you can also find other ways that will work for your businesses with some creativity and open-mindedness. Additionally, network with your neighbors. In tough times, lean in to the support system our association provides us all. In doing so, many great ideas to help us during this time can be shared.

Remember, in unity there is strength. In knowledge there is power.

Stay informed, exercise the necessary precautions, get creative with your business strategy and most importantly, remain the most positive leader you can be.

Bob

Bob Amendola

Autoworks of Westville - New Haven

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut



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"Pulling together for a better future"

April 3, 2020

ABAC Members,

It has been brought to our attention that some insurance companies are refusing to pay for applying sanitizing and disinfecting solution to vehicles pre and post repair. These services are recommended and necessary to protect the safety of our customers and shop employees. If you have been refused reimbursement for these services, we recommend the following:

1. First, inform your customer;
2. Second, file a complaint with the Department Of Insurance (<https://cidonline.ct.gov/ccf/>)
3. Third, notify the ABAC by sending a copy of your complaint to Heather Romaniello (abacadmin.heather@gmail.com)

ABAC March Meeting Featured Local Tech School Department Head and LiftNow Presentation

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut welcomed 90+ attendees to their recent membership meeting held at the Seasons Restaurant in East Haven, Ct. on Tuesday, March 10th.

ABAC President Bob Amendola addressed the crowd and thanked the meeting sponsors that helped finance this event. They were:

- **Primary Sponsor**

- Liftnow



- **Co-Sponsors**

- Enterprise
- Paint World

The Primary Sponsor, Liftnow, has also signed up as a new ABAC News Supporting Advertiser.

Continuing with recognition Amendola thanked all the ABAC News Supporting Advertisers, as well as the Platinum and Gold Corporate Sponsors. He then thanked our newest Platinum Sponsor, Providence Lacquer for their investment to the ABAC. Providence Lacquer joins Buckley, Wynne & Parese as Platinum Sponsors. ABAC Gold Sponsors are Bald Hill Auto Group and Stephen Auto Mall Centre.

We then welcomed new ABAC Members:

- Auto Specialist of Milford - Milford
- JC Auto Body - Seymour
- Ledyard St Auto Body - Hartford
- Ye Old Station Auto Body - Cheshire



Bob then asked Attorney John Parese to give us a legislative update. Said Parese, ***“Rhode Island passed a law not too long ago that gave consumers the right to OEM parts for vehicles that were 3 years old or newer. That later was pushed back to 4 years old or newer. The ABAC sought to do something similar. Unlike Rhode Island’s law, which seemed to give insurers a say in the repair process, we took the same concept, but we made it such that the insurer doesn’t ever have a say in how a vehicle is repaired. I think everyone on the ABAC Board agrees with me here, that there would be no scenario where it would be appropriate for the insurance company ever to tell you (the repairer) what parts to put on a vehicle.*”**

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

So, we created language that made it such that within the first 5 years, a consumer would be entitled to OEM parts. But, under no circumstance would a consumer have to put parts on their vehicle if the licensed repairer thought it was unsafe – no matter the age of the vehicle. Recyclers were opposed to this type of legislation and showed up in large numbers to object to the proposed bill. We believe they misunderstood the point of the bill, which was to ensure consumers have their vehicles repaired safely and with less aftermarket parts. They understood it as an attack on used OEM parts, which it was not. Either way, the recyclers were able to use scare tactics, which seemed to bring concern to some committee members. It's unclear what will happen to this bill at this point. We continue to fight for this law as we believe it helps the industry and protects consumers."

Our next guest speaker was Dan Thibault, Department Head of Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing program at Wolcott Tech High School. Dan thanked the ABAC for all their support financially and the fact they show up at events to support the schools and students. Dan placed a form on the tables to get input from members on the school's curriculum. He then spoke about the availability of the school's students and mentioned to each shop to seek out employment offerings to them for part time work this summer at their shops.

Responding to Mr. Thibault's words, President Bob Amendola said, ***"I and the ABAC appreciate everything that you and the trade schools are doing to help the automotive industry. It's certainly a worthwhile cause and it's where our next generation of collision and mechanical repair staffing will come from. I think that the best thing that is happening in our industry is, with all the technology and diagnostics, we have given the students a higher sense of professionalism and the way that consumers now look at the collision service industry."***



After a short dinner break, we welcomed our Feature presenter of the evening, Paul Stern and Paul Stern Jr. of Liftnow.

Founded by Paul Stern in 2003, Liftnow is the industry standard for competitive pricing and superior customer service. In 2013, Liftnow added its service arm to offer a suite of services to its already large customer base. Liftnow is currently in Phase II of its aggressive expansion, rapidly adding salespeople and service technicians to serve an ever-increasing demand. They believe that there is power in empowering the customer. By acting as a source of education and innovation, Liftnow hopes that you'll think of them when making the next important purchase for your shop. After all, LIFTNOW will help your shop become The Shop of the Future.

Liftnow
1-800-LIFTNOW (543-8669)
SALES@LIFTNOW.COM



"We're excited to offer the first educational center for the automotive equipment industry. We're also in the process of experimenting and introducing technology into a historically lagging industry that will soon be available to all Liftnow customers," said Stern ***"Every year, the number of vehicles equipped with Advanced Driver Assist Systems (ADAS) grows exponentially. As a result, it's increasingly important to understand how to calibrate and reset many of these systems post-collision."***

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

This seminar will cover the evolution of advance driver assist systems (ADAS), such as lane departure and adaptive cruise control and the importance of calibrating and resetting. This seminar also covers the profitability that body shops can enjoy from participating and specializing in these new industry trends," Stern continued.

Some of the things that were covered in the presentation were:

- Alignment
- Eras of Safety Technology
- Rear Cross Traffic Alert
- Hunter Equipment
- VIO's
- Scanning Equipment
- ROI
- Alignments; Pre-Diagnostic Alignment; Steering Angle Reset; Safety System Alignment



This was followed by a Q&A discussion.

Amendola once again thanked event sponsors, ABAC Corporate Sponsors, and ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. ***"Please consider them when making your decisions to purchase anything that they offer. Remember to support those who support you,"*** he said.

The ABAC is dedicated to educating Connecticut motorists, enhancing the abilities and knowledge of its members, and promoting in all ways safe and dependable auto repairs. Through proposing and monitoring legislation, the ABAC endeavors to protect the best interests of consumers, its members and the collision repair industry.

For more information about ABAC and its future events, visit abaconn.com

Article submitted by Don Cushing



A Special Thank You to Our Behind-the-Scenes Partners during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Our world, our daily lives, our businesses have been turned upside down these past few weeks as the Coronavirus makes its destructive path throughout the country. The automotive industry has reduced or stopped making vehicles. That will only result in more challenges ahead.

One thing that hasn't stopped yet, is the need for collision shops to repair the vehicles that suffer unfortunate damages during this period. Repairers remain "essential" businesses to keep these vehicles on the road.

What no one has mentioned is that these repair centers could not continue to function without being able to get parts, paint and supplies to repair these vehicles. Our ABAC News Supporting vendors have all stepped up to the plate during this crisis. Without them, we'd see a backup of vehicles waiting to be repaired, refinished and brought back to the safety that our customers expect.

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut would like to recognize those Vendors who have kept functioning these past few weeks. We know it hasn't been easy. We do realize the sacrifice you have all made to retain as many of your employees as you can to offer the best service available. Your partnership has always been and will remain to be essential to us. Thank you for supporting us and working side by side with us as we navigate through these trying times together.

We need to let these Vendors know how much we appreciate the challenge they have had also. The one way we can do that is by making sure to use them as often as you can. And when this is all over, and we hopefully get back to some sort of normalcy, remember who was there for you, and more importantly, who wasn't.

Kudos to ALL of our ABAC News Supporting Vendors. You ARE making a difference! **Thank you.**

Sincerely,

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut Executive Officers & Board of Directors





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“Pulling together for a better future”

Dear Members,

While our industry is attempting to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, we will all likely confront increased pressure to submit to insurer-based desk reviews, virtual estimates and virtual supplements. The ABAC is aware of several insurers, for example, that have already begun pulling appraisers off the road. In consideration of this unprecedented and challenging circumstance, the ABAC encourages all shops to do what they can to help facilitate the transaction of repair claims. Our mission has always been focused on helping consumers and the motoring public get back on the road safely.

At the same time, we are encouraging member shops to be vigilant of insurer attempts to exploit our industry. Insurers pay licensed appraisers a considerable sum to do their jobs. We cannot be expected to do that same job for free.

What is more, we all know that photographs alone do not reflect the full scope of the damages to a motor vehicle. There is no substitute for a visual inspection. We consider it an unfair trade practice for an insurer to engage in a pattern or practice of refusing to pay for necessary repairs, especially in the absence of a visual inspection.

Thus, if you are being asked to perform extra services for an insurer, it is our position that you are entitled to a fair reimbursement for those services. Likewise, it is our position that you are entitled to a fair reimbursement for services performed sanitizing and disinfecting vehicles prior to and after repairs are complete. As with all repair services, we advise that you make those labor assessments known to your customer and transparent in your paperwork. We also recommend that you post a conspicuous sign on your wall so there is no confusion or misunderstanding.

Please stay safe.

Operating in times of uncertainty.



I write this article under extraordinary conditions. I'm not sure what things will look like by the time you get to reading this, but right now, the implications and inevitable consequences of the coronavirus remain very much uncertain. The virus is currently spreading, and rapidly. Our businesses have been shuttered and/or battered. The State is essentially on lockdown, likely through the month of April, maybe longer. The stock market tanked, potentially signaling the start of a recession. And in the face of all this, our greatest concern remains that for our friends and family who are at risk of serious illness and death. Please accept my sincerest thoughts and prayers to you and your family as we work our way through this. We are very much in this together.

Since things have gone haywire, I received several calls from shop owners discussing a variety of concerns. One consistent theme relates to virtual supplements and desk reviews, or general insurer abuse of the conditions. I helped the ABAC structure some guidance in this regard. I believe that should be set forth in this edition of ABAC News. I would recommend you cite to that statement if you run into any issues. What burns me is this idea that some insurers would take this pandemic as an opportunity to exploit shops and consumers. We all have to chip in right now and be flexible. And that includes shops being flexible with virtual claim processing. But flexibility must go both ways. If you are doing the work of a paid appraiser, then you should be paid for that service. Similarly, it isn't right for an insurer to take this opportunity to short pay on a repair claim citing lack of physical inspection or inadequate photos. If you did the work, you should be paid for it – in full. If that is not happening, then I think shops should be filing bad faith complaints with the DOI. Something like that needs to be documented. If you file a complaint, send a copy to me, Heather Romaniello, or someone on the Board.

By way of best practices, now more than ever, I would recommend that you document your work and extensively photograph everything.

That's about all I have for now. It's my sincerest hope that you, your families and your businesses promptly and fully recover. Until that happens, I'll be thinking about you and pulling for you. And I'm here to talk if you need some advice – or if you need an extra guy for one of those virtual drinking parties. Take good care.

John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese and serves as General Counsel to the ABAC. Buckley Wynne & Parese 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.

Customer Service during Turbulent Times



ABAC Vice-President - Ashley Burzenski

While stellar customer service is a key component to operating a successful business, it is especially critical during uncertain times like this.

Everyone, including our customers, is focused on the pandemic which means we must adjust the way we interact in our role as a service-based essential business.

Begin with patience and kindness. This is a stressful time for all of us but we will get through it by working together. Consider how you can streamline certain procedures in the repair process for customers to make things as simple as possible for them.

We are all trying to navigate through this unprecedented time so a little extra empathy and consideration can make all the difference for your customers. Make accommodations. This pandemic has called for us to adjust our standard operating procedures pretty drastically. For example, there is now a demand for interaction-free pick-ups/drop-offs, rental car deliveries, processing payment over the phone etc.

Extra precautionary measures also need to be followed in accordance with CDC guidelines. While this will undoubtedly increase our workload, it is especially important that we go the extra mile right now.

Communicate with your customers. It is absolutely imperative that you keep your customers informed. Whether it is by phone call, text, email or social media, be sure to keep your customers updated on not only repair status, but also the safety and precautionary measure you are exercising. As the majority of our community is quarantining, many of whom are on social media more than usual. Now, more than ever, is the time to make sure you are active online.

While this is not business as usual, we will work through this together with a bit of creativity and adaptation. Despite the uncertainty within the immediate future, we can focus on what is within our control for the time being to ensure that we are doing our best for both our customers and our businesses.

Opinion: Insurance companies ignoring a consumer protection statute

By Thornton (Scotty) Scott - March 30, 2020 - Article from The Connecticut Post

As our minds focus on health, some auto insurance companies are taking advantage of Connecticut motorists.

Some insurance companies claim they are making it easy to settle claims after a car accident. In reality, they are boosting their own profits to the detriment of the consumer. It sure seems they are trying to take advantage of our current emotional strains while simultaneously having to deal with car repairs.

How many times have you seen a car insurance company ad on TV claiming they will handle everything for you following a crash?

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

They will happily arrange to have your car repaired - at their favored auto body shop.

Motorists have the right to have their auto repaired by a qualified, licensed, competent auto body shop of their own choosing. Unfortunately, consumers need to be periodically reminded that insurance companies try to influence that decision to increase profits, not necessarily to benefit the consumer.

As one of the owners of a large auto body repair shop, nearly every day we see an insurance company try to force a consumer to agree to the installation of so-called aftermarket or even used parts. Consumers should insist, instead, of the use of only parts made by the car company itself.

In Rhode Island, any car four years old or newer, by regulation, must be repaired with new parts from the car manufacturer.

Deceptively referring consumers to insurance company "preferred" shops has been illegal for decades, but far too often the insurance companies have been able to bully unsuspecting consumers. A common phrase used by some of these insurance companies: "Of course, you can go to any shop you select, but we will guarantee the work at the shop we recommend." All reputable auto body shops guarantee their work.

Consumers must have the courage to go to the repair facility of their choice, despite implied threats, inaccurate suggestions of out-of-pocket costs and misleading statements about delays in the repairs. Meanwhile, insurance companies seem to have developed another method of deceiving the consumer.

Did your air bag deploy in an accident? Too often, that fact alone results in the insurance company stating that the car is a total loss. They would rather pay you for the depreciated value of the car versus the repair - even if a proper repair would have your car looking and performing like new.

"Why take advice from someone who owes you money (the insurance company)? Why take advice from a company that makes a greater profit by paying you less?" At the very least, the courageous consumer will call or visit more than one repair facility to learn which shop is qualified to repair your car properly. This is critical when you want to maintain the value in that vehicle after the repair.

Beware of low-ball estimates. The facility with the lowest estimate may base it on using substandard, aftermarket parts that are not authorized for use in many vehicles. Or in many cases leave out necessary procedures needed to bring your car back to pre-loss condition. In fact, the warranty on many new cars will become void if the car is repaired with these less-than-perfect parts.

In Rhode Island, an appraiser must physically look at the car and come to an agreement on the cost of repairs. In Connecticut? Well, a photo can be sent to the insurance company and no appraiser will likely have a look.

The insurance company may be happy with a substandard, inexpensive repair - betting that you will sell your car before you are involved in another accident and the poor work is undiscovered. Do we really want to trust the safety of our families and the motoring public to parts and repairs that may fail in the event of a second collision?

Maybe it is time for the state Legislature to revisit this issue with an eye toward strengthening our laws and regulations.

Thornton Scott is an owner of Family Auto Body in Bridgeport, a member of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut.

From the Desk of Mike Anderson: Performing All OEM Safety Inspections is Critical---but OEMs Can Help Us Too

At last November's SEMA, I had the honor of moderating a session featuring representatives from a number of automakers. The subject came up of the detailed safety inspections most automakers call for being done on vehicles that have been in a collision.

In many cases, these inspections require a lot: measuring the steering column, checking seat belt anchors, inspecting wiring and connectors, removing the dash to check the knee bolsters and mounting points, etc.

During the discussion, Nicole Riedel of Subaru of America was asked if the detailed, labor-intensive safety inspections that her company---like many other automakers---call for really must be done on every vehicle undergoing collision repairs.

"Every time," Riedel emphasized. "Even if you are in New York City and vehicles are just getting sideview mirrors clipped, you still have to do it (after those repairs.) We will not deviate from that procedure...We need you to do it every single time."

I think it's critically important that shops research on every job what safety inspections the particular automaker is calling for, to educate themselves, their customer and, if necessary, any insurer involved.

I'm getting a lot of calls from both shops and insurance companies about these safety inspections. In some cases, the educated shops that recognize the need to do them are being told by a third party that a dealership or an OEM-certified shop says the inspections are not necessary.

My message to you, is that you, as a professional--whether a shop or an insurer---need to understand that whatever an uneducated dealer or shop thinks does not negate the need to follow the OEM procedures, nor remove you from the liability for not doing so.

I think too few shops in the industry are doing these inspections, and that makes it tougher for the shops trying to do the right thing.

There are generally very sound reasons why the post-crash safety inspection steps are so important.

One automaker explained to me, for example, that measuring the steering column is necessary because that column contains collapsible plastic bushings. If those bushings are collapsed, the steering column needs to be replaced. There's no other way to know that without measuring it.

A vehicle scan isn't going to tell you if those bushings are collapsed, or if a dash or sensor bracket or seatbelt mounting point is damaged. That all requires a visual inspection.

So first and foremost, my message here is that you need to be doing these inspections whenever they are called for under the automaker procedures.

I was in a meeting recently with about 30 other industry professionals where one person shared that of 10 steering columns he'd inspected for one particular domestic automaker, three were damaged.

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

Another said his shop had just removed a headliner and found a supplemental restraint system sensor had been dislodged.

Wow. Think about what may have happened if those issues were not found. The result in a future accident could have had disastrous consequences.

But I also have a message for the industry as a whole and for the automakers in particular: We need to develop more clarity on this subject, if only to remove the friction I'm seeing.

I salute the automakers looking for creative solutions that reduce the need for the invasiveness of some of these inspections.

One OEM, for example, has put a sight glass in the steering column underneath the airbag cover. If you look through that sight glass and see a particular marking, that tells you the steering column has collapsed and needs to be replaced. If you don't see the mark, you're good to go. That's an easier, less labor intensive solution.

Some automakers also try to clarify differences in what steps are necessary based on whether airbags have deployed or not deployed.

But others use such phrases such as "minor to moderate collision." I think we need to get a better definition of what qualifies as a "minor to moderate collision."

Just like most of you, I'm not an engineer, so I don't feel qualified to determine that.

If what's required in terms of safety inspections varies based on the severity of the collision, we need the automaker engineers to help us define that. Perhaps I-CAR can work with the automakers to do that.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed one [definition of a "minor crash"](#) in relation to when child safety seats must be replaced.

I don't know if that's how automakers would define it in terms of post-collision safety inspections, but it's one possible starting place for the discussion.

I'm by no means saying the safety inspections may not always be necessary. The automakers are the experts. If they say the inspections are necessary every time, then they are. Shops need to continue to research the procedures and follow them every time.

But the automakers can play an important role here in clarifying or communicating exactly when and why the safety inspections are needed to help remove some of the friction that is leading both shops and insurers--those trying to do the right thing---to reach out to me on this topic every single day.

**Unity is Strength
Knowledge is Power
Attitude is Everything**

OSHA urges employers to consider alternatives to N95 masks



3M has suggested collision repairers could use alternative respiratory protection during heavy demand for N95 masks, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration on Friday offered a similar perspective.

“If respiratory protection must be used, employers may consider use of alternative classes of respirators that provide equal or greater protection compared to an N95 FFR, such as National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-approved, non-disposable, elastomeric respirators or powered, air-purifying respirators,” the Department of Labor wrote in a news release Friday.

OSHA said that even expired or even reused N95 masks could suffice if the alternatives weren’t available to a shop. However, GMG Envirosafe President

Brandon Thomas on Friday said repairers should be able to obtain the alternative protection methods.

Doing so could help body shops protect employees, stay in compliance, and free up the N95 masks for health workers on the front lines of the disease.

“If respiratory protection must be used, employers may consider use of alternative classes of respirators that provide equal or greater protection compared to an N95 FFR, such as NIOSH-approved, non-disposable, elastomeric respirators or powered, air-purifying respirators (PAPRs),” OSHA Directorate of Enforcement Programs acting Director Patrick Kapust wrote in a Friday memo. “Other filtering facepiece respirators, such as N99, N100, R95, R99, R100, P95, P99, and P100, are also permissible alternatives for those who are unable to obtain N95 FFRs. However, per 29 CFR § 1910.134(d)(1)(ii), when considering N95 alternatives, check to ensure that they are NIOSH-approved, at www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/default.html. When these alternatives are not available, or where their use creates additional safety or health hazards, employers may consider the extended use or reuse of N95 FFRs or use of N95 FFRs that were NIOSH-approved but have since passed the manufacturer’s recommended shelf life.”

Kapust said the guidance Friday applied to industries in which “Protection of workers exposed to other respiratory hazards is impacted by the shortage resulting from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such workplace respiratory hazards may be covered by one or more substance-specific health standards.”

3M, for example, has recommended auto body shops consider one of its reusable respirators fitted with replaceable P100 filters.

“One very good alternative is the BodyMan Respirator : Part number 7181 (Small) 7182 (medium) and 7183 (large) — replacement filters are part number 7184. This mask handles grinding, sanding, welding, undercoating,” 3M business development manager Mark Algie wrote Monday to the Society of Collision Repair Specialists.

3M said it recommends the mask “for use in brake and clutch repair where asbestos exposures may be found.”

“The 3M™ Half Facepiece Respirator 07182 can be used for grinding, sanding, welding and brake and clutch repair applications,” 3M continued.

Continued on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

N95 masks filter out 95 percent of airborne particles but not oil, according to the Centers for Disease Control. P100 personal protective equipment blocks 99.97 percent of particles and is oil-resistant, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

P100 filters will provide respiratory protection for a technician grinding, working with body filler or welding, said Thomas. "You can do all of that," he said.

Unlike N95 masks, a repairer should be able to obtain this kind of setup, according to Thomas.

"I haven't heard of any shortages," said Thomas, whose compliance firm also recently announced free COVID-19 training for the industry.

Thomas said PPE meeting the P95 (protection from 95 percent of particles and oil, according to the CDC) and P99 standards (protection from 99 percent of particles and oil) would also suffice for standard auto body work and should be available.

"It might be more expensive," Thomas said. But repairers would receive "adequate or better protection" and free up N95 equipment for the health workers who needed it, he said.

"It's for the best," he said.

Thomas said many of his company's clients weren't using N95 masks anyway, but agreed they were common elsewhere in the body repair industry. A distributor ought to be able to help those shops find an OSHA-compliant alternative.

Thomas also noted that some states were demanding an inventory of personal protection equipment. Switching to an alternative respiratory protection method now would let shops "get out in front of it" in case the state ordered a repairer to turn over N95 masks for health care, he said.

To this point, OSHA might be temporarily loosening its rules — but it doesn't seem to be suspending them. Based on the guidance Friday, repairers still must protect their employees despite these difficult times.

"All employers whose employees are required to use or are permitted voluntary use of respiratory protection must continue to manage their respiratory protection programs (RPPs) in accordance with the OSHA respirator standard, and should pay close attention to shortages of N95s during the COVID-19 pandemic," Kapust wrote. "Paragraph (d)(1)(iii) in section 1910.134 requires such employers to identify and evaluate respiratory hazards in the workplace, and paragraph (c)(1) requires employers to develop and implement written RPPs with work-site-specific procedures and to update their written programs as necessary to reflect changes in workplace conditions that affect respirator use. CSHOs should generally refer to CPL 02-00-158, Inspection Procedures for the Respiratory Protection Standard, 6/26/2014, for further guidance."

Using a vacuum system to capture particles might also protect employees from dust, Thomas said. But buying one might be impracticable for a repairer given the current economic climate, he said.

Continued on Page 16



Continued from Page 15

OSHA also suggested repairers consider such alternative technology.

“Due to the impact on workplace conditions caused by limited supplies of N95 FFRs, all employers should reassess their engineering controls, work practices, and administrative controls to identify any changes they can make to decrease the need for N95 respirators,” Kapust wrote. “Employers should, for example, consider whether it is possible to increase the use of wet methods or portable local exhaust systems or to move operations outdoors. In some instances, an employer may also consider taking steps to temporarily suspend certain non-essential operations.”

As noted above, OSHA will allow respirators to be reused or worn for a prolonged time — but only if the alternative PPE wasn’t available.

“In the event extended use or reuse of N95 FFRs becomes necessary, the same worker is permitted to extend use of or reuse the respirator, as long as the respirator maintains its structural and functional integrity and the filter material is not physically damaged, soiled, or contaminated (e.g., with blood, oil, paint),” Kapust wrote. “Employers must address in their written RPPs the circumstances under which a disposable respirator will be considered contaminated and not available for extended use or reuse. Extended use is preferred over reuse due to contact transmission risk associated with donning/doffing during reuse. When respirators are being reused, employers should pay particular attention to workers’ proper storage of the FFRs in between periods of reuse. ...

“If reuse of respirators is necessary, an appropriate sequence for donning/doffing procedures should be used to prevent contamination, and training needs to address appropriate donning/doffing procedures. See www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/PPE-Sequence-508.pdf.”

OSHA also might permit expired respirators at the compliance officer’s discretion if a repairer follows certain guidelines. However, this can only be done if “N95s are not available and the employer has shown a good faith effort to acquire the respirators or to use alternative options.”

According to Kapust:

- Employers may use only previously NIOSH-certified expired N95 FFRs found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/release-stockpiled-N95.html. Workers should be notified that they are using expired N95s.
- Purchasers and users of personal protective equipment should not co-mingle products that are past their manufacturer’s recommended shelf life (i.e., expired) with items that are within their shelf life.
- Employers should visually inspect, or ensure that workers visually inspect, the N95 FFRs to determine if the structural and functional integrity of the respirator has been compromised. Over time, components such as the straps, nose bridge, and nose foam material may degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit and seal.
- Where an employer has expired N95s available from their own stored cache (i.e., not from the U.S. Strategic National Stockpile), the employer should seek assistance from the respirator manufacturer or independent lab regarding testing of those stored respirators prior to use. (Minor formatting edits.)

Kapust said OSHA’s guidance took effect immediately but wouldn’t stand forever. “This guidance is intended to be time-limited to the current public health crisis,” he wrote.

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

SCRS website compiles COVID-19 resources for auto body shops; get links to it, RDN coverage here

The Society of Collision Repair Specialists on Friday announced a new webpage providing auto body shops with links to safety and business management resources related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Repairers might wish to bookmark www.scrs.com/covid19-resources.

"We recognize that many of you are being inundated with information surrounding the current events that are unfolding, and many of our members are reaching out trying to understand what it means to your business, and where to start," the new SCRS webpage states. "SCRS is working to continue to compile relevant information that we believe provides you with access to tangible solutions and easy-to-digest breakouts of what are very complicated measures being taken to help small businesses and citizens across the U.S."

The trade group also cautioned repairers to examine how they communicate vehicle sanitization to customers.

"We've also seen examples of businesses promoting services to 'clean', 'sanitize' or 'disinfect' customer vehicles," SCRS wrote. "The Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) urges caution with the language used in your promotion of services. For instance, your facility can assure that you 'apply disinfectant', but there is no testing protocol to ensure that you 'disinfected' the vehicle. In our interaction with other industries, this has been a repeated caution; describe only what you performed, rather than a promise of what it accomplished."

FYI, the Centers for Disease Control recommends disinfecting using chemicals on the Environmental Protection Agency "List N."

The new SCRS site features links on topics like "essential businesses," cleaning and disinfecting a vehicle and small business relief like the recent CARES Act.

"This economic relief package should provide financial support to many of our member businesses facing hardship as a result of the very sudden change in the marketplace due to the Pandemic," SCRS wrote of the CARES Act. "From what we are hearing, there is an overwhelming demand for support."

Visit the SCRS COVID-19 webpage here - <https://scrs.com/covid19-resources>

Repairer Driven News has also been hustling to get COVID-19 coronavirus information out to readers. Below, find some recent highlights that might be helpful to a collision repair owner, manager or employee.

Obviously, the situation is fluid, and some of this content might have been accurate at the time but superseded by new information. But these articles might help you get your bearings on the topics before you research them with the federal, state and local officials (and your qualified legal and financial advisers) who will probably be your True North on topics like COVID-19 safety and business and employee aid. For example, we've been treating information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Small Business Administration, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, state health departments and governor's offices as the "OEM procedures" during the pandemic.

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

Uber for Business Offers Collision Shops Alternative for Customer Transportation

Written by Stacey Phillips - Aotbody News

When a vehicle is dropped off at a body shop for repair, transporting a customer to his or her desired location can often be an issue. Many shops rely on loaner cars, rental cars and shuttles.

However, Jim Bauman, automotive partnerships lead at Uber, said these options aren't always conducive to every situation.

"We've talked to a lot of body shops---both independents and MSOs---as well as insurance companies, and across the board there is no one, perfect solution for taking care of customer mobility," said Bauman. "Obviously, rental cars are a big part of the collision industry, but they don't solve every problem, especially if a customer doesn't have rental coverage replacement insurance."

In situations like these, shop owners may ask a customer service representative (CSR) or technician to drive a customer in their personal or shop-owned vehicle.

Not only can this impact a CSR's productivity, but Bauman said it also increases the risk exposure for a body shop.

Recognizing the success car dealerships are having using Uber for Business's tools to address these challenges, Uber began reaching out to body shops as well.

Since launching its ride-sharing platform in the U.S. 11 years ago, Uber has expanded internationally and instituted a variety of programs in the 66 countries in which it operates.

In 2014, the company established Uber for Business, which specifically focuses on the needs of business owners.

Rather than using the personal Uber app, Bauman encourages collision repair facilities to sign up for Uber for Business, which is the same price and offers the same functionality as the regular Uber app.

"There is no contract, no minimum usage and no premium in terms of fee for using a business account," he said. "What it allows a body shop to do is to control who is allowed to book an Uber ride for a customer and gives full transparency and accountability."

Bauman leads Uber for Business's strategy and partnership for the automotive industry, which offers mobility solutions for those operating large and small businesses.

There are two main Uber for Business products Bauman recommends for body shops: Uber Central and Uber Vouchers.

Uber Central uses dispatch software to book rides for customers. Riders aren't required to have the Uber app on their phones and all of the communication occurs via text.

"If you know how to use the Uber app for yourself, you're going to learn how to use Uber Central with no problem," said Bauman. "It's a very similar flow, but it's a dispatching software so you can set up rides for customers to get them from point A to point B."

Continued on Page 19

Continued from Page 18

There are additional benefits to using Uber Central that Bauman said business owners don't have access to with the regular app.

For example, employees can keep track of the repair number, so they know the trip associated with each job.

Bauman said the company built easy-to-use tools that have an immediate, positive impact on Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores, cycle time, reduction in costs and reduction in risk.

"If you were going to pull a CSR or technician off the shop floor to get a customer to work, you lost all of that person's productivity when they were giving a person a ride," said Bauman. "Instead, that employee can stay focused on his or her job."

The ride is covered under Uber's insurance policies in case anything happens, which Bauman said reduces the risk exposure for body shops. "It's a great way for shop owners to take care of their customers and keep their costs in check," he said.

Currently, there are more than 100 car dealerships in the U.S. that use Uber Central daily.

Uber Vouchers are configurable coupons shops can hand out to customers, who can then decide when they want to ride. The business sets the parameters of the voucher and can decide how much of a ride will be covered or where it can go.

Bauman said the vouchers help businesses enhance customer service and drive repeat business, as well as remove the customer's burden of driving, navigating and parking.

"These are going to be great products for collision centers as they offer a really seamless experience for customers," said Bauman. "We want to make sure the collision industry knows we are here for them with solutions that solve their problems."

For information on how to establish an Uber for Business account, visit www.uber.com or contact an automotive account executive at 415-910-9384.

Source: www.autobodynews.com

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To our community and the motoring public, we are committed to advocating for you and protecting your rights as a vehicle owner. We promise to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethics, to attempt to identify and correct abuses within the automotive industry, and to be aware and proactive in response to changing technology and legislation.

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