

ABAC NEWS

September
October
2019

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut



**Estimating:
Being Prepared
Getting Paid for What You Do!**

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President's Message

Bob Amendola

2019

A Year in Review



As the end of 2019 looms in the distance, I'd like to take a moment to step back and reflect on some of the key issues the association has focused on within the last year.

With the support of Senator Richard Blumenthal, SCRS, fellow associations and industry leaders alike, we have lead the charge for the country in trying to save the 1963 Consent Decree which prohibits insurers from engaging in illegal and anticompetitive practices.

Secondly, we took IANET to task for violating the Appraiser's Code of Ethics. In case you haven't had the misfortune of dealing with this illegal practice, in short, IANET has been changing the appraisers' locked estimates prior to submitting them to insurers. To address this, we insisted that the appraiser leave a locked estimate at the shop in accordance with statute 38a-790-4. When IANET changed the estimate, we called them directly and advised them that this practice is a direct violation of the appraiser's code of ethics. They reversed their estimate revisions immediately. John Shortell of Airport Auto Body also crafted an excellent template for supplement submissions. I commend John and all of our members that have challenged IANET directly to rectify this injustice.

In recent months, we have been in communication with neighboring associations regarding the legislation that they have passed in their respective states. Our board of directors have been researching and discussing proposing similar legislation in CT. We earnestly believe that this is a decision not to be taken lightly and we have been doing our due diligence to ensure that we consider every aspect.

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We've also been in the process of arranging meetings with both the DOI and DMV to address specific concerns we have over a variety of issues.

Within the last two years, we have ramped up our social media efforts to educate the motoring public as effectively as possible. We updated our website to be more consumer-centric, created many successful social media campaigns and worked with a local production company to produce two series of informative and creative videos to incorporate with our marketing strategy. Our mission to educate the motoring public and empower them to protect their rights as consumers continues to be a driving force for our association.

Looking ahead to 2020, our board of directors will be discussing what we will focus on in the coming year. I encourage anyone who has ideas to make improvements for our association and industry to contact us.

As important as it is to look back at how much you have accomplished and improved upon, it is equally, if not more important to look ahead. In my first article of 2019, I challenged each and every one of you to set goals for yourself for the new year. I now challenge you to take an honest look at how you did. As small-business owners it is our duty and responsibility to ourselves, our businesses, and our industry to take stock of the decisions we have made and reflect on both the highs and the lows. We need to consider what worked and what didn't so we can make better decisions tomorrow and next year. I encourage everyone to do this for both your business and personal lives. Reflecting on our professional life is a privilege afforded to us by our personal life.

I'd like everyone to take time this holiday season—look around your family gatherings—and allow yourself to be thankful for those wives, husbands, sons, daughters, grandchildren, parents, nieces, nephews, dogs, or cats. Our work is never done and the hours of work never seem to get shorter, but we aren't the only ones who sacrifice our time for the job...our loved ones do, too.

To our dedicated board of directors and each and every person that has given their time to improve the industry for us all and make this past year successful, thank you. I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season and look forward to making the coming year even better.

Bob

Bob Amendola

Autoworks of Westville - New Haven
President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut



**AUTO BODY
ASSOCIATION
OF CONNECTICUT**

ABAC's New Season Begins with CollisionAdvice Presentation

This past September saw the membership meeting of the ABAC draw another huge crowd to Hartford at the Chowder Pot. Over 90 members, guests and associates got to hear what has been going on with their association and what's planned for the near future.



President Bob Amendola greeted attendees, thanking them for their continued support and sacrifice, making time to attend these important meetings.

The first order of business was to thank the evening's sponsors. ***"Once again, I'd like to remind everyone of our valuable businesses who sponsor help make these meeting possible. Please consider them when making your decisions to purchase anything that offer,"*** said Amendola

The primary sponsor for the ABAC's Sept. 26th meeting was Stephen AutoMall Centre represented by Brian Walendziak and Devon Sylvester. Co-sponsors included Enterprise, Auto Body Supplies and Paint, and Designer Systems. Amendola thanked event sponsors, ABAC Corporate Sponsors, and ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. ***"Remember to support those who support you,"*** said Amendola.

Bob then welcomed ABAC Legal Counsel, Attorney John Parese, to give everyone an update on the efforts to save the 1963 Consent Decree. ***"The 1963 Consent Decree is the culmination of litigation the United States Department of Justice initiated against insurers to prevent insurance companies from conspiring with one another and to essentially do all of the nonsense we are seeing today. The Decree sought to prohibit, for example, much of what we see in today's DRP network schemes, price fixing, steering, labor rate suppression, etc. All the stuff independent collision shop owners are still battling today. The Consent Decree was the result of the DOJ's settlement with insurers. It was an agreement to stop doing these things and has been the law of the land for some time. Now in the Trump administration's push to deregulate businesses, the DOJ is looking to terminate the Consent Decree. We obviously want to save this law because it protects repairers. So now, we are back at it on a national level, trying to save this law and we will do everything we can."*** said Parese.



Next was ABAC Lobbyist Andy Markowski from Statehouse Associates, LLC. Andy spoke about how we can work to help the Consent Decree cause with the emails the ABAC has drafted and sent to members to give their input and support. Says Markowski, ***"What we've heard tonight is right on the money. You can't do it alone. Your Board of Directors can't do it alone. You all know about the industry we're up against. The money, the power, the number of lobbyists and the employees of the insurance industry has, and they amount of influence they have. However, we (ABAC members) have the ears and the minds of some key politicians that have taken the time to understand your collision repair industry and are willing to go to bat for you. When these people step up for us, we need to step up as a group."***

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Between now and January is when you can get the attention of the legislators before they go back to the Capitol, before they are busy with a bunch of people outside their door, serving on multiple committees, trying to work their day job, trying to do everything else. We need to educate them about our industry. How do we do that? Many state legislators will host open-houses, coffee hours and meetings in their districts. Attend these get togethers. Meet them. Tell them about your business, your industry. Invite them to come to you shop,” he continued.

After a break for dinner, President Amendola once again thanked the sponsors for the evening and then welcomed our feature guest of the evening, **Scott Simmons from CollisionAdvice.**

Scott has over 25 years of experience in the Collision Repair industry. During this time Scott has developed a diverse background ranging in all areas of the industry starting out with a lengthy career with USAA insurance, to becoming a Facility and Fixed Operations Management for Pohanka Collision Centers a ten store MSO with over 50 million a year in sales, to most recently providing Process Consulting throughout the US and Canada as Founder of Body Shop Rescue and with Summit Software Solutions for over 10 years. Scott has specialized in the evaluation and implementation of management best practices through Process Mapping and a common sense approach of “Keeping those processes that make you successful, modify the existing required tasks to make them easier to accomplish, and eliminate those that are unnecessary”. Scott is a Subject Matter Expert as it applies to the utilization of Summit CRS Collision management system. He also has experience working with and implementing a variety of other management systems

Simmons then presented “**Creating a Non-Negotiable Final Bill.**” He began by asking, *“Are you continuing to do the same processes every day, expecting a different outcome? Are you ready to decipher the ‘Code’ of today’s vehicles and gain the confidence to not negotiate the repairs required?”*

Simmons proceeded to discuss when a final bill is created, why negotiations happen, and what the insurance company’s role is in the vehicle repair process. He explained how to achieve outcome-based negotiations and explored a technician’s needs in order to properly repair a vehicle. Emphasizing the value of words, Simmons said, *“What is the area your technicians work in called at your facility? Stall? A work bay? If you want to be considered the leaders, you need to use terminologies and discussions that the consumer can consider us to be the experts or professionals. So, in my world, I call it a ‘production bay.’”*

When it comes to negotiating to get to the final bill, Simmons encouraged attendees, *“Tell your story. Let’s remove the opinions. Have your documents prepared in advance. Stick to the facts. Is it required? Is it included? Is there a pre-determined time? What is it worth? There should never be a choice of how to fix the vehicle correctly. There should only be a business decision to bill or not bill for the operation.”*



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Simmons' presentation also included a review of the industry's latest technology, including OEM technologies, telematics, and connected vehicles. Additionally, he discussed scans, electrical systems, automatic collision notification, disconnecting batteries/precautions, required operations for disconnect initialization, how long to wait before disconnecting, removal of undamaged parts, and more.

"Thank you to Scott Simmons for giving us a full slate of critical information that we can all bring back to our businesses," Amendola stated, adding, "The ABAC strives to bring in presenters that can assist and educate collision repair shop owners and managers to help repair cars properly and efficiently while also presenting tips for the future of technology. Please consider joining the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, attend these important educational meetings and get critical information to help keep your shop aimed toward the future."

Submitted by Don Cushing



**AUTO BODY
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A Case You Should Know About: Parker's Classic Auto Works, Ltd. v. Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company.



The Vermont Supreme Court recently issued an important decision in the world of auto body repair litigation. In short, our good friend and all-around great person and advocate for the industry, Mike Parker, brought a lawsuit on behalf of his repair shop: Parker's Classic Auto Works (Parker's) against Nationwide for short paying his shop on 70 insurance claims. The case went to trial. The jury found in favor of Parker's and awarded Parker's \$41,737.89. After the verdict, however, Nationwide filed a motion for judgment as a matter of law in its favor, which the court granted, thereby taking away the jury's verdict and ruling in favor of Nationwide. The trial court did this based on a provision in Nationwide's insurance policy giving Nationwide the contractual right to pay "an amount [Nationwide] determined was sufficient to do the repairs."

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If you have steam coming out of your ears at this point, you're not alone. But, fear not, for the Vermont Supreme Court took the case up on appeal and made some important decisions reversing the lower court. First, the Vermont Supreme Court resolved that Nationwide, or any insurer for that matter, cannot unilaterally determine the value of an insurance claim. The Court stated:

“When interpreting an insurance policy, the language is to be viewed ‘from the perspective of what a reasonably prudent person applying for insurance would have understood it to mean.’”

The Court held that an insurer must pay for covered damage and may only refrain from paying for damage not covered by the policy. The Court stated:

“The amount owed to the insureds under the policy is not entirely within [Nationwide’s] discretion and [Parker’s] may sue [Nationwide] as the insured’s assignee to challenge [Nationwide’s] valuation of the claims.”

In short, though an insurer may attempt to assert language in the insuring agreement that, in effect, makes it judge, jury, and executioner, that type of provision is not enforceable as a matter of law. While this seems like an obvious point, the fact that the Court articulated this sentiment in the context of auto body repairs is actually very important.

The argument that an insurer can contractually empower itself to pay only what it deems fair is something that I have confronted here in Connecticut. The argument defies common sense and public policy. The payment of a claim must be consistent with the insuring agreement, as a reasonably prudent person would understand it, and it must be reasonable. In this case, the court resolved that “damage” means “the amount of money needed to repair an insured vehicle to preaccident condition” The Court further stated that “‘damage’ under the policy means cost of repair to preaccident condition, which must be paid unless repairs are uneconomical” (in which case, the vehicle would be a total loss).

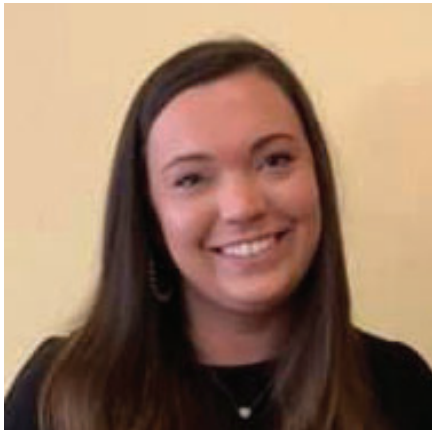
In consideration of the above analysis, the Court reversed the trial court’s judgment as a matter of law and reinstated the jury’s verdict in favor of Parker’s in the amount of \$41,737.89. This is an outstanding result for the industry and something you should keep in mind when making a case for a fair price for your repair services.

*For reference purposes, the citation for the case is Parker’s Classic Auto Works, Ltd. v. Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, 2019 VT 46, No. 2017-433 (Vt. 2019).

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.

The Importance of Making a Good First Impression in Customer Service

***Submitted by ABAC Vice-President
Ashley Burzenski***



Customer service is such a critical aspect of our industry because the relationship we establish with our customers directly reflects the success of our businesses. Making a great first impression is key to establishing a positive experience. Each employee that interacts with your customer base is the face of your business. Therefore, it is imperative to provide training and coaching for office personnel to create and maintain techniques to wow customers and provide great customer service from start to finish. First impressions are made face to face, on the phone and online. Here are some key factors to consider.

Face to Face

Overall appearance, signage and parking are key factors in impressing customers from the get-go. Uniforms, parking spaces and clear signage make a big difference. A professional attitude and appearance are also a crucial element to making a good first impression. That is usually distinguished by being appropriate in language and behavior, being credible and honest, and eager to help. A strong understanding of the services offered goes a long way as well. Having an accident is typically a stressful situation so it is especially important to simplify the process for customers. Lastly, ensuring that employees treat each customer with respect and a positive attitude may seem like a no brainer but they are fundamental in customer service and not to be overlooked. Office lobbies and receptionists are especially critical here.

On the Telephone

A great first impression over the phone begins with a prompt, friendly and professional greeting. An answering machine with a professional greeting is important to remember for after hours, too. Avoid long hold times and be sure to return calls promptly. Proper scripting and training can make all the difference!

Online

Despite being listed last, this is arguably the most important component in making a first impression. In today's technological world, most potential customers will search for your business online first before they contact your or visit your office. Therefore, branding, consistency with posting and reviews are crucial.

Audit your first points of contact, train your employees to interact with customers, make sure your facility is clean and you will be well on your way to creating a positive first impression!

10 Tips Every Estimator Should Be Following

Today more than ever, the importance of creating an outstanding blueprint for automotive repair is an integral part of Proper and Safe repairs. Creating a roadmap of how the vehicle is going to be repaired provides the most accurate and efficient methods of repair and ensures that every standard operating procedure (SOP) is being met. In I-CAR's Cycle Time class, they identify that "Doing a complete repair blueprint has been identified as a key to improving efficiency in a repair facility."

Here Is A List of What We Recommend As The 10 Keys to Complete Estimating:

1. Have an SOP For the Estimating Process

Develop a systematic approach to writing a complete estimate and ensure that it's repeatable. Most importantly, follow it on each vehicle blueprint.

2. Training

Take the time to be educated on today's automobiles and the technology associated with them. Anyone who endeavors to repair an automobile should know how the system really functions before they can repair it. The same holds true for anyone that is tasked with writing a damage appraisal. If an estimator is not armed with the knowledge of how systems function or which parts are HSS or UHSS and what estimators are allowed or not allowed to do by a specific manufacturer, an estimator may not be able to write a complete estimate.

3. Pre-Scan

The importance of doing a pre-scan or health check on every vehicle that comes into a facility will help ensure that every system is functioning as designed. Not doing a pre-scan is like going to the doctor and expecting him to know what's ailing the patient without verbalizing any symptoms.

4. Photographs

Photographing everything around the vehicle is just as important as writing a good estimate. Pictures help ensure that everything on the vehicle is captured, including damage associated with the loss and any pre-existing damage. Documenting everything helps remove doubt as to what the vehicle came into the facility with.

5. Know and Understand The Estimating Platform

Becoming an expert on the software that repair facilities use not only makes an estimator more efficient, but assists in getting everything that is "Not Included" for the database a repair facility is using. The procedure pages have been commonly referred to in our industry as "the profit pages."

6. Research and Access the OEM Repair Information

This an important aspect of writing a repair blueprint. This includes any TSB's, Technical Bulletins, OE Recalls and specific airbag replacement matrices that might exist. Without the knowledge of how the OE wants the vehicle repaired, it may be difficult to repair the vehicle correctly. Most of the time, repair facilities do an outstanding job of accessing repair procedures and writing an accurate damage appraisal. These repair procedures should get into the hands of the ones actually doing the work and the repair technician!

7. Teardown

The teardown process helps the estimator see any hidden damages that can easily be overlooked with a simple repair plan without removing components. The best estimators in this industry do a complete teardown, photograph and write a complete blueprint.

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8. Identify One-Time Use or Non-Reusable Components

There are a number of specialized fasteners and parts that certain manufacturers have deemed as non-reusable. Identifying these at the earliest stages of the estimating process will help ensure that a repair facility is not faced with supplements at the tail end of the repair process for parts that may be special order, or back-ordered, thus affecting the total cycle time.

9. Identify Any Needed Sublet

There may be instances where a repair facility may not have the necessary equipment or technician in-house with which to perform certain operations, and therefore will need to sublet those operations. Identifying these early helps ensure the most efficient cycle time on the entire repair.

10. Post-Scan

Just as important as the Pre-Scan is the Post-Scan—or final health assessment. Everything that a repair facility does on today's automobile has the potential to set a fault code (DTC) or digital fingerprint. Even simply realigning a mirror or door handle may set a fault code. The Post-Scan process can help determine whether or not the repair process has been completed properly and safely. It's at this point where a technician is able to clear any codes that were originally set during the collision or that may have been added through any touch points. Finally, it gives the repair facility the opportunity to provide a clean bill of health to their customer that will delight them in knowing that their investment has been well taken care of.

Source: mPower by Mitchell

Article by Wayne Krause

Wayne has been involved in the automotive industry for over 40 years. Throughout his 30 years at Mitchell he has held numerous roles and currently oversees creation of Mitchell's Repair Standards and NAGS databases. He also remains active as an I-CAR instructor and is a committee chair within the Southwest Region.

Train Like Your Shop Depends On It

Can you imagine painting a vehicle without an air compressor? How about replacing a quarter panel without a welder or rivet gun? While we couldn't conceive of doing those operations without the necessary tools to do the repair, somehow our industry feels we can repair any vehicle without the necessary training needed to repair the vehicle.

In the past, an untrained tech might have cost us more time or an eventual comeback. Today, an untrained tech could cost millions. If you've been under a rock for some time, just Google search the words "Texas body shop Honda lawsuit" and you'll see what I mean.

I believe we should look at training like we look at paint or replacement parts—an absolute necessity to do a proper repair. There's been enough written about the changes in today's vehicles that we don't need to rehash that today. To get more info on vehicle technology, you could go to fenderbender.com and search the word aluminum and it will turn up over 570 related articles. That's just one example of how vehicles have changed dramatically. If you've made it this far down the page I'll make the assumption you know vehicles have changed and we need to get trained in order to repair them safely.

The next question to ask is, "How do we pay for this training?" How do you develop a budget to take on this additional expense? Adding on other expenses such as marketing, HR benefits, or even office personnel can be carefully and methodically worked into a budget with the right timing.

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However, necessary training is a unique expense that can moonlight as a “cost” on your P&L since it’s necessary to have in order to repair the vehicle that’s either in your shop or coming very soon.

If you haven’t done this before, it would be very beneficial to pull the data to see what vehicles are being registered in your area. Comparing that data with your recent repair history will help you determine what manufacturers you are likely to repair more of in the immediate future. This will help you prioritize the list of training options available to you. You want to begin with the training that will be most useful to you based on your work mix.

Once you know the type of vehicles you will work on, it’s time to research what training is available. There are many resources to help you compile a list. You could reach out to the OE reps who handle the certification process for each line. If you attend a trade show or industry conference, there are bound to be experts there to assist in compiling a training list. And, of course, FenderBender is a great resource. As I was writing this I searched “training” at fenderbender.com and it showed 2,590 results.

One way to look at budgeting for training is to determine what top-line sales are required to pay for it. If you send a team of techs to attend a class and the bill is \$2,000, then you should know what increase in sales you would need in order to pay the \$2,000 without putting a dent into your current budget. If you divide the \$2,000 by your gross profit margin (I’ll assume it’s 40 percent), then you have to do an additional \$5,000 in top-line sales in order to pay for this expense. The \$2,000 training bill would increase your break-even sales by \$5,000.

Another way to find the dollars to pay for this training is to do a review of your expenses. Even if you don’t have any new spending in mind, it’s always valuable to look through your expenses and see if there is any fat to trim. If you’ve never done this before you might be surprised what expenses you are paying that you can either reduce or eliminate.

Another aspect of the training we all need is the proper OEM repair procedures. This is ongoing training for each repair, not something you can check the completed box. Regardless of how many times we’ve done a particular repair, we still need to review the current procedures, as they change regularly. Some of these procedures are available for free on websites like I-CAR or OEM1stop. Other manufacturers will charge a subscription fee to get the repair procedures from their website. Instead of buying an annual membership, we purchase a daily subscription and invoice that on the job just like a part. You may get pushback from the payer at first, however this is as necessary as any item we put on our estimates. Some shops even have success getting paid for the time to research the proper repair procedures. Regardless of how you choose to tackle it, you should be getting paid for obtaining OEM repair procedures.

Our industry is changing. In order to succeed, we must take training seriously. Don’t let the cost of training keep you from doing it. While I don’t always like fear as a motivator, if you need the extra push, let the cost of not training scare you into doing it now. Once we adopt the attitude that it must be done, we will find there are several ways to pay for it. Create a priority list for your training, see what sales you might need to cover it, and trim your current expenses to help pay for it.

Source: By Jason Boggs – Article from www.fenderbender.com

Focusing on Customer Service Keeps the A-1 Toyota Parts Team Successful!



A-1 Toyota

This issue's Vendor Spotlight shines on A-1 Toyota in New Haven.

We had a chance to catch up with Parts Manager Jay Welch to ask him for some insight on Toyota's 5th oldest dealership!

Welch says that their focus is always on their best customer, the service department. The A-1 service department has 26 bays, including two Express Lane bays. They have a total of 22 technicians, which also includes 2 two-man teams in the Express.

A-1's on-site body shop allows Jay and his parts team to experience the processes that today's collision centers must perform to be successful. ***"Having our own collision shop on the premises helps us realize the needs of our wholesale customers,"*** says Welch. ***"We understand the many situations that our wholesale customers face daily. We also understand the competition is fierce, so this helps us stay on top of our game which helps us provide the level of service necessary to our customers."***

The A-1 parts team is comprised of one dedicated delivery person, 4 counter people, including 2 counter people for the service department, assistant parts manager Kevin Wheeler and Jay. ***"We are all about Team Concept here,"*** says Jay. ***"We're just entering the wholesale arena and we all have to be on the same page. Communication is a must and I am a firm believer that all incoming calls should be answered by the third ring. I learned that long ago,"*** he continued.



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Jay began working with parts when he was in high school, working part time with motorcycle parts. From there, Jay has worked at a NAPA store, Foreign Autopart and Autopart International selling aftermarket. He has also served as a parts advisor then parts manager at an Audi/Porsche dealership with a stint as a service manager for the Porsche side of that dealer. Jay believes that his involvement in aftermarket parts has helped him realize the value of OEM parts when dealing with collision shops.

We wanted to know how A-1 Toyota became involved with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut and what prompted Jay to become a Supporting Advertiser? ***“Our body shop manager, Ralph, as well as our dealership, is a member of the ABAC and has been for many years. After attending meetings, Ralph mentioned to me that it may be a good idea to get involved. I contacted the ABAC and we signed up to support the association as an advertiser,”*** said Jay.

Jay then introduced us to AnnaLynn Wheeler, co-owner and General Manager of A-1 Toyota. Her father, Dominic and her grandfather Anthony, opened A-1 Auto Service in 1951. They pumped gas and sold used Cadillacs. When the highway came through, they moved across the bridge and their loyal customers followed! In 1963, Anthony and Dominic were approached by Toyota to see if they would sell the soon to be popular off-road vehicles, the Land Cruiser. All parties agreed, A-1 became a Toyota franchise and the A-1 legacy continues. If you ever have a chance to stop by A-1 Toyota, take a walk through their service drive. There is a mural across the length of the drive with pictures of many milestones. This is truly a family run operation.

We asked AnnaLynn if she would like to add anything and she immediately replied, ***“Our parts team is so special. They really know what it takes to service a body shop since we have one here on the premises. Oh.... I also love reading the (ABAC News) newsletter!”***

Thank you to AnnaLynn, Jay and the team at A-1 Toyota for taking their time to answer a few questions. The Auto Body Association of Connecticut would also like to thank you for your continued support.



ABAC News

Post Repair Calibration - A Growing Crisis

Have you, as a body shop owner or manager, ever taken a vehicle to an OE car dealer for a post-repair recalibration on an Advanced Driver Assist System (ADAS) vehicle only to get the “deer in the headlights” look from the dealership service manager, or simply be told the car does not require recalibration ... even though you know it is required?

If you have, welcome to the club. ADAS systems, once used only on high-line cars, are now seen in almost every vehicle. Even the ubiquitous “every-man car,” the Honda Civic has had ADAS components for several years.

Mark Olson of Vehicle Collision Experts LLC (VECO Experts) of Seattle, a noted industry leader and consultant wants to reverse this trend by bringing it to the attention of the OE's through as much anecdotal evidence as can be mustered before the industry week at this year's SEMA show. His message to the OE's will be to encourage them to properly train dealership personnel on the need for, and how to perform post-collision repair recalibration for those vehicles with ADAS systems.

Anecdotal Evidence Mounts

On Sept. 3, Olson sent out a call to the industry at large via social media asking for particular instances including names, types of vehicles involved, etc. Some of the early responses revealed the following:

A general manager for an independent body shop located in upstate New York noted, “GM, Toyota and Chrysler dealers have all said to me ‘... is the light on? No? Then it is fine.’ I have literally begged them to do diagnostic and calibration with little to no success.

A manager for a Fix Auto shop in Canada wrote, “What I am seeing is position statements from the car makers about how something has to be done. Recalibrate a mirror that has been R&I only, and then take the vehicle to the dealer for them to turn around and say it didn't need it. Dealers going against what their companies' position statements are. How are we supposed to keep up if local dealers get to change the rules?”

An independent body shop in the upper mid-west wrote about work his shop had done on a 2018 Nissan Murano. “We had the vehicle towed to the [Nissan] dealership. Shortly after it was dropped off, they called and said it didn't need a calibration on the front radar. I told them it did. They called back a while later and said they talked to their “A” mechanic at their other store and it did not need a calibration. I told them I was going to go on the Nissan tech site, print the exact procedure for the calibration, they were to perform it and bill me for it accordingly.”

Another upper mid-west body shop owner experienced a problem with a Subaru, similar to the Fix Auto shop in Canada. He wrote, “We will provide adjusters with the repair procedures for recalibration and they will call the dealer and the dealer will tell them the opposite of the Subaru procedures. We don't have the backing from the dealership.”

The same shop owner had some issues with a GM dealer when he brought a collision-repaired car to that dealership for recalibration. Thinking ahead, the shop owner went into the vehicle's shop manual, found the documentation regarding recalibration and brought them to the dealership. The shop manager continues, “When I handed them the documents, they said they never saw those documents and asked where I got them. The service department spoke with their own body shop about the inspections and since their body shop wasn't doing them ... it wasn't needed.” In another instance with a Honda vehicle, the shop owner received a call from the Honda dealer service manager asking how a particular calibration was supposed to be performed. The shop owner printed the procedure right out of the Honda repair manual and sent it to the dealer.

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Wake Up and Smell the Liability

Asked about this situation, veteran collision repair and consumer advocate Erica Eversman, J.D. founder and principal of the Automotive Education & Policy Institute, noted, "If a body shop brings a car to an OE dealership, the recognized authority and representative of the OE, and the dealer service manager tells the shop that the car in question does not need to be recalibrated, or if they accept the car for recalibration, do a cursory or otherwise incomplete job and hand the car back to the body shop, it could be argued in court that the body shop should reasonably expect that the dealer knew what they were doing, accept the job as-is and move on. In this case, the body shop could have a legitimate defense – assuming the jury bought it; however, you would have to go through the entire mess and cost of a trial to discover this. Or the jury could simply say that as a collision repair facility, 'you should have known better' and still find you at fault."

Some industry people feel that improperly repaired ADAS systems, or failing to recalibrate them properly could be a ticking time bomb for the industry. It could be a replay of the John Eagle case.

An "Invisible" Problem

One of the major problems with the issue of recalibration ... or lack thereof, is that it is difficult to "see."

Consumers, the ones most directly affected by having a post-collision car properly recalibrated don't know enough about it to ask the right questions. And even if they did know what questions to ask, they should be asking the OE, and there really is no direct contact between consumers and the OE. Independent body shops don't have a direct line to the OE for two-way communication. All that exists is electronic access to that OE's repair materials which many fail to read.

Every OE has field representatives to call on dealers which allow a back and forth exchange. And they all have similar areas of responsibility. But rarely does the topic of proper post-repair recalibration come up. First ... only about 38% of dealerships have their own body shops. Second, when the OE rep walks into a dealership, they usually have their own agenda for the day – objectives to be met and people to see. These may include dealing with warranty customers, technician training, introduction of new programs, etc., but rarely does it include topics germane to collision repair.

What is the Answer?

When asked what body shops should do to protect themselves, Eversman replied, "Shops should do their own homework and know what needs to be done relative to scanning and recalibration. If they can do it themselves in-house, all the better. If they have to sublet it to a dealer, know what needs to be done, and present the dealer with that documentation. When the car is retrieved, demand signed documentation that the car has been properly recalibrated based on the OE protocols."

Eversman continued, "Knowing what needs to be done to which car regarding scanning and recalibration should be on the shoulders of the shop's estimator. And to help them, the onus of supplying that information should rest with the estimating systems so they are truly helping shops make a safe and complete repair. In that same vein, the OE's could do more to make their respective dealers aware of this situation and how to address it. A body shop representative should not get a 'deer in the headlights look' from dealer personnel when the subject of recalibration is brought up."

Jerry Dalton, president of Dalton Collision with two locations in Tennessee said in a social media posting, "We ALWAYS look up and print OEM calibration procedures, discuss with service if they have necessary equipment, hand them instructions, and then make them document that the calibration has been performed. Then, we test drive the car to ensure the system functions properly."

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Chuck Olsen, senior VP of Operations & Automotive Technology for AirPro Diagnostics said, "I recommend when a collision shop identifies the need for a calibration to bring documentation with them including parts replaced and repair procedures performed. Include the calibration needed and the service information that calls for it based on what was done."

Olsen continued, "After going to the dealer, or any other sublet provider, save your dealer documentation on what they did, perform a road test and validate functionality. Make sure to ask for scan results showing all systems are clear or post-scan it yourself to document. In defense of dealership techs and advisors, most have not been exposed to this until a body shop comes in and asks for it."

A Wider Scope

Ideally, body shops should be able to conduct recalibrations in-house. This could improve cycle time and the shop would know it was completed. However, given the complexity of recalibrating some systems on some cars, the time needed, and the cost of equipment, some body shops are going to continue to bring the repaired vehicle back to the dealer. So at minimum, the dealer should be able to know what is needed to scan and recalibrate the brand and models of cars their dealership handles.

If you are a body shop that has had trouble getting an OE dealer to recalibrate a post-repaired vehicle, please send your story to Mark Olson of VECO Experts to mark@vecoexperts.com or call Olson at 888-362-2511.

Source: www.autobodynews

Written by Gary Ledoux

The Roadblocks to Better Blueprinting

As we continue our quest to develop a robust and detailed standard operating procedure for blueprinting, it's time to move on and discuss procedures that are critical to overcoming preventable roadblocks in your workflow. I have found that most interruptions to flow are preventable, but shops without a viable SOP for blueprinting continue to experience the self-inflicted delays that rear their ugly heads most often near the very end of the repair.

The first roadblock to discuss occurs when there is no accurate diagnosis of the vehicles structural integrity and conformance to OEM specifications. Simply put, it is the job of the blueprinter to discern whether or not corrective pulls are going to be required to restore the structure of the vehicle back to its originally designed dimensions. Failure to notice structures that are out of tolerance will cause huge delays and potential quality issues part way into the repair. Because one of the objectives of blueprinting is to discover and address all damages before putting the vehicle into production, adding a structural integrity check into your SOP is mandatory. Not every repair requires this check so it is not necessarily expedient to put a rule in place to measure every vehicle. Perhaps an adoption of the practice to measure every vehicle that has evidence of previous repair work will work for you.

In addition, any vehicle that visually or logically could have structural movement should be measured. You could implement two-tiered approach to this. Level one could include simple basic digital tram measurements in damaged and undamaged areas, and level two would include electronic measuring or benching with fixtures of the vehicle if the blueprinter detects any anomalies while using the tram bar. You will have to make your own rules based on how your shop is equipped, but, at the very least, your blueprinter needs to be trained on the detection of structural damage.

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I-CAR has some good classes as do the manufacturers of frame and measuring systems. Insert this maxim into your SOP: “When in doubt, measure it out” and you’ll greatly reduce the number of delays in your repair flow.

The second area of opportunity to prevent delays and surprises involves completing a diagnostic scan of every vehicle before commencing with the teardown. This diagnostic or pre-repair scan procedure has been a hot topic in our industry for several years, but I’m not sure that there has been the large-scale adoption of this necessary operation that one would expect. Several OEMs have weighed in on the topic and insist on having diagnostic scans done on their vehicles after a collision. Several more OEMs highly recommend that this procedure be completed. Some collision repair pundits have stated that these OEM positions should be sufficient reasoning for adding pre-scans to your SOP. The bottom line is that I agree all vehicles need to be scanned prior to disassembly. There are too many unknown issues that can go undetected without a scan, but these unknown issues or faults will surely cause a delay at the end of a repair when you do a completion scan.

There is still a fair amount of friction between shops and a few third-party payers of repairs, i.e. insurance companies. The encouraging news is that most insurance companies understand the importance and value of the pre-scan operation. While getting paid for this operation is important, I would hate to find that you choose to not do a pre-repair scan just because a particular company doesn’t want to pay you for it. I suggest you do the scans anyway and I think you’ll find that, in many cases, a DTC will pop up, which will be enough to justify the prescan.

More importantly, there are so many components that can malfunction because of a collision without any outward evidence of damage to the component. Blind spot sensors are notorious for failing after a collision and, without a pre-repair scan, you will not know of this issue. You will be the one scrambling to locate a replacement sensor on the day the vehicle is supposed to be delivered but the BSD system is malfunctioning. This is a preventable delay that easily remedied by implementing a prescan process into your SOP.

It is not hard to teach your blueprinter and teardown technician to use and interpret the scan tool and reports. Probably the hardest decisions you will face relate to the method you use to do the scans. Your options include using OEM scan tools and software, using aftermarket scan tools, using mobile sublet vendors, or using a company that has licensed the OEM software and connects to the vehicle remotely. We use a mix of the aforementioned options currently, but I favor the use of OEM software overall. The bottom line of this topic is that scanning must be part of your SOP.

Your blueprint SOP also needs to include researching and documenting resets, calibrations and tests that will be required to complete the repairs on any particular vehicle. Again, the intent here is to prevent a supplement near the end of the repair. An example of possible resets or calibrations include occupant classification or detection system calibrations, also sometimes known as seat weight sensor calibrations. Many manufacturers require this calibration after a collision.

Your blueprinter should research and document this and put the operation itself on the initial repair plan. Most OEMs require that the steering angle sensor be calibrated after a battery disconnect or an alignment is performed. Again, the blueprinter needs to research this and get it onto the repair plan before starting the actual repairs. If you have a damaged park assist sensor needing replacement, will you need to calibrate it, test it, or aim it, or is it a plug-and-play sensor? Feel free to refer to some of my previous columns that discussed the numerous resources available to blueprinters to ferret out these required operations. Make sure to make this research process a mandatory part of your blueprinting SOP.

By Steve Morris – Article from www.fenderbender.com

Speakers Discuss Need to Know, Follow OEM Calibration Steps for ADAS

George Lesniak, Autel's director of sales and training, said one of the biggest challenges for shops working to follow OEM collision repair procedures – in particular, the steps necessary for calibration of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) – is the variation among automakers.

"There's a complete lack of consistency across the different OEMs when it comes to their service information: where that information is located, where you find the procedures and specifications," Lesniak said during recent Collision Industry Electronic Commerce Association (CIECA) "Connex" conference.

But some of the challenges shops encounter in following OEM procedures, he said, has little to do with that inconsistency in how the information is organized.

"The one thing that I've found to be very consistent is technicians' ability to skip steps," Lesniak said. "The key skill set required to do calibrations is the ability to read, interpret and follow complex instructions and make detailed measurements. Knowing how to use a metric tape measure is absolutely foreign to most technicians. We've found that 50 percent of calibration failures come down to missing or skipping steps in those preliminary instructions."

Those steps, he said, include having the required space with the right environmental conditions, such as proper lighting, and ensuring that nothing is interfering with the field of "view" of any sensors.

"I actually got called out by a customer who couldn't get this vehicle calibrated. He had tried multiple times," Lesniak said. "They sent me out to trouble-shoot, and there was what looked like a grasshopper splattered right in the middle of the camera on the windshield. Step number one in the instructions was to make sure the windshield is clean, especially in front of the camera. They skipped the basic steps."

Lesniak was just one of several speakers discussing OEM procedures and ADAS calibrations during the CIECA conference, held in Charlottesville, VA. Sean Guthrie, director of operations for the seven Car Crafters Collision Centers in Albuquerque, N.M., said one thing he thinks may slow the expected reduction in claims count based on ADAS is whether consumers are buying vehicles equipped with such systems.

He said he and his wife were recently in the market for a new car and found no dealer in their region with the model vehicle they wanted that included all the ADAS features the automaker makes available for that vehicle.

"It wasn't just a matter of finding one in the trim model we wanted," Guthrie said. "From the base of that model to the top tier, there wasn't one available with the full ADAS suite. I asked the dealer why is it that your cars are among the safest out there, with the most available technology, yet you don't have one on the lot with that technology. They said, 'It's simple, Sean: We don't sell them. And if we do sell them, the customer wants us to turn it all off. So why would we have a car on the lot that's \$6,000 more for something that someone is just going to turn off?'"

Guthrie thinks it may just be that consumers aren't seeking out ADAS because it's not something that is being marketed to them. Regardless, Guthrie said his company is working to do more of ADAS calibrations in-house, in part because dealerships often aren't prepared to do so. He believes that even shops subletting the work should still research the calibration procedures to know what needs to be done.

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"It's disappointing how often when you tell dealerships, 'We removed and reinstalled all these things, and replaced these things, so this is what we need calibrated,' they look at you and say, 'But it drives fine and there are no codes or dash lights,'" Guthrie said. "This is from a dealership that sells and services that vehicle. Unfortunately, more than once we've had an argument with a dealership about what needs to be done. We couldn't have that argument unless we knew the OEM repair procedures."

He said subletting the work also doesn't relieve a shop from the liability that ADAS calibrations were done fully and properly.

The only way to ensure that has happened is to road-test the vehicles, something his company does even if a dealer did the calibration work on a sublet basis and should have done its own road test.

"We've picked up many cars after they get done at the dealership and had to turn right back around and take it back because they're not calibrated right," Guthrie said. "You have to test drive the car to know that. And you need to test every system, not just the ones you affected [during repairs] because they all talk, they all work together. If you affect one, you may have affected five."

Guthrie said although it varies by make and model, dynamic system calibrations and post-calibration road tests often require two people.

"You've got somebody who needs to be manning the scan tool, while the other person is safely driving," he said. "There are some cars that you can put into [test] modes and then drive and confirm that it worked. But for the most part, two people make it much safer."

Guthrie was asked what happens to a vehicle his company has repaired if neither his shop nor a local dealer is equipped and prepared to calibrate the ADAS.

"The car sits," Guthrie said, comparing it to a car not being released if an airbag hasn't been installed. "We had a Subaru for which we didn't have the calibration equipment. The dealership had the equipment but had never set it up or used it. So that car wasn't safe to be back on the road. It took almost two months. We ended up helping the dealer getting the equipment set up and getting it done."

Another speaker at the conference concurred. Darrell Amberson of LaMettry's Collision, which operates nine collision shops and two stand-alone mechanical shops in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota, has developed ADAS calibration stations at two of its locations. He said companies such as his can be another source of calibration help for other shops if dealers in a market are not set-up to do so.

He said that like Guthrie, his company won't release a car until calibrations are completed; in one case, that even meant not taking on a particular job.

"It was a Toyota van that was a handicap conversion," Amberson said. "They had put in heavy-duty springs in the back of the vehicle. There was no data from Toyota in terms of how we should calibrate it. We reached out to the conversion company, and they admitted they just performed the conversion and didn't do anything about the ADAS. We found that situation scary and just stepped aside and didn't perform the repairs because there was no way we could know how to properly calibrate that vehicle. It was probably fixed by someone who probably didn't do anything with the ADAS systems."

Source: www.autobodynews.com

Written by [John Yoswick](#)

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