



***Collision Tech Shortage:
Do Your Part By Getting Involved
With Local Trade Schools***

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President's Message

Bob Amendola

Plant Seeds for the Future



I have long believed in the industry we chose. I see the present time full of opportunity for anyone interested in the trade but it's no secret that millennials and younger generations alike have pushed to go to college instead of pursuing the trades.

While college is wonderful, I think that is a disservice for some. Careers are certainly not a one-size-fits-all type of thing. College may be a necessary step for some but not everyone. I believe it's high time our society stops discouraging our youth from pursuing careers in the trades... but I'll get off my soap box for now.

First and foremost, I am proud of our association for continuously supporting the technical schools in our state and I am grateful for the partnership we have with them.

We recently hired two tech school students to join our team and give them an opportunity to start gaining experience in a shop. It is refreshing to work with the next generation and teach them all that we can.

I applaud them for pursuing their interests when it may not be what everyone else is doing.

Three of my four children are now involved in the business. If I didn't believe it was a good opportunity for them, I wouldn't allow them to pursue it.

Corporate America isn't as appealing these days. We hear it time and time again from appraisers that visit our shops. There's something to be said about being in control of your own future.

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There's ample opportunity in the trades and I am committed to encouraging our students and younger generations to explore them.

As technicians begin to age out of the industry, there is a substantial demand for new technicians to enter the workforce. It is up to us to train them and lead by example. If you have any positions available, I would encourage you to consider a tech school student.

Our industry will get better but it is up to us to make it better. Share your knowledge and facilitate growth.

I hope to see you all soon (in person).

All the best,

Bob

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



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

ASE Education Foundation: Get involved with local collision trade schools to help them thrive, survive

SE Education Foundation Vice President George Arrants recently warned the collision industry that the pipeline for its future workforce is “collapsing.”

Arrants presented Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicating that the “Automotive body and related repairers” sector had 155,500 employees in 2019 and projecting it’d need 159,900 by 2029. Repairers would also average 13,600 job openings a year which would need to be refilled.

However, while user data from the training firm S/P2 found upticks in the number of 2020 auto service and heavy-duty/diesel students, the number of collision students fell 36.9 percent from 2019, according to a slide from Arrants’ virtual Collision Industry Conference presentation Jan. 21.

The collision sector isn’t lacking students, according to Arrants. But it was losing vo-tech programs which could feed the local collision workforce, he said. It also was doing a poor job of retaining the entry-level techs it had, he said.

Arrants told the Jan. 21 virtual CIC that 17 ASE-accredited programs had gone inactive, with potentially another 26 collision programs following suit in February or March.

In an interview Tuesday, he confirmed these remained in jeopardy, and ASE was working to try and save a couple more.

“The number keeps popping up,” he said Tuesday. He said the CIC appearance hasn’t prompted a flood of industry figures asking how to help.

Arrants told the CIC in January that 241 collision programs failed to renew their subscriptions to SP/2, and I-CAR had experienced 87 vo-tech nonrenewals. “Those programs are going away,” he said.

Arrants said Mississippi recently required its collision education programs to be accredited — the first state to do so in history. “That is a positive and a negative,” Arrants said. For if the industry doesn’t support those collision programs and help them earn accreditation, they’ll vanish.

Arrants said an estimated 900-1,000 collision programs exist in America, and “we are constantly hearing” of programs closing. He said reasons include expense and low enrollment, but the most likely culprit involves instructors retiring without replacements. He said he and others are working to identify schools “as quickly as possible” and help salvage their collision programs.



Tradiebot Industries industry and customer engagement global director Beth Rutter has been working with Enterprise on a collision education pilot program involving a blend of college learning and time in a real-world body shop. She told the CIC about challenges introducing the Automotive Collision Engineering Pilot Program at vo-tech schools. She said the initial experience has been many colleges willing to sign up — but then many of them “really struggle to do the heavy lifting” to adapt to it. Rutter said few colleges base their curriculum on what the collision industry actually needs.

School personnel might also be divided in terms of commitment.

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Rutter said they've found colleges whose administration completely backed the program, but "instructors didn't want to do the work." Or the instructors are "completely dialed in" but must "swim upstream" to get anything done, according to Rutter. She described one instructor who made the necessary changes, reached out to the industry, and began to pursue ASE accreditation — only to see a vice president and president change at her college deliver new orders for the program.

Rutter said she's worked with hundreds of body shops and dozens of school, and "behind every, and I mean every," successful college collision program was industry personnel like shops and vendors participating in the school's advisory board. "They provide the muscle the colleges need in order to make the changes they need," Rutter said.

Arrants also pointed out that the CIC audience members were taxpayers. Failure to get involved with the local college collision program meant the schools could "spend your money" on whatever they wanted "without your input."

Collision Repair Education Foundation development director Brandon Eckenrode offered to help anyone who needed help finding a local high school or college collision program. He can be reached at Brandon.Eckenrode@ed-foundation.org. Schools can be fixed if the industry gets there in time, according to Arrants and Rutter.

Rutter described an Ohio shop which made contact after hearing about the Enterprise pilot. The repairer had a technician it sought to enroll in the program but didn't want to waste money, she said. She said they contacted the dean, and now the school is on its way toward buying equipment, pursuing ASE accreditation and giving teachers support they "never had" before.

Arrants said Rutter connected the ASE Education Foundation with a "really struggling" Iowa community college. The collision program only had five students — two of which were "over the age of 60."

Instead of closing the program, the college decided to fix it and seek support locally and nationally from businesses, according to Arrants. And while historically, the program's funds weren't necessarily spent on items which would foster student success or entry-level skills, "all of that is changing," he said.

"We have a national concern with a local solution," Arrants said. The answer was to "get involved."

Suppliers, manufacturers, struggling programs and employers all needed to get involved, for the pipeline was collapsing with "too many holes."

The industry needed to "seal those holes, little by little."

Arrants said that if one was unable to make progress through an advisory committee, contact others in the industry such as himself or Rutter.

"You have a voice" as a member of the industry, Arrants said. He advised reaching out to school administrators, for if they aren't aware of what's occurring or of the industry's participation, "you are just a line item on a spreadsheet"

"We need to keep the programs we have," Arrants said. He said that automotive and medium-/heavy-duty programs are growing, collision was "moving into the negative, and we have to stop the bleeding."

An informal poll of the January CIC audience found 16 percent of them had hired an entry-level tech or intern from a vo-tech program in the past two years. 77 percent said it wasn't applicable to their role, and 7 percent said no. 19 percent obtained the new hires from local tech schools, while 8 percent tapped both local and distant campuses. 73 percent called this not applicable.

The poll found 32 percent of respondents had been involved in the local trade school's advisory committee, 21 percent had served on one in the past and while 47 percent hadn't been part of one at all.

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

UPDATE - ASE Education Foundation updates collision vo-tech program accreditation standards



An ASE Education Foundation review and overhaul of vo-tech accreditation requirements has largely preserved the thresholds collision education programs need to qualify for recognition.

The ASE Education Foundation said it solicited input from parties “including secondary and post-secondary instructors, state Dept. of Education, working technicians and representatives from Gerber, Caliber Collision, Service King, 3M, Car-O-Liner, Axalta, Sherwin Williams, Chief Automotive, and I-CAR” to develop the revised format released Jan. 1.

Collision programs’ educational offerings will continue to receive accreditation in the same four categories: Non-Structural, Structural, Painting/Refinishing and Mechanical/Electrical. All programs must still continue to offer sufficient Damage Analysis, Estimating and Customer Service education, and the Structural and Non-Structural programs will continue to require a welding course of study.

The ASE Education Foundation said it made “Minor changes to the number of priority tasks in each area” and “Edits, additions, and deletions” for “task lists, tool lists, and equipment lists.” But it will still require students to have the same number of hours in each area and demand the same qualifications of instructors.

All tasks required to be taught by the schools to receive the various ASE accreditations are considered “High Priority” and assigned either a HP-I or HP-G designation. The school must teach 95 percent of the HP-I skills and 90 percent of HP-G skills. With the exception of the Damage Analysis, Estimating and Customer Service section, the revision produced more “High Priority” tasks and demanded more of those tasks be taught. However, as noted above, students must put in 46 hours worth of approved Damage Analysis, Estimating and Customer Service time, just as they did under the old standards.

A comparison of the 2018 standards and the new 2021 collision repair accreditation requirements can be seen here. <https://www.aseeducationfoundation.org/uploads/2021-Collision-Standards-Summary-of-Changes-22Dec2020.pdf>. Schools can seek accreditation using either set of standards through June 30. Effective July 1, campuses can only apply under the new requirements.

The new accreditation rules come amid what the organization described in January as a nation that’s shedding collision repair vo-tech programs. Seidner’s Collision Centers development and training director Gene Lopez had advocated for a simplified set of requirements during past Collision Industry Conferences, arguing that most shops would be ecstatic with a technician versed in just four skills: Removing and replacing a bolted-on component, detailing, entry-level prepping of a vehicle for paint, and fixing a small dent.

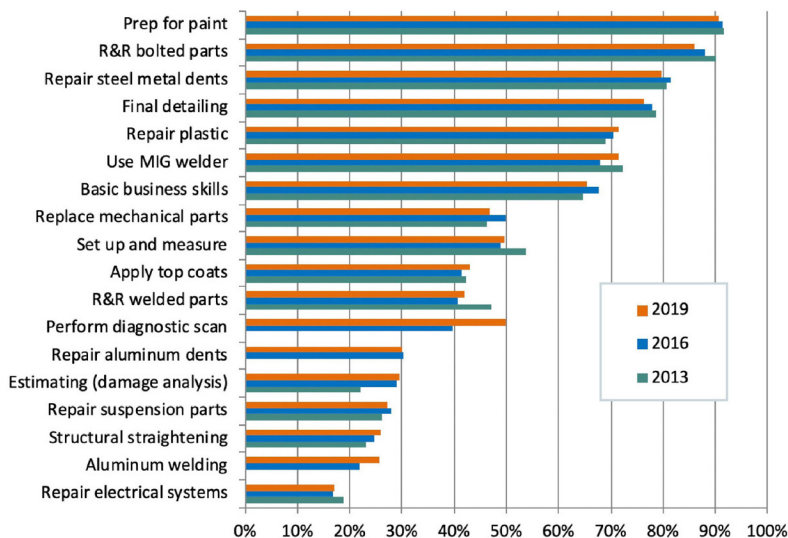
A Collision Repair Education Foundation and I-CAR industry study released in 2019 found the industry only needed graduates to have less than 10 tasks.

“Survey respondents indicated which tasks they would expect a technical school program graduate to be able to perform with very little supervision,” states an executive summary of the survey, which drew responses from more than 675 collision companies. “Respondents chose an average of 9.3 tasks, similar to selections made in 2016 (9.2 tasks). “The top four requested tasks remained the same, as they have since 1995. Electrical Repairs is still the least expected entry-level skill.”

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Entry-Level Technician Task Expectations



Lopez pushed for a simplified accreditation requirement again during the Jan. 21 virtual CIC.

“The hurdle is too high to become accredited,” Lopez said of San Gabriel Valley, Calif.-area schools on whose advisory boards he sits. The nearly 400 tasks previously required for ASE Education Foundation accreditation demanded a “full-on” body shop, he said.

Accreditation in all six categories offered for collision vo-tech historically meant completing 347 out of 377 tasks under the ASE Foundation’s 95 percent/90 percent rules. The new accreditation would increase the list of potential tasks to 390 skills and require 357 of them be learned.

However, that’s “MASTER” level accreditation. As noted above, schools can be accredited for just some of these programs, which can bring the task list down to less than 200 skill options and re-

quirements for some accreditation options. (Mechanical/Damage and Painting/Damage).

“It’s up to the program,” ASE Education Foundation Vice President George Arrants told the January CIC. Nothing required a school to teach every subject that could be accredited, merely the ones relevant to the local community, he said. Arrants also said the task list provided “flexibility” to add or remove specific skills. He also argued that offering too small a list of requirements wouldn’t provide enough breadth to support a full collision program. “They’ll just undo the program,” he said of a school. Arrants stressed that the task list was developed by the industry itself. In this case, the revision committee involved a “fresh group” of panelists which included many newcomers to the process and made for a sort of “clean slate.”

Arrants also noted that trade schools used to play the ASE Education Foundation and I-CAR off against each other, declaring that the campus had selected one program and didn’t need the other. Today, the two groups work more closely together.

During a open mic session of the January CIC, Lopez called the cost of accreditation an issue for many schools, including those not being reaccredited. He said more schools could be accredited — and then qualify for funding and grants only available to such schools — if the task list permitted a lower tool, equipment and material outlay, “say \$100,000.”

The chat at the virtual CIC also addressed the question of the threshold for accreditation.

I-CAR technical products, programs and services Vice President Jeff Peevy wrote: “Do we want students to be exposed to a lot of different things or be really good at the key tasks needed.”

Tradiebot Industries industry and customer engagement global director Beth Rutter, who has been working with Enterprise on a collision education pilot program, replied: “That is the ongoing debate Jeff. The task list came from a wide range of industry shop owners, managers and industry experts like Mike Anderson. Over and over again collision shops tell us that they want students educated — not basically — but professionally.” Peevy later wrote: “I think the questions are, ‘what is it we ultimately want a student to be able to do in their career?’ or ‘what is it shops need them to do well when they first start their careers?’ I have struggled with these questions for years.”

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

LAND ROVER OF HARTFORD GIFTS TOOL KITS TO TECH STUDENTS

Land Rover of Hartford, part of Mitchell Auto Group, has awarded three tool kits, valued at \$3,000 each, to A.I. Prince Technical High School's Automotive Technology program. Steven Mitchell, Vice President of Mitchell Auto Group, presented the tool kits this week.

"I am delighted that Mr. Mitchell and Land Rover are willing to partner with Prince Tech," said Principal Dan Mello. "This provides our auto students with a direct pipeline into employment opportunities in their career pathway."

"Tools are a big expense for students," said David Tefft, Mitchell Auto Group Director. "This gift is to get somebody going in the industry and hopefully students will consider working for us."

Attracting skilled technicians to their business is a priority of Mitchell Auto Group, as the number of automotive technicians retiring statewide is expected to dramatically rise in the coming years, and the number of new technicians entering the auto repair field is at a historic low.

Two students have been gifted the kits based on their career goals, good attendance and positive attitude. The third kit will be awarded to a senior student who has completed the highest number of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifications by graduation.

Tefft says this is a first-of-its-kind donation from Mitchell Auto Group, but they hope to continue.

Mitchell Auto Group also sits on the Career Technical Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) at Prince Technical High School. CTEAC members ensure the technical high school trade programs are in alignment with industry trends by providing input on curriculum, technology and workplace readiness skills.

Prince Tech's Automotive Technology program trains grade 9 through 12 students how to diagnose, service and repair today's vehicles. The curriculum is aligned with the ASE Education Foundation Standards and students are taught by ASE Certified Master Technicians in a real-world licensed repair facility. Graduates of the program earn a high school diploma, a career certificate in their field of study, and multiple industry-recognized credentials. Prince Tech is part of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, a statewide school district of 17 diploma granting high schools, two aviation maintenance technician schools and an adult education center. Learn more at cttech.org.

WILCOX TECH LAUNCHES CAREER ACADEMY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MERIDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In collaboration with Meriden Public Schools, H.C. Wilcox Technical High School, part of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), opened an afterschool, career and technical education (CTE) program for grade 10 and 11 Meriden public school students. Twenty-three (23) students have enrolled in the program.

"We are thrilled to partner with the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System and Wilcox on the creation of the Career Academy for Meriden Public Schools students," said, Dr. Mark Benigni, Superintendent of Meriden Public Schools. "These are the innovative partnerships that can make a real difference for our students. Culinary Arts, Facilities Carpentry and Manufacturing are high demand and high interest trades."

The two-year Career Academy program will graduate students with two and a half CTE credits towards a high school diploma and industry-recognized credentials in one of three trade areas: Manufacturing, Facilities Carpentry or Culinary. The Career Academy program gives students a jump-start on their career by preparing them with technical and employability skills aligned with entry-level industry positions.

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“The need for skilled trade workers continues to rise, and CTECS is committed to meeting that demand by creating new and innovative educational pathways that align with the needs of regional employers,” said Jeffrey Wihbey, CTECS Superintendent of Schools. “The Career Academy expands training opportunities available to the next generation of Connecticut’s workforce, and we hope to replicate this model throughout the state.”

To learn more about The Career Academy, contact Principal Stacy Butkus at Stacy.Butkus@cttech.org.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS ACHIEVE LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION IN MARZANO HIGH RELIABILITY SCHOOLS™

A.I. Prince Technical High School (Hartford), Howell Cheney Technical High School (Manchester), H.H. Ellis Technical High School (Danielson), Norwich Technical High School (Norwich) and Bullard-Havens Technical High School (Bridgeport), part of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), are pleased to announce the achievement of Level 1 certification in Marzano High Reliability Schools™. Level 1 certification means these schools have created a “Safe, Supportive, and Collaborative Culture,” which is the foundation for every level that follows. Without such a culture, student achievement will be compromised. Day-to-day school operations are addressed and evaluated in Level 1.

The high reliability school (HRS) program was created by Marzano Resources to help transform schools into organizations that take proactive steps to ensure student success. Using a research-based five-level hierarchy, along with leading and lagging indicators, educators learn to assess, monitor, and confirm the effectiveness of their schools.

“These schools were already doing outstanding work to ensure students success, and cultivate safe and supportive learning communities,” said Jeffrey Wihbey, CTECS Superintendent of Schools. “This latest accomplishment is a testament to the hard work of our school staff, and their commitment to putting students first. The certification gives our teachers additional instructional and support tools to continuing improving their professional practice.”

This framework, based on 50 years of educational research, defines five progressive levels of performance that a school must master to become an HRS—where all students learn the content and skills they need for success in college, careers, and beyond. “As you move through the levels, it represents a complete transformation in how schools are run,” says CEO Robert J. Marzano.

Schools must collect data and validate their performance to climb each level of the hierarchy. Certification is determined by Marzano Resources analysts in cooperation with school data teams. Using the HRS framework and indicators, schools can drive sustained, positive, and significant impacts on student achievement by synthesizing multiple complex initiatives into one harmonious system.

About Marzano Resources

Built on the foundation of Dr. Robert J. Marzano’s 50 years of education research, Marzano Resources supports teachers and administrators through customizable on-site professional development, educator events, virtual coaching, books, videos and online courses. Our associates and authors are thought leaders in the field of education and deliver research-backed guidance for all major areas of schooling, including curriculum development, instruction, assessment, student engagement and personalized competency-based education.

Source: <https://www.cttech.org>

Transitioning Into Retirement

Building, Maintaining and Planning Your Business for Success

We recently contacted Bob Skrip, owner of Skrip's Auto Body in Prospect to ask how he has managed to keep his business successful through the years and how he was able to move into his retirement from the auto collision industry.

Early History

Bob Skrip graduated in 1975 from of the auto body program at W.F.Kaynor Tech School in Waterbury. We hear from Bob in his own words:

Graduating from Kaynor is what launched me into the auto collision business, and I continue to have the utmost respect for the technical programs at all of the Connecticut schools. From the day I opened my business to present day, I have been an extraordinarily strong supporter to the point where I would ask the local tech schools to send me an entry level student that I could train in my shop allowing that student to "get their feet wet" in the auto repair industry. We should all encourage the trades in any business whether its automotive technicians, electricians, carpenters, plumbers and so on. We all need to embrace and support the trades,"



I opened Skrip's Auto Body in 1978. The building was originally a 2,000-sf facility. We were fortunate back then to buy the property and build the building with the help of my Dad. He basically signed the mortgage, handed me the paperwork, and said, 'you screw up, then I own it'.

Measuring Success

There are a lot of things that come into play when you try to measure a person's success. You need to hit the ground running. You need a detailed plan. You need a strong foundation to start. That foundation was, for me, it was my dad. We are also fortunate geographically to be in a small town and not a big city. The community atmosphere in our town is unique. A small community needs to rely on you. It's so important to earn trust in your community. Don't be afraid to get involved. Get out there and meet the people in your community. Build those relationships. We have sponsored just about everything in our town, Little Leagues, the Boy Scouts, the local schools' sports programs, etc. I don't think there's anyone from town that has approached us for a donation, that I refused. We've always tried to give back to our community. In return, we've enjoyed the support of the community. Still, to this day we continue to support our community.

Once you've earned the trust of the community and once you have your name out there, (your brand) that has been established and recognized in a favorable way, the customers will come to you! It's a wonderful way to build your customer base and your workforce.

Being a reputable shop like Skrip's, when you put the word out that you are looking for an employee, they'll come to you. Potential employees do their homework and check out potential employers.

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They want to see your reviews. They want to see who they may potentially be working for. You want to shine a favorable light. They want to see that they are coming to work for a leader in the community and the industry.

Another area that helps be successful, recognize your employees. They are the face of your business. I would go out into the shop every day and try and speak to every one of my employees. Even a simple, "Hey Tony, how's the kids doing? Or asking one of the guys how his wife is feeling after a bout with the flu. You need to communicate with your employees as people, not just numbers. Whenever I hire a new technician, I tell them, if we like you, if you do your job, participate in the way we run our program, the way we expect, then you might as well take the wheels off your toolbox because it won't be rolling out of here. My shop manager John has been with me for over 30 years and is a dedicated employee. This year we gave all of our workers a gift card to go and buy new boots. It's a great feeling when one of my guys is in a local grocery store, having just left work and is recognized because of the uniform with Skrip's Auto Body on their sleeve. People comment all the time, "Hey, Skrip's Auto, we see your name all the time or, hey you guys fixed my car, last week or last year or 5 years ago. You guys are great!" This is nothing that happens overnight.

Involvement with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Part of our success is belonging to a group like the Auto Body Association of Connecticut (ABAC). The camaraderie with your colleagues. Don't say that the guy down the street is your competitor. There is no such thing as a competitor in this business. You need to be colleagues. You must work together. That's always been my mindset. We all have colleagues we look up to, and mine at that time was none other than Mike and Mark Wilkowski, of Stanley's Auto Body in Waterbury. Their shop was already established in the area and I always looked up to them. When someone inspires you, you want to be like them. Their long-established business and their quality of work was one I wanted to emulate. In the early 80's Mike encouraged me to join the association that he had been a part of for many years, at that time, known as The Auto Body Association of Greater New Haven. Shortly after, all the local ABA's in the state became one, known as the ABAC. I made it a priority to attend ABAC meetings, putting aside fun and games most guys my age were partaking in, with the hope there's going to be time for fun later. Another one of my inspirations was Mike Brunt of Autocraft Corporation in Branford., who was a man ahead of his time. I learned an awful lot from him. I learned a lot from all my peers in the ABAC. Just a quality bunch of people and professionals.

At every ABAC meeting I had the pleasure of attending, I walked away with knowledge, confidence, and a boat load of information that I was able to bring back to my shop the next day and run with it. I learned how to professionally write a ticket, how to treat my employees, how to find and retain customers that more often than not, became friends. Sometime in the early 90's I was honored to become a Board member of the ABAC. This is the "think tank", of the ABAC. This is where the ideas for upcoming meetings are discussed, correspondence with other national associations take place, legislation is proposed, politicians and other Government officials are introduced to our concerns, and problems of the industry are addressed and attacked for the benefit of us all, by the group I was part of, The Board of Directors of the ABAC. Fast forward, I went from Board member, to Treasurer, VP, and then in the Spring of 2008, I was humbled to be nominated to the position of President of the ABAC, that I graciously accepted and held until 2012 when I handed the office over to now former President, Tony Ferraiolo. Being at the helm of the ABAC was great. I enjoyed it immensely. You can't go into that role with a ho-hum attitude. If you're going to sit in that seat as Bob Amendola is doing now or Tony Ferraiolo before him, you need to live and breathe the association. Every day there was something going on even between meetings. Every day you're doing something for the ABAC. You need to be devoted to that position.

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Anytime I would travel as an ambassador for the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, no matter what state we were in, people that I met had nothing but respect and praise for the leadership that we have.

I can honestly say, my business has prospered and succeeded because of what I learned, and who I met through the ABAC. I became a "sponge" at the meetings and absorbed every bit of knowledge that was offered and that knowledge I now offer to my two sons that have worked for me since high school, and God willing, they will continue to carry the Skrip's Auto Body culture for years to come.

Customer Involvement

Every car that comes in is connected with a person. Every person has a story. You need to listen to that story. When a customer comes to your shop it's because they've had a "not so good" experience. You need to listen to their concerns even though you may have heard it before. They are going through a traumatic time in their lives. Being a good listener will help make you a good businessman. I don't have to remind anyone that without our customers, we would not be in business. Think of how you would like to be treated when you walk through that door. Treat your customers with respect and care. You will be amazed how your business can increase just due to "word of mouth" advertising.

Transitioning Into Retirement

Well, when I first started out in this business, there was no thoughts at all about an exit plan. My first thoughts were all about running a successful business, feeding my family, feeding my employees and their families. That was my first priority. You don't think about an exit strategy when you first open your business. I didn't. You don't normally see success, at least, for the first 5 years or so. Success comes slow. It took me at least 25 years into my business before I could even entertain the thought of throttling back. Time to start investing in other things. Very few people can retire from this business if this (running and owning a body shop) is all you do. You need to diversify. Originally, I thought that building this into a behemoth selling cars, buying tow trucks, and becoming a tow company, get my dealer's license, but I quickly found out that there is so much more work involved and time involvement that even though I could be successful, I don't want to wear that many different hats. I even tried being a DRP about 25 years ago for one year but quickly found out that the customers that were being sent to me through the DRP program were my customers anyway! I never found the program to be profitable.

Once you established your company with key frontline people, management positions and a management program that you can rely on and trust (you can trust them because you take care of them which in return, they take care of you), once you have that in place you can start slowing out. I started taking a morning off here and there, then a day off here and there, it was a slow transition. It certainly wasn't the flick of a switch. Working is in my DNA. I still check in on things at the shop. I still make calls to make sure all I ok. As a matter of fact, I'm at my office this morning while you are conducting this interview. But I try to stay away as much as possible and let my team run the shop. It's at the point now where if I call in to see how things are going, I'm met with, "WHO IS THIS?"

Although I haven't worked in the back of the shop in probably about 25 years, I still needed to know what was going on back there. You need to stay involved, keep the equipment up to date, the metals, the rivets, bonding materials, etc. I continue to credit the ABAC for the education that allowed me to keep current and up to date.



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One of my sons, Bob Jr. (or Bob-E as he is affectionately called in the shop) is very instrumental to this business. He's into the technical portion of this business. He wants to know the correct process. He researches every bit of data there is when repairing a customer's vehicle to properly repair that vehicle whether it's the OEM repair procedures or even the torque specs of a lug nut, what bolts may need to be replaced and not used over again. He will be the one to carry on what we've been doing for the past 42+ years. So, as you can see, you need to have many things in place before you can even think about retirement.

Enjoying Life

And as far as the fun I missed in my early years. Those of you who know me personally can attest to the fact I'm more than making up for it now. One of the first things I did was to build a beautiful little log cabin in the woods of Vermont overlooking a peaceful lake that I enjoy immensely. I still go there regularly. I've been an avid snowmobiler for decades (before it became fashionable) and it's the perfect spot in the wintertime. And great for fishing. Myself and my girlfriend Luiza DaSilva run Sun Gold Stables which is a horse boarding farm



in Bethany, with 24 horses. It's a horse lover's dream! Believe me, I did anything but retire! I don't understand how I was able to do everything I did at the farm when I was working. My last project during retirement was to restore a vehicle that was Concours d'Elegance worthy. So, I bought a 1955 Buick Roadmaster Convertible. I spent 5 years with my sons and part of my staff helping and restored this car from a rust bucket that barely ran to Concours d'Elegance quality. Speaking of Concours, you don't just show up on a Sunday morning with your car at a Concours event. Someone must refer you to the panel and you must be invited. I was very fortunate, after a series

of emails with the Concours panel, sending pictures and answering many questions and submitting documentation of the car, to have been accepted and invited to the Concours d'Elegance event in Greenwich. Unfortunately, due to COVID, the event could not be held but it is my understanding that the event will be held this fall of 2021 so I'm being cautiously optimistic that I will be able to show the fruits of my labor.

Bottom line, retirement has been very enjoyable but, to sum it up, you need to have a management plan, work hard, take care of your people, generate a good customer base, and take the steps necessary to make sure your business is on a solid foundation. It is then that you can consider your move into retirement.

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut would like to thank Bob Skrip for taking the time to offer up his thoughts on his career and retirement. They would also like to wish Bob and Luiza continued health and success as they continue enjoying life.

Submitted by Don Cushing



Join the Party!

We recently announced our exclusive ABAC Facebook Group just for body shops, did you miss it? If you haven't joined yet or you're not sure where to find it, we can email you the link and guide you through the short verification process.

During this virtual time, the group is a great way to stay in contact with colleagues, communicate directly with the board and stay up to date with the most current information. Since the group is private and monitored by our social media committee for security, you can rest assured it is a secure platform where you can share your ideas and read others' as well.

Oftentimes, there are quick messages or information we need to share with each other. The Facebook group is a great tool to do that swiftly. Furthermore, there are a bunch of resources and links you can easily access to help you with the day to day operations. Not sure how to file a DOI complaint? The link is just a click away. Or maybe you need to quickly reference a statute when dealing with an uninformed adjuster, we've got that too! Curious what goes on in our board meetings? We've got monthly updates for you to bring you up to speed.

To get started, you just need to have a (free) personal or business Facebook profile. We can take it from there so you don't miss out! If you have any questions or need any help, please do not hesitate to reach out so we can get you set up. You'll be glad you did!

Ashley Burzenski

ABAC Vice-President Ashley Burzenski

*Ashley Burzenski can be reached at
autoworksofwestville@gmail.com*



The ABAC Board of Directors
proudly presents...

ABAC Body Shop Members Facebook Group

...an exclusive social media forum to network with fellow members, discuss industry related topics, quickly access helpful resources and stay up to date with updates from the board.

A free personal or business Facebook account is needed to access.



[FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/ABACMEMBERS](https://facebook.com/groups/abacmembers)



**AUTO BODY
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ABAC Launches New Marketing Campaign

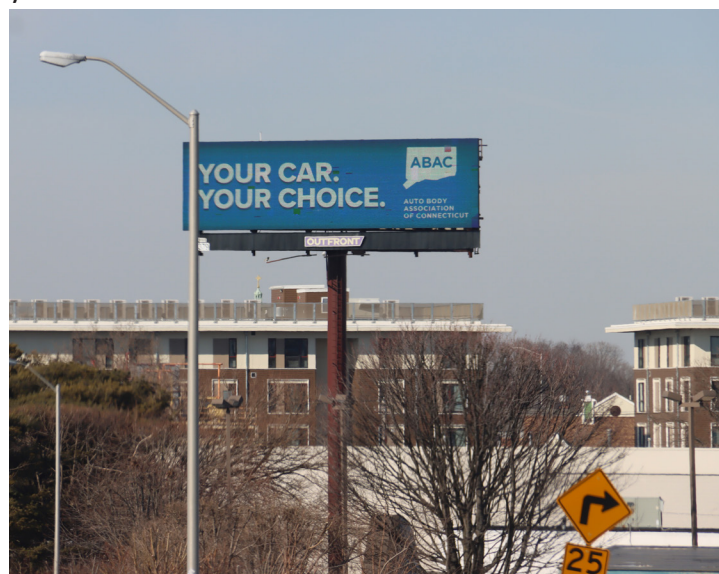
Billboards and Service Station Advertising Flood the Connecticut Area

With the challenges of the pandemic in 2020, and meetings being cancelled, your ABAC Board of Directors has continued working to find ways to connect with the members and reach consumers. The ABAC News has been a very effective tool for education but the Board still felt as though they needed to be a better way to get their message out to the motoring public and consumers.

After several board meetings, discussing different ways to get the best results with their financial investment, the ABAC launched an advertising marketing strategy in February. Many different avenues of media were discussed. Radio ads and music streaming service companies (Pandora/Spotify/Sirius) were mentioned, but the reach of that market is selective. Trying to decide what station to choose or what radio program to sponsor seemed a challenge to reach many people since everyone has a different taste in what they listen to. It was finally decided that billboards and gas station audio advertising would really affect a larger audience.

After Administrative Assistant Heather Romaniello made calls and shopped the highly competitive market, the ABAC decided to use Out Front Media to handle several different messages on digital billboards throughout the State. These messages will rotate in the high traffic areas of Interstate 91, Interstate 95, and can expand to Waterbury on I-84, New Britain on Rte. 9, and Meriden on I-691. Being digital messages allows the ABAC to change their presentations at a moment's notice.

The billboard campaign began in February and is a 28-week venture that runs through September 5th of this year.



The second part of the campaign is audio messages on service station gas pumps throughout the area. These messages are audio clips that are produced by Geomatrix Productions and then sent to Amp Radio Network for uploading to the various service station systems for sound at the pumps.

So, keep your eyes open but drive safe! The ABAC is determined to get their message out to all the potential customers that travel the roads daily. Tell your customers to be on the lookout!

Submitted by Don Cushing



Our Vendor Spotlight this edition shines on the Lorensen Auto Group's Wholesale Parts Operation

Chances are, if you own a shop in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Western Massachusetts or the Western portion of New York, you have used at least one of their 7 dealerships to buy your parts.

And, if you've ever had the opportunity to buy from them, chances are you've met their Wholesale Parts Director, Dave Fogarty. We asked Fogarty for some "insider information" on the workings of this giant of an operation. Dave was more than happy to praise the success of the operation and more than excited to share their story.

The Lorensen operation does not have a centralized warehouse. Each dealer is responsible for parts orders and deliveries. Years ago, in conjunction with each dealership parts manager, Dave and his team were able to develop a very efficient parts delivery system based on great communications and technology. They use 3rd party software for their communications and deliveries. All stores communicate together to satisfy their large customer base. They currently have 9 delivery vehicles on the road. That is down from 10 due to the efficiency that they employ. Says Fogarty, ***"Each delivery vehicle that we have on the road creates a substantial annual expense. By utilizing our system's technology, and with our management efficiency, we've been able to shrink those expenses from 10 vehicles to 9 and still provide delivery service that's second to none!"***



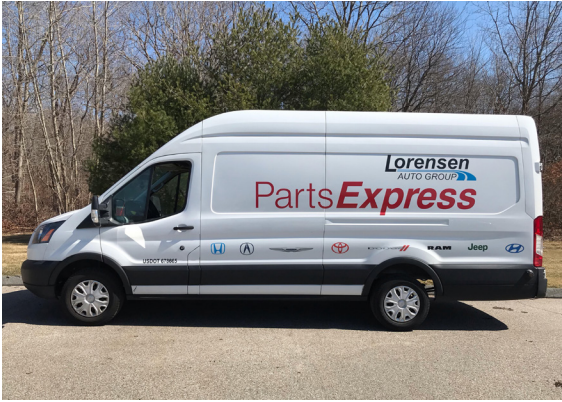
All vehicles are hard wired with GPS. Each of their dealership operation have this up-to-date information at their disposal and can see updates at a glance.

Based on the geographic locations of their stores, the following dealerships co-op their deliveries on a daily basis: Westbrook Honda, Westbrook Toyota, Acura of Milford, Old Saybrook Hyundai and Old Saybrook Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep. These are all the Lorensen "shoreline" dealerships right along the I-95 corridor. Each driver has a designated geographic region that they are responsible for to deliver to for all of these car lines.

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Their other 2 stores, Acura of Avon and Honda of Watertown are responsible for the western portion of Connecticut and a portion of New York. The shoreline stores will communicate with these 2 stores when needed to make sure that ALL customers are serviced promptly, efficiently, and ultimately satisfied.



The Lorensen Group covers all of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Western Massachusetts and the portion of New York along the I-84 boundary. Each store is responsible for coordinating the fleet of trucks, which are housed at Honda, Toyota and Acura dealerships. Each day, as the requests for deliveries arrive, they are listed on the driver's app sheet, broken down by territory and driver. Any store manager can look at the app sheet at any time, as well as each driver, to see what their route is looking like for the next day.

When we asked Dave about how the Lorensen Auto Group became involved with the Auto Body Association, here's what he had to say, ***"I started my employment at the Lorensen Auto***

Group, hired in April of 1994. From day one, I made it apparent to my supervisors, that my opinion was that we at the Lorensen Auto Group needed to support the ABAC by first becoming a member of the Association which was followed by magazine advertising by our whole group. Secondly, mandatory attendance at ABAC events to make sure our name was out there to all members and others that may attend these events. In 2000, with the introduction of the ABAC News, the Lorensen Auto Group moved their advertising to the Association's ABAC News Advertiser's Directory. At that time Lorensen had just the 5 stores in the newsletter but as they opened their Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep and Hyundai stores, they added those to the Directory as well. As a footnote, in my 26 years, I have only missed 6 ABAC Meetings."

He continued, ***"I have always felt that it was extremely important to support our own industry's association. My message is simple. How do you expect to sell OEM parts to the ABAC member shops if you're not supporting them? It's not only advertising. We have supported the ABAC at quarterly meetings, ABAC events or, as I'm enormously proud of, taking an active role with ABAC President, Bob Amendola and his Officers in helping them with ideas and education. It's been a privilege and an honor to work so closely throughout my career with all the past ABAC Presidents and their Board Members. The ABAC is an admirable group of dedicated business individuals and automotive professionals and I stand proud with my personal involvement as well as a Vendor Member."***

Fogarty credits the fluidity of the Lorensen Auto Group Wholesale Program to a concentrated total team effort. According to Dave, their success would not be possible without their dedicated parts management team that collectively make the Lorensen parts operation run smoothly. ***Here are the mangers involved in this massive operation:***

- ***Westbrook Honda – Tom Albin***
- ***Westbrook Toyota – Jesse Mies***
- ***Old Saybrook Hyundai – Russell Kastner***
- ***Old Saybrook Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep – Bill Pherson***
- ***Acura of Avon – Paul Martinik***
- ***Acura of Milford – Brian King***
- ***Honda of Watertown – Peter Losey***

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I can't do what I do without a phenomenal performance by each of these team members along with their dedicated staff and of course, the awesome group of parts delivery professionals that we employ," said Fogarty.

Jon Lorensen grew up in Bethlehem, graduated from Watertown High School in 1968 and attended the University of Connecticut. Jon is perhaps best known as a self-made, successful businessman. He founded the Lorensen Auto Group with a single store - J. Thomas Honda - in 1978 (which has since been renamed Honda of Watertown) and grew the business into the multi-franchise group it is today. Jon was an avid boater, car collector, traveler, and benefactor, generous with his wisdom, his time and his wealth. While formidable when it came to business, he was easy to like and admire. ***Jon Lorensen passed away on July 19, 2019. His wishes were that the dealerships would remain a Jon Lorensen enterprise, and to this present day, his wishes are being fulfilled.***

The Auto Body Association would like to wish the Lorensen Auto Group much success in the future as they continue to grow and to Dave Forgarty for his effort with his group and the dedication he brings to the ABAC with his involvement.



Acura of Avon



Honda of Watertown



Westbrook Honda



Old Saybrook Hyundai



Old Saybrook Chrysler Dodge
Jeep RAM



Westbrook Toyota

Article submitted by Don Cushing

‘Who Pays?’: 51% shops say insurers often reimburse engine compartment masking

More than half of body shops polled in the latest “Who Pays for What?” survey said leading national insurers “always” or “most of the time” reimburse the cost of masking the engine compartment.

The response by 51 percent of the more than 500 shops surveyed in January represents a 16-percentage-point increase over the proportion reporting such consistency in 2015.

Survey authors Collision Advice and CRASH Network announced the availability of the January “Who Pays for What?” survey results on Tuesday.

“I think our surveys have helped raise shops’ awareness of not-included procedures they may be doing without making an informed decision as to whether it’s something they will charge for,” Collision Advice CEO Mike Anderson said in a statement Tuesday.

The “Who Pays?” studies examine whether eight of the nation’s largest insurers “pay” for various not-included operations when the shop requests it and how frequently shops charge for such items. Technically, the shop would be charging the consumer — the party truly on the hook for the final bill — with the insurer in turn reimbursing the claimant for some or all of what they paid the shop. So the “Who Pays?” results matter to consumers as well.

More shops in 2020 also reported billing for the masking operation in the first place. In 2015, 36 percent of shops said they never invoiced that work. In 2020, that proportion had dropped to 25 percent.

Masking an engine compartment is “often necessary following repair or replacement of core supports, aprons, frame rails, firewalls, etc.,” CRASH Network and Collision Advice wrote in a news release. It’s a not-included operation not factored into any estimating system labor times, according to the study authors.

Repairers and their customers were less likely in 2020 to get a blanket denial from the eight major carriers studied than was the case in 2015.

In 2015, around 40 percent of shops said their masking charges were “never” paid by the carriers, compared to just 20 percent this year.

“Shops may have become better at explaining and documenting the need to mask the engine compartment,” CRASH Network and Collision Advice wrote.

Help the collision industry by taking the current “Who Pays for What?” survey by the end of the month and answering questions on topics including not-included body labor operations. All answers are kept confidential; data is published only in the aggregate.

“Just completing the survey can be a good reminder of a couple dozen such procedures, and the survey report we produce with the findings can be a good training tool for shop staff,” Anderson said in a statement.

The recently released “Who Pays?” survey ran from Jan. 1-Jan. 31 and asked about a couple dozen operations, with a refinishing focus. Collision Advice and CRASH Network received responses to at least one question from 757 auto body shops. It had a 3.5 percentage-point margin of error on questions with responses from all 757 shops, assuming a 40,000-shop collision industry.

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

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ABAC NEWS

Don Cushing - abacnews13@gmail.com - (401) 578-6945

Dave Fogarty - (860) 227-0653



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