

ABAC NEWS

May
June
2022

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut



**asTech by Repairify Featured Presentation
at ABAC Membership Meeting**

ABAC Election of Officers Held

Your Car, Your Choice - Find us at www.abaconn.org

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ABAC President's Message

Bob Amendola

Thank You!



tremendous event.

I would also like to thank the "Cavallaro Crew" from Airport Road Auto Body. Tony Sr., Tony Jr., and Joe, thank you three so much for all the time and effort you spent. From planning with Dave to securing sponsors and everything else in between, thank you. Our association is very lucky to have you guys. Thank you for making the event such a great success.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to our sponsors. BASF, PPG, Norton Abrasives, West Springfield Auto Parts, Albert Kemperle Auto Paint, Body and Equipment, Axalta, Mitchell Auto Group, and all the wonderful sponsors that were kind enough to sign up for hole and t-signs. The tournament would not have been possible without all your support. We truly appreciate your partnership.

Judging by the smiles and laughs throughout all the golfers, I know everyone that attended had a great day on the green and I hope anyone that was not able to make it this year can make it next time. It was truly a great day to come together for a good cause. All the proceeds are directly benefiting the Connecticut tech schools. Thank you to all our golfers for coming out and supporting a great cause.

While we're on the subject of golfing... I want to encourage everyone to take some much-deserved time off this summer.

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Even if it's just a single day in the middle of the week or a long weekend. It is important to recharge your battery. Everyone needs time off. We've all been on a long run of chaos juggling backorders, heavy workloads etc. on top of the normal daily pressures.

You are the best asset to your team when you carve out some time to relax and do something you enjoy doing. Burnout is real. I know it sounds easier said than done but the work will be there when you get back. You can't get the time back.

I wish you all a safe and enjoyable summer and look forward to reconvening at our September membership meeting.

Sincerely,

Bob Amendola

Autoworks of Westville - New Haven

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut



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

ABAC Membership Meeting Brings More Information for Business Owners Election of ABAC Officers Held

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut held their most recent Membership Meeting on May 17 at Seasons restaurant in East Haven.



ABAC President Bob Amendola began by thanking everyone for their attendance and went over the evening's agenda. ***"Thank you to everyone involved here tonight for their help in making this meeting come to fruition. We will be following up on our last meeting with more information on how to help you with more ideas on taking back your businesses. We will follow that with dinner and then you will hear from our featured presenter AsTech. You'll also be hearing from Wesley Beal from Padgett Business Services who we use in our business, and he will explain the difference between cash and accrual and any accounting questions that you may have. Collision repair has become a strategic business of numbers. And if you're not in touch with this reality, I'm not sure what to tell you. It is THAT important to keep your numbers correct! This will all be preceded by our ABAC Election of Officers,"*** said Bob.

"I'd also like to thank all of our ABAC Corporate Sponsors and our ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. Everyone currently listed in our newsletter has made a commitment to support the ABAC and the best way to thank them is to purchase from them. Remember to Support Those Who Support You," Bob continued.

The Sponsors for the night were:

Primary Sponsor – asTech represented by

- Andy Noyes - Senior Vice President of Sales & Strategic Accounts at AsTech
- Jon Dulude - Director of Business Development at AsTech

Co-Sponsor – Albert Kemperle, Inc – Auto Paint, Body & Equipment represented by:

David Esposito - Territory Sales Manager

Legislatively speaking, and according to Bob Amendola, ***"we had House Bill (HB5366) trying to get passed into law. We tried as hard as we could with the a few of our BOD's donating much of their own money to try and get this bill passed. Unfortunately, the bill was squashed. Speaking from the attendees, Tony Cavallaro Sr, from Airport Rd Auto Body said, "Our biggest opponents were the Recyclers. They have a big lobbying firm who was able to talk with the politicians and get our bill stooped. It wasn't the insurance companies; it wasn't the aftermarket lobby; It was the recyclers who squashed this in the last hour. Just remember, we all buy from recyclers. And they are the ones who got it thrown out!"***

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Tony Ferraiolo, past president of the ABAC commented, ***“The numbers tell you, since we’re down to around 335 collision repair shops, that it’s time for us to take back this industry. If you’re not interested, then you might as well get out of business. Our time is here. Do you see how people are driving? There is no lack of work in most of the shops here tonight. So, if there’s no lack of work and, according to one of our past presidents Bob Skrip, who used great terminology when he said that we’re all “colleagues” here, what we need to do is to stick together, in unity, on how we’re going to repair vehicles. That’ seems to be the big issue right now; there’s too much outside interference on how to fix a car properly. Therefore, we tried to propose legislation, we even had the DMV on our side, even the DOT, we did everything we could do to get this legislation passed but we were outgunned. Our opponents use “scare tactics” to get to uninformed politicians who think that rates will go up or they will lose votes and on and on, instead of worrying about the consumers. We’re trying to fix cars properly! We’re not talking about paying us more money. Loo, the ABAC tries to educate members every chance we get. This room tonight should be filled with over 100 people. We have over 140 ABAC Members and we all need the education, the people that are here tonight is because they are all good business owners or managers, and they understand that knowledge is power. This is the byproduct of our member meetings. It’s the shops that are not here that we need to reach out to and get them to attend. Some of these shops’ business practices are hurting our industry because they are going about it the wrong way. We can’t set prices and we’re not here to do that. We don’t tell you what you should be charging. Your accountant is the one that will tell you what you need to charge to keep you in business. But what I want to reiterate is that if we stick together, in unity, of HOW to repair a car and follow the guidelines, then everything else falls into place. The days of “stealing” work from one another is over. Let’s fix cars properly. We fix cars. Insurance companies DO NOT repair cars. Just look at the success rate of Randy Serkey in small claims court. He fixes cars the right way. He backs it all up with facts and documentation done the right way. And if you choose the path of litigation, you must do it the correct way. And the ABAC will help you through the process.”***

After Bob’s opening remarks, the meeting then moved to the ABAC Election of Officers. Treasurer Mike Wilkowski presented this year’s slate of candidates:

- Bob Amendola – President
- Ashley Burzenski – Vice President
- Mike Wilkowski – Treasurer
- Mark Wilkowski – Secretary

The vote was approved and carried, and the 2022-2023 ABAC Officers were all voted in to serve another term. Congratulations to all!

Following dinner, we then heard from our main sponsor of the night, asTech.

Modern vehicles present much more complex electronic systems that require extreme precision to function safely. Our ASE certified and dealer-trained technicians use our patented technology to ensure electronic vehicle systems are back to OEM standards post-collision repair. Their team draws on real world experience along with asTech training to pinpoint the exact cause of issues within a vehicle to recommend solutions and repairs that work.



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“As automobiles become more complex, gaining access to a comprehensive set of quality tools, technology, and vehicle data is a top item on the checklist for every repair business we speak to,” said Cris Hollingsworth, President of Repairify Holdings, parent company of as-Tech. ***“asTech is ecstatic to serve Driven Brands, and we look forward to delivering the tools and expertise required to help repair technicians complete a safe, quality repair every time.”***

Andy Noyes and Jon Dulude gave a presentation on asTech’s products and services. They covered scan types, OEM vs. aftermarket, Calibrations: Static vs. Dynamic, Calibration Identification and more. This was some great information and it all started off with being prepared and having the proper equipment and services that you can apply in your shop. Again, we can’t stress the importance of being at these meetings to get this valuable information. This is what your association does for you; quality presentations that help your business! asTech’s presentation was followed by questions from the attendees.

We then heard from Wesley Beal from Padgett Business Services. Accountants and Tax Professionals Dedicated to Your Future. ***“At PADGETT BUSINESS SERVICES®, we know the stresses of running a business can keep owners awake at night. Your business is your livelihood—and quite possibly the livelihood of your employees—so it’s no wonder it’s always on your mind. PADGETT is here to help. We’re a full-service accounting, bookkeeping and tax planning and preparation company that can help your business reach new heights, allowing you to rest easy.”***

The evening ended with a 50/50 Raffle along with several gift cards provided by the Auto Body Association of Connecticut.

The ABAC would like you all to consider becoming a member of this strong association. Just by attending these meeting you will offset the cost of a yearly membership.

“In unity there is strength. In knowledge there is power.”

Submitted Don Cushing

To DRP or NOT to DRP? - We Ask the Questions!

We recently surveyed 3 Connecticut Collision Centers and asked them some hard questions on their thoughts about DRP relationships.



Participating in these interviews were:

- Bob McSherry – North Haven Auto Body/Sabo Auto Body
- Tyler Rook – Victor Auto Body
- Alex Pesarik – B&D Auto

Do you really need DRP relationships with insurers?

McSherry: No. Just the amount of administrative time spent to operate these programs is not worth it. Then, trying to communicate with the insurer and getting the appraisers out to the shop is not worth the involvement. Too time consuming.

Rook: My belief is that our industry is trending away from the DRP model of doing business and more towards the OEM Certified collision repair. Years ago, we probably had 10+ DRP's that we did business with. So many things have changed today due to a variety of reasons; the pandemic, parts supply, insurance companies being less receptive, virtual estimates, etc. When you add this all up, it's my belief that more OEM involvement is becoming the norm instead of direct repair involvement. Let's face it. The OEM's want their cars fixed with their parts and they don't condone the use of "donor" wheels, used parts, etc. and for all the right reasons. Direct repair is becoming the dying breed. I'm down to two direct repair programs.

Pesarik: I think the pandemic has opened the eyes of many shops who now think we may not need those relationships any longer. Once the pandemic hit, the insurers were the first to reduce staff, placing more of the workload burden on the shops. They changed the rules. They changed how they wrote cars. Going virtual and not having that interpersonal relationship with the adjusters was a bad move on their part.

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Have you performed a Labor Rate Survey in your area?

McSherry: Yes, we have. And we intend to keep doing a Labor Rate Survey on a quarterly basis or at the very least bi-annually

Rook: We are in the process of doing just that. We decided that our survey will be performed quarterly. My involvement in the ABAC, as a Board Member, has helped me in my business. I don't say much, I listen.

Pesarik: Yes, we have. Not only within our industry but with other similar trades. What we have found was that collision repair is the lowest paid per-hour industry in our area. We charge less than small equipment repair, less than all homeowner and contracting services, less than bicycle repair, motorcycle repair and well below dealership and independent mechanical repair facilities. We try to perform these surveys quarterly. It's quite eye-opening.

Do you inform your customers, up front, that there may be charges for procedures that may or may not be paid for by their insurance company?

McSherry: We most certainly do. Communicating with your customer is one of the most important steps in the repair process. We tell them right up front that their insurance company may not pay for all the necessary work that needs to be done to repair their vehicle to be safe and fixed properly using the OEM procedures.

Rook: As an association (Auto Body Association of Connecticut) we have at our fingertips, documents that were created for us shop owners to use. These documents are very powerful and straight to the point. One document helps us when explaining what the customer is responsible for when repairing their vehicle. It's an educational tool that can help us to show the customer what they need to be prepared for. I am just beginning to use this document in our shop, and I will be the one explaining to the customer and looking for my employees to follow my lead. I'm the one that will tell the customer that their insurance company will not pay pre or post scans on their vehicle, which I believe is necessary. Just because one insurance company doesn't want to pay for it doesn't mean it won't get done. Other insurance companies pay with no problem so that's just one hypothetical issue. Only recently has Allstate begin to pay for scans.

Pesarik: Every single customer is explained the process and what we charge for. I feel that it is our responsibility to let them know that. It will do our industry a great disservice if we don't discuss what we are charging and then surprise the customer with those charges later. I believe that being honest with customers up front regarding additional charges and explain to them what they may or may not be responsible for through their insurance company.

With the current abundance of collision work, are you considering eliminating any of your DRP relationships that are less profitable than your customer pay and other insurers?

McSherry: We already have. There are many insurance companies who we no longer accept their work. If their customers want to have their car repaired at our collision center, we will not refuse the job. We just let that customer know that they have to pay for the complete repair and then that customer must contact their insurance company to get them to pay for the repair.

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Rook: It's been happening on its own. 5+ years ago we had 8-10 DRP's. At this point we have 2.

Pesarik: We already have. In 2019, we eliminated a large insurance DRP once they moved to shop written estimates and demanded which software we were required to use. They dictated how we write an estimate and how we document photographs. It became a quick and easy decision to move on from doing any direct work for them. We shouldn't have to bend to their way when our process works for our business. The insurer is NOT our customer. These changes make it easier for them thus placing more responsibilities and tasks on us.

Another example was this past winter, I contracted Covid along with my family and obviously I couldn't be in the shop. I requested that our largest DRP shut off any program cars because we needed to reduce our workload while short staffed. Lo and behold, we were taking more customers off the street and being more profitable than with the vehicles that insurer was referring! It was a no-brainer to move on from them as well. The shop was being paid full rate for scans, getting paid on all the extras we were told for years that couldn't be paid! Factor in storage on total losses and it was game over. We politely asked to be removed from the program. We also recently tossed out a smaller DRP, once they were purchased by Allstate and their "guidelines" were certainly not acceptable to our terms. We currently have 2 DRP's that align with our vision on customer service and repair quality.

My recommendations to any shop considering a new DRP relationship would be:

1. Make sure you understand the full costs of being on that DRP. Whether it's additional software or free storage charges and total loss evaluations which consume more of your time (which adds up to \$\$\$)
2. Align yourself with a DRP Program that has similar morals and principles of collision repair as your company.
3. Remember that volume does not always equal profit.

The 2 DRP's that we have remaining are Amica, which is listed as #1 in Customer Service by J.D. Power in New England, and Chubb.

Have you dropped any specific insurance companies and why?

McSherry: Allstate for one. We haven't done any work for them in years and will not doing any work for them in the future. It's just not worth the headaches.

Rook: Yes. And the reason is because we must repair cars the way the OEM requires us to repair them.

Pesarik: Progressive, GEICO and Esurance for reasons stated in my last question.

Given the high volume of work, how do you keep your employees motivated?

McSherry: We went to a 4 ½ day work week. Those looking for overtime will work four 10-hour days with a half day on Saturday. Those working 40-hour shifts will work four 9-hour days and a half day on Friday. It's been working very well. During COVID, there were no "in-house" lunches that everyone was used to. Now that things have settled down, every so often we will have pizza or sandwiches brought in. The nice thing is that now, it's more appreciated by the employees. You know the old saying, "you don't know what you've got till it's gone!"

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Rook: We have a few incentive programs that are specific to our shop. Treat your employees fairly. Greet them in the morning. Making your employees feel appreciated is one of the most important things you can do, in my opinion. These are things I was taught from the beginning. You can tell when one of your workers has an issue. I take them aside and talk to them. Letting them know that you understand goes a long way to helping them. Respect them.

Pesarik: We have always tried to do things as a family operated business; not treat our employees like numbers. We know that many of our employees have families, and we give them a little bit of latitude when it comes to family concerns. Our employees are great at solving their own problems. One may need to leave early on one day but come in early the next day to make up for it. We're somewhat forgiving depending on the circumstance. We recently gave everyone a bonus for fuel to help take some of that pain away, we shut down the shop 2 weeks ago to take everyone out to lunch so that we all got to enjoy it as a team. Don, I know that you remember our lunch cook outs we have at the shop. We still have them! (Chicken on the grille was being prepared as we conducted this interview!) Of course, we offer a great benefit package, health coverage, 401K. As managers, we try not to overload the shop with work and keep things flowing. By no longer being a DRP, we dictate the work schedule and the workload. We are in total control of our business! We have also flexed our hours in the summer to give half days on Friday for the technicians.

Do you think that the OEM Certified Repair Programs will replace the DRP Programs?

McSherry: I don't know if the OEM Programs will ever replace the DRP's, but I think you will see more of a "hybrid" type program in the future. Some sort of mix.

Rook: This is what I'm hoping for. If we all get paid properly for doing the work, I'm fine with the program. Remember, we are doing what the OEM wants us to do correctly, using their repair procedures. We all want to get fairly compensated for doing this work. The new cars we are now working on are state-of-the-art with hundreds of sensors. It takes much training to repair these vehicles correctly. Because of insurance companies' influence and involvement on a day-to-day basis, our rates have continued to be stagnant. And it is continuing on an everyday basis. I base that belief on their relationship with the government. It seems that no matter what we do as a group, as an association, whether we go to the Capitol, whether we meet with the DOI or any other avenue, we always seem to get a door shut in our face. What an insult.

Pesarik: I believe the jury is still out on this. In the same way that insurance companies hold back what they want to pay our industry, the OEM's are charging shops upfront for the certification and equipment requirements. Training and education are extremely important and having the proper equipment is also very important whether or not you are on a certified program. Much of the OEM's information is proprietary and whether a shop is on or off a certification program, we still need and can access much of this information. I believe when cars get to a point of complexity in the not-so-distant future, it may benefit a shop to look at what the makeup of OE brands that are coming into your facility and decide which way you want to lean as far as an OEM Certification. Several shops, us included, have dropped certain OEM Certifications because the ROI was not there. So, long answer short, I'm not sure the OEM certification programs will replace the DRP's in the near future, but down the road the programs may become necessary to stay ahead with new technologies.

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Do you feel that your investment in Certified Programs are worthwhile?

McSherry: To a degree, some more than others. Some OEM's are very particular in how they want their cars repaired and rightly so. There are a lot of high-end cars whose OEM certified repairs are critical to the repair process and must be adhered to. It's all dependent on the manufacturer. This can also begin in the Trade School system. The trade schools can use any help that we, the collision repair industry is willing to give. These future technicians and body repairers can use our guidance with "hands-on" learning and training. The schools are doing the best they can with what they have to work with in the school system. We can step up and bring these students into the business teaching them the correct way to use the OEM procedures to repair a vehicle. Another item would be educating the vehicle owners. Kudos to the ABAC for doing what they can to educate their members, thus giving the members an opportunity to educate their customers.

Rook: Absolutely. All for the above reasons that I mentioned. I would rather make my investments in programs that I know will be of more value to what I'm currently doing. Doing the job properly is what I'd love to see everyone doing. We are repairing vehicles that can almost think for themselves with all of the technology built into them. These are not the cars my dad used to repair. One of the more recent things I've learned through the ABAC is a process where I print out all of the OEM Repair Procedures, then you take the next step which is to have your technician date and sign off on the repair. This makes the technician a part of that repair should anything happen down the road. But that's why they use the procedures. To make sure it's repaired correctly. OEM vs. DRP. This seems to be the direction that the industry is going.

Pesarik: Aside from my answers above, as of right now, they are not worthwhile in the Eastern CT market. Many shops are being successful marketing as certified and I think it all depends on your shop and your market. The last OE certification program we were on only provided 2 customers directly in 3 years. At the time, DRP programs proved much stronger at referring vehicles to us than that particular program. One program I'm keeping an eye on is American Family Insurance which is aligned with On-Star. This may be interesting to see if the DRP requires GM certification. Stay tuned!

Submitted by Don Cushing



Opinion: Time to reform laws so consumers get safer auto repairs



John M. Parese is a partner at the New Haven-based firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese

John M. Parese - May 9, 2022

The state legislature once again considered laws that would help consumers get safer vehicle repairs.

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut, for one, endorsed needed legislative reform to protect consumers by prohibiting outside parties from pressuring licensed repairers to deviate from Original Equipment Manufacturer recommendations or installing unsafe parts.

The original vehicle manufacturer, the OEM, sets guidelines that are the undisputed standard of care for proper vehicle repair. Insurance companies have long pressured repairers to cut corners and deviate from these guidelines to effectuate cheaper repairs.

This can be done through pressures to compromise on the quality of the repair and/or mandating the use of imitation parts, which are cheaper but often do not meet the technical specification or quality standards of OEM parts. This results in improper fit and function, something that has always been important, but even more so now in the context of today's more complex vehicles and more integrated safety systems. Improper repairs or use of imitation, aftermarket parts may compromise the overall safety of the vehicle, compromise the

vehicle's safety systems (e.g. airbag), void the vehicle's warranty, violate a lease or financing agreement, result in premature corrosion and/or paint problems, and cause one's vehicle to suffer further diminished value at resale. Connecticut's motoring public should not ever have to compromise occupant safety or needlessly accelerate the diminished value of their vehicle for no other reason than to save an insurer a few dollars. Most vehicle manufacturers have issued position statements on the importance of following recommended repair procedures and the dangers of using inferior parts, including warnings that such deviations may compromise the vehicle's warranty.

It just makes sense.

Imagine your surgeon is preparing to operate on you. She intends to utilize a titanium plate and screws because her experience and education taught her that titanium was the best material for your repairing your injury. Just prior to the operation, however, some desk jockey from an insurance company (with no medical license, training or degree) comes in and tells your surgeon that she is only permitted to use aluminum plate and screws (because it is slightly cheaper). The insurance desk jockey rejects pleas from your surgeon that operating in this fashion would be dangerous and fall below the standard of care; and instead tells your surgeon that if she wants to use titanium, she can pay for it out of her own pocket.

If that sounds absurd, it is. But this is precisely the type of injustice that's happening with auto body repair every day. Outside interference, primarily from insurance companies, relentlessly pressures licensed repairs to compromise quality without regard to occupant safety or repair standards.

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Just as you would want your surgeon to use her best judgment when operating, you want your vehicle repairer to do the same. That means following manufacturer's specifications. Since simple changes would save lives, make vehicles safer, and protect consumers, it is my sincere hope that this much needed reform will be passed.

Auto body repair shops have been forced to argue with insurance companies on behalf of consumers. It is time for reforms so that will no longer be necessary.

Needed reform could very well save lives, make vehicles safer, and protect consumers. Clearly, the sooner reforms are enacted, the better for us all.

Attorney John M. Parese is a partner at the New Haven-based firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese. He can be reached at 203-776-2278 or jparese@bwplaw.com.

Source New Haven Register

Social Media Tuneup



ABAC Vice-President - Ashley Burzenski

Social media and the internet remains an incredible tool we have as small businesses to promote ourselves and reach potential customers. In today's day and age, there is an abundance of advertisements, information and catchy slogans that can confuse the motoring public.

I wanted to use this edition of ABAC News to encourage all of our members to check in on your presence online. I strongly encourage you to review your social media presence, your website, and listing on sites such as Yelp and Google. Make sure you are staying active with current photos and information. This is one of the best (and free!) tools we have to combat steering

and help educate consumers.

If your website is outdated and you lack a presence on social media, you are missing out on making a good first impression. Consider this a friendly nudge to get on board and put your best foot forward online. Once you have a current website and social media presence, you will find that it is easier and less time consuming to make quick updates and improvements. If you can do it in house, great! If you can't, the investment in a local company is well worth it.

As always, I am happy to make any suggestions and provide any guidance I can on the subject.

Until next time,

Ashley Burzenski

Auto Body Association of Connecticut's Inaugural Charity Golf Tournament is Huge Success!

When ABAC Board of Director Tony Ferraiolo was having a conversation with Dave Esposito, Territory Sales Manager for Albert Kemperle Auto Body Paint and Supplies about how to raise money for the Connecticut Technical Schools, the subject of a potential fund raiser by means of a golf tournament were suggested by Esposito.

Esposito has managed many tournaments in his career with associations, so this was a passion for him. He put together a presentation for Tony Jr and Joe C. to try and sell his idea.

Dave got the green light and this past June 15 and the First Annual ABAC Golf Tournament teed off at Lyman Orchards Golf Club in Middlefield, CT.

Now, Esposito wants everyone to know that this was certainly a team effort. He contacted sponsors, Tony & Joe worked on soliciting golfers, and Exec Admin Heather took care of the accounting of the funds. As for volunteers, Ben Swain from BASF, Brian Higgins from Kemperle and Dave's son Matt Esposito were involved.

The Major Sponsors for the event were:

- BASF
- Norton
- PPG
- West Springfield Auto Parts
- Albert Kemperle
- Axalta
- Mitchell Auto Group



And of course, all the wonderful sponsors that were kind enough to sign up for available sponsorships, Tee Box signs and Hole Sponsors. The tournament would not have been possible without all your support. We truly appreciate your partnership.

There were an amazing 88 golfers for this first annual event.

There were tee sponsors and donated raffle prizes. Some of the prizes that were raffled off were ??????????

Everyone had a great time, and the event was followed by food and beverages along with a 50/50 Raffle and Prize Raffle.

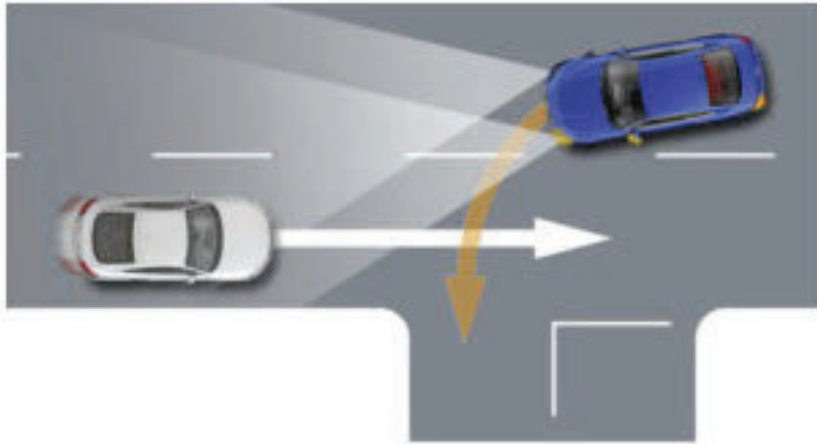
According to ABAC President Bob Amendola, all proceeds from this event will benefit the Connecticut Technical Schools.







IIHS encourages adoption of new ADAS features designed to help motorists through intersections



Older drivers could especially benefit from advanced driver assistance system (ADAS) features designed to help motorists navigate intersections, according to a study released Thursday by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The study found that left-turn assist, a relatively new feature, and other technologies that are under development could address a third of the crashes that occur with drivers who are 70 years old and older.

The results of the study, called “Safety potential of crash avoidance features, improved headlights, and V2V-enhanced technologies for older drivers,” should “spur efforts to roll these technologies out to consumers as rapidly as possible,” Jessica Cicchino, IIHS vice president of research, said.

The research could be particularly meaningful as older drivers become more numerous on American roads, the institute said.

“The number of older drivers in the U.S. is growing rapidly because Americans are living longer and retaining their licenses later in life. That raises safety concerns, as drivers in their 70s and 80s are at a greater risk of certain types of crashes and more prone to severe injuries and fatalities than younger people,” IIHS said.

IIHS’s conclusions are based on its evaluation of federal crash data from 2016 to 2019. Researchers compared the types of crashes that are most common for older drivers and their middle-aged counterparts. They then estimated how many crashes could be addressed by five existing ADAS features, as well as two others not yet available that depend on vehicles being able to share information about their location, speed and intended path.

IIHS Research Associate Aimee Cox, the paper’s author, wrote, “Despite their usefulness, commercially available crash avoidance features are still relatively uncommon in the registered vehicle fleet. Older drivers are also less likely than other age groups to have vehicles equipped with these features because they tend to drive older vehicles than the general population.

“The goal of this study was to understand how many crash involvements, driver injuries, and driver fatalities could be mitigated by these vehicle technologies for older drivers if all drivers used them and these technologies were completely effective,” she wrote.

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The institute said that “intersection-assistance features,” which are newer and less well known than other ADAS features, were potentially relevant to 32% of older driver crash involvements, 38% of older driver injuries and 31% of older driver fatalities.

Middle-aged drivers, too, could benefit, as the features were potentially relevant to crashes involving more than 20% of that age group.

The study looked at a number of ADAS features that have become commonplace: brighter headlights and related improvements, front crash warning and prevention, lane keeping, and blind spot detection.

Left turn assist and other upcoming intersection-assistance features are probably less familiar, IIHS said. Left turn assist, which is currently offered on a limited number of vehicles, uses a camera and other sensors to warn the driver of oncoming vehicles when making a left turn.

Vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) connectivity, which is “still on the horizon,” would enable “similar, more sophisticated features,” the institute said.

V2V promises to reduce collisions by allowing vehicles to communicate their positions, speed, and travel path with one another. A vehicle turning left would know the speed and trajectory of oncoming traffic, even over a hill or around an obstruction.

“Intersection movement assist” is another V2V technology under development. This would let vehicles warn drivers of possible collisions with others approaching a crossroads from multiple directions at various speeds and with different intentions.

The study concludes that “all drivers could benefit from crash avoidance features and improved headlights,” and that some age groups might benefit more than others because they’re overrepresented in the crash types that specific crash avoidance features are meant to address.

“More research is needed to better understand how age-related driver characteristics influence the efficacy of different vehicle safety features, but the evidence is already clear that these technologies have the potential to address thousands of crashes, driver injuries, and driver deaths every year,” the paper concludes.

It suggests that “Widely available crash avoidance technologies should be promoted for and adopted by all drivers,” and that OEMs should be encouraged to equip all new vehicles with technology to improve safety at intersections.

Source: *www.RepairerDriven News.com*

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