

ABAC NEWS

May
June
2023

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Combatting The Workforce Shortage



**ABAC Enjoys Success with Hard Work,
Member Involvement, and the
Support of Vendors/Suppliers**

“In Unity There is Strength; In Knowledge There is Power”

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abacnews13@gmail or give him
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set up an appointment to feature
your company in the
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ABAC President's Message

Bob Amendola

The Power of The ABAC



The power of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut forms from the knowledge of its people and the ability to share this knowledge. Problem solving comes when good people put their heads together and share ideas with each other. Outside influence seeks to divide and conquer. Time and time again, unity and strength in numbers will always prevail.

The ABAC is such a great resource with tremendous value to its members through education, seminars, trade school support, dedicated volunteer leadership and

networking between colleagues. Every month your board of directors meets to discuss the challenges our industry faces. Within the board, we have specific committees to focus on certain aspects more specifically. Every board of directors' member volunteers their time behind the scenes for the benefit of the entire membership. I am grateful for their hard work and dedication to our industry.

The ABAC would not be this powerful without our supporting advertisers. The partnership we have in them is unparalleled. They are the driving force behind the ABAC. We are so grateful for their continued support, enabling us to continue to bring value to the membership. It is truly a team effort on all parts to maintain the level our association operates at.

No man is an island. Trying to "go it" alone is futile.

Please continue to support your association; onwards and upwards!

Sincerely,

Bob Amendola

Autoworks of Westville
President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut
Autoworksofwestville@gmail.com





Combatting the Workforce Shortage - Update

ABAC Vice-President - Ashley Burzenski

As we've previously discussed, the workforce shortage continues to be a serious concern for our industry. On behalf of the association, the board of directors continue to work behind the scenes on this issue. Our monthly meeting serves as a "think-tank" where we brainstorm ideas surrounding industry related issues such as this. While we have some strategies we're working on right now, various members of our board participated in a

recent local career fair. I wanted to mention the event in this edition of ABAC News to highlight the importance of participating in career fairs and work-based learning programs.

On June 7th, Lincoln Tech hosted an outdoor career fair at their East Windsor campus. Current students and recent graduates from the welding, auto/collision/diesel, electric/hvac, cnc program, and medical assistant program were invited to attend. Employers were invited to attend for a minimal fee and the fee covered lunch for attendees. Events like this career fair are a great way for employers to network with candidates in person in a short period of time. We sent out the invitation to this event by email to our membership and we will be sure to continue to distribute information regarding events and programs like this to encourage our members to attend and participate.

When we consider the workforce shortage and how to resolve it, we must take the initiative to reach out and connect with candidates. As an industry, we have been experiencing many changes and it is time we rebrand our industry as a whole. The technology, skillset and day-to-day operations have changed significantly. It is a great career path for young people to pursue. It is up to us as members of our association and employers to help spread the word to the next generation. Career fairs, internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities are one of the single most effective tools we have to do so.

Moving forward, please keep an eye out for future invitations to events like this and please participate. Even if you can't spare the time to go yourself, consider sending a representative or two from your company on your behalf. I have spoken with fellow members who have participated, and they have been glad they took the time to go. We personally have found numerous candidates by doing so. It is well worth the effort.

The board of directors will continue our efforts to alleviate the workforce shortage but we cannot resolve the matter on our own. It will take participation and involvement from the membership to rebrand the industry and subsequently entice the next generation. Let's keep the momentum going!

Ashley Burzenski

Autoworks of Westville

Vice President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

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Open Forum & Panel Discussion Follows-up Blockbuster ABAC Meetings

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut held their most recent Membership Meeting on May 24 at Cascade Fine Catering in Hamden.

ABAC President Bob Amendola began by thanking everyone for their attendance and went over the evening's agenda.

"I know that I say this at every meeting, but I again want to sincerely thank all our ABAC Corporate Sponsors and our ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. They have all made a financial commitment to support YOUR Auto Body Association of Connecticut. In return we'd like to ask all our members to remember to "Support Those Who Support You," said Bob.

Buckley Wynne and Parese and Mauro Motors are our Platinum Sponsors of the ABAC News Advertisers Directory as well as Bald Hill Dodge Chrysler Jeep Kia who is our Gold Sponsor of our Directory," he continued.



The Sponsors for the night were:



"We have had great turnouts our past 2 meetings and we appreciate the support. The turnouts were record breaking and the subject matter was tremendous and helpful not only to attendees but to the membership! It is a great time, in our industry, to move forward," says ABAC President Bob Amendola.

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Our first order of business this evening was to announce the upcoming 2nd Annual ABAC Golf Tournament. Tony Ferraiolo and Joey Cavallaro approached the podium. “Last year we had a very successful golf tournament at Lyman Orchard Golf Course,” said Immediate Past President Tony Ferraiolo. “Dave Esposito from Albert Kemperle was a big component of the Golf Tournament as far as organizing the event. He will be working with us again and we are asking the shops to do what they can to participate, enter a foursome to the tournament, donate and become a sponsor. There are many opportunities for you and your shop to be involved,” said Ferraiolo. There is a listing of potential golf sponsorships available later in this newsletter.

“Once again, proceeds from the tournament will go to the Technical Schools to supply the needs of future technicians. The ABAC has been in contact with the Tech School advisors and teachers to find out what areas of need they

want funds to be applied.

If you’re looking for a new technician, please consider the Tech School system,” Tony continued.

It was at this point during the Golf Tournament sponsorship availability announcement by Joe Cavallaro that John Musco asked if the ABAC had a Platinum Sponsor yet. Joe replied “no” and Musco said, “you do now!” And “just like that” the top sponsorship was taken by an ABAC Supporting Vendor & Advertiser to a deserved round of applause from attendees! Thank you, John Musco and Mauro Motors – Mercedes Benz of North Haven and BMW of North Haven.

Returning to the podium, President Bob then covered a few examples of solutions that were offered at the last two meetings and discussed keeping the pressure on concerning the push against the insurance companies. Some great conversations ensued. “Get what you have coming to you and get paid for what you do,” continued Bob.

ABAC Legal Counsel John Parese then discussed a storage issue concerning a claim with State Farm. Parese explained what happened with that claim.

Follow-up discussions from the past 2 meetings were presented by several ABAC Members.

After dinner we began our guest presentations.



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Our first speaker for the evening Environmental Risk Services

Environmental Risk Services offers the expertise an automotive repair facility needs to gain environmental, health, and safety compliance. Shops must adhere to a multitude of local, state, and federally mandated laws



environmental risk services
AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY & COMPLIANCE

designed to promote employee safety and environmental protection. Upon entering a facility, our mission is to ensure compliance with these laws, while minimizing workplace injuries, lowering insurance premiums, and adding money to the bottom line by improving hazardous waste disposal techniques. Through regular, on-site visits, Environmental Risk Services develops a goal-oriented and sustained relationship with each of our clients.

Next up was Liberty Bank



Established in 1825, Liberty Bank is one of the oldest and largest mutual banks in the country. With more than \$7 billion in assets, Liberty Bank has 56 banking offices across Connecticut and one in Massachusetts. As a full-service financial institution, Liberty offers consumer and commercial banking, cash management, home mortgages, business loans, insurance and investment services. Named a Top Workplace every year since 2012 and a Forbes Best-In-State Bank in 2021 and 2022, Liberty maintains a longstanding

commitment to superior customer service and unparalleled community involvement.



Our feature presentation was from Eagle MMS

EagleMMS' fully automated Material Management System allows your collision center to seamlessly track and invoice all repair material costs.

- **Materials calculator**
Generate repair order invoices for all of your paints and materials in less than a minute using their automated calculator.
- **Insurance reimbursement**
Getting insurance companies to pay for your materials usage is a hard task. With EagleMMS invoices, we generate all the proper documentation to make sure you get paid for what you use!
- **Operation kits**
EagleMMS allows you to generate operation kits from your existing inventory in order to specify body and finish operations tailored specifically to your shop and workflow.
- **Pricing database**
Keep up with inventory and material price changes using our comprehensive manufacturer part number database.

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- **Inventory tracking**
Achieve operational insight like never before. EagleMMS enables you to have precise insight into your current inventory and alerts you when you are running low.
- **Powered by QR codes**
With EagleMMS, all material tracking is done through QR codes, which means you do not need to buy any expensive scanning hardware or clunky cabinets.

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 meetings you can offset the cost of a yearly membership with the knowledge and education presented to you.

"In unity there is strength. In knowledge there is power."

Submitted by Don Cushing - abacnews13@gmail.com

Estimates, repair planning & billpayers: 'Damage dictates repair'



A three-member panel made up of insurance, appraisal, and body shop employees said during a recent Collision Industry Conference (CIC) panel that repairers shouldn't need to change their repair plans based on what carriers will pay.

Automotive Education & Policy Institute founder and National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) consumer liaison Erica Eversman, Collision Safety Consultants of West Virginia owner Steven Kriepps, and Pacific BMW

Collision Center body shop manager Andrew Batenhorst spoke as part of the CIC Estimating and Repair Planning Committee's presentation on April 13.

"The damage dictates the repair and following the procedures," Batenhorst said. "The only real adjustment that can take place is how much, your labor rates per hour [are], your internal rates."

Eversman, who is an attorney by trade, agreed. "From a legal perspective, there's a right way and a wrong way to fix a car. ...if you're following what the OEM has made as a recommendation or as a requirement to prepare the vehicle and you're changing that because of who the customer is, or whether the person is going to be private pay, consumer payment... there should be no difference. The only difference could possibly be in how you identify that information on your repair plan analysis."

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Kriebs added that he always warns shops he works in that whether the repairs end up being carried out the way they originally planned or not that it should still be documented, to which the panel agreed. And documentation should include what the OEM says should be done in its repair procedures and photos.

"Documentation is as important today as the plan itself is, especially as we go forward in time as vehicles become more complicated and jurors, as your potential audience, become more and more enamored of physical and visual evidence — they want to see, they don't retain nearly as much as what you tell them," Eversman said.

Batenhorst pointed out that not every job has to be accepted if payment becomes an issue. The first step in making the decision to repair a vehicle is to talk in detail with the customer about the damages, what it will take to fix it, and the cost. If they say they can't afford it, then at that point, the shop can let them know what can be done instead to save money but still result in a quality repair. "I have set up a process and a standard in my facility to allow my repair planners the time to do all of this work," Batenhorst said. "How much time does it take to read a single repair instruction if they're saddled with all these other administrative wasteful tasks that they can't take the time to do all this? They're going to have a subpar repair plan; they're going to have a subpar evidence package. You're going to have trouble supporting what you did."

Documentation should include bonding tests and test welds as well, he added.

Most shops likely know which carriers pay appropriately and for what — whether OEM parts or certain recommended OEM repair procedures but Eversman said, while that's good to think about at first, there's more to think about long-term. "I can tell you from the back end that even if you have a good company that pays, you want to keep that good company paying and you want to keep them paying well," she said. "You want to encourage consumers to be utilizing good companies or those who engage in good consumer insurance finances." Regardless of who the carriers are, business practices from what's charged to procedures create consistent standards since carriers will be comparing claims documents during subrogation, Eversman added. "[I]f it's not in your physical documents somewhere, it didn't happen," she said.

Kriebs added that shops tend to underestimate the value of SOPs but when established and documented, they create consistency and credibility. And every job doesn't have to be accepted, he said. It's also about safety. "We're moving into an environment where if you don't do something right it could literally mean one of your techs dies and so now you're in a position where... you better document what they were trying to do in the facility in these instances, what steps did the shop take and have available for their technicians to protect themselves?"

What were the SOPs and were they followed? Because, unfortunately, if somebody is seriously injured in your facility, that's a whole other world of documentation that you're going to have to generate and have ready to go."

Ultimately, the panel said it's the consumers' job to stay engaged with their carrier on their claims but Kriebs noted that shops can educate their customers about where to find insurance regulations for their state online and how they can file complaints with the state's Department of Insurance if they discover unfair claims handling. "Not very many consumers know they [DOI] even exist, let alone what they can do and what they can't do," he said. "They didn't even know they had somewhere they could go to complain. They're just generally going to complain to you because you own the shop and are the only one that's ever interacted with them."

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com – Article by Lurah Lowery

ABAC Enjoys Success with Hard Work, Member Involvement, and the Support of Vendors/Suppliers

There are no secrets. The only “magic” that can explain the success of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut is simple. hard work, dedication, team effort, a large amount of owner/manager advice and commitment to the future of the industry, and of course, their ABAC News Supporting Advertisers.

Hard work

The ABAC has always had a leader at the top. Every leader has made their mark in advancing the ABAC mission during their term of Presidency, working within the confines of current business conditions. Not one of them could have been successful without a solid membership and team behind them. The Association’s current President is Bob Amendola, owner of Autoworks of Westville in New Haven.

The Team

Bob has surrounded himself with a team of like-minded business individuals. Vice President Ashley Burzenski, Secretary Mark Wilkowski, Treasurer Mike Wilkowski and Immediate Past President Tony Ferraiolo. This group of dedicated individuals guide a Board of Directors consisting of 16 individual shop owners all working with the same challenges: how to make their shops more successful and in the end, more profitable. This group of leaders work for a growing membership of quality repair shops. Include its lobbyist, Andy Markowski of Statehouse Associates, LLC and the ABAC’s Legal Counsel John M. Parese of Law Offices of Buckley, Wynne & Parese and you have the core power that generates one of the most successful associations in the country. This team has had meetings with the Department of Insurance, the Attorney General and state Legislators.

Cost of Success

None of this success comes without a cost. The ABAC depends on the financial involvement of many Supporting Vendors through the ABAC News’ Supporting Vendor Program. The ABAC News is the single largest revenue source. It allows the ABAC to provide its members with important marketing and education. It pays for legal representation, lobbyist fees, billboards, self-service gas station videos “at the pump”, radio spots, local Trade School technician training, and membership meetings with guest speakers, just to name a few.

The ABAC News

As previously mentioned, the ABAC News is a vital lifeline to the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. Formed in November of 2000, the Official Newsletter of the ABAC brings information to association members as well as groundbreaking business practices that help individual shop owners get more involved in their businesses. ABAC membership and access to the ABAC News gives repairers unique opportunities to tap into a wealth of knowledge and access to a network of colleagues.

ABAC News Supporting Advertiser’s Directory

The ABAC News gives maximum exposure in a hard copy printed format that is sent to over 500+ Collision & Mechanical Repair Centers in Connecticut and surrounding areas. The Ad Directory is included as a separate pull-out section in each mailing. Each shop is encouraged to use this Directory when selecting a supplier for their shop’s needs.

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Why Become a Supporting Advertiser?

There are many reasons why you should consider becoming a Supporting Advertiser in the

ABAC News:

- ABAC member shop owners are strongly urged to purchase their products from supporting advertisers at every ABAC event which leads to increased exposure thus opportunities to sell your services!
- ABAC Meetings are attended by 100-200 people, More attendees means more opportunities to increase your sales business!
- The ABAC News is mailed on a bi-monthly basis to over 500 collision and mechanical repairers in Connecticut. (We have also recently added nearby RI and MA shops!)
- Each NEW Supporting Advertiser will get a 1/4-page ad insert in the ABAC News to announce their support. (First time vendors only!)
- Each Supporting Advertiser will be recognized at every ABAC quarterly meeting
- Each Supporting Advertiser will be prominently displayed in a separate section on the ABAC website: www.abacconn.com
- Affordable pricing! (See application)
- Each NEW Supporting Advertiser will be welcomed and personally introduced with an email blast from the ABAC President to all ABAC members

**Remember what ABAC President Bob Amendola always says at every ABAC Meeting,
“Support Those Who Support You!”**

We recently spoke with several ABAC News Supporting Advertisers and asked them, **“What Does it Mean to Be a Supporting Advertiser in the ABAC News?”** Here are their responses:

“It’s truly beneficial. I’ve been in the parts sales industry for many years, and I have always maintained that supporting those who support you is one of the best decisions you can make. And the ABAC supports their advertisers. It’s great to see the education that the ABAC provides to their members and anything that I can do to help, from an OEM perspective, is always offered. Although there are no guarantees of increased sales, being an ABAC News Supporting Advertiser has opened a lot of doors for me and my company. Being involved gets your name in front of the many shops that not only read the Advertiser’s Directory but attend the ABAC Meetings. Look, advertising is always important and where else can you find an opportunity to get the word out to so many shops in Connecticut and surrounding areas for such an affordable rate? And because of that fact, I’ve always chosen the highest level of sponsorship available. To me, there’s no question that advertising in the Supporting Advertiser’s Directory has made a difference.”

-John Musco – Wholesale Parts Director – BMW of North Haven/Mercedes Benz of North Haven

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"We find it very beneficial to be a Supporting Advertiser. We have grown our wholesale business tremendously due to our involvement with the ABAC. I've been able to attend most of the ABAC Meetings and have met many of my accounts there offering any help even if they DON'T do business with me. It's all about relationships. I even use much of the education I've learned at those meetings from the people in the association to keep myself current with the collision industry. This way I feel I can discuss these subjects with my customers. We've been ABAC supporters for many years, even before I began working for my boss Joe B. at the Columbia Ford-Kia. I can't imagine what my clientele would look like if I didn't advertise in the ABAC News Supporting Advertiser's Directory. As far as we're concerned, advertising is one of the most important things you can do as a wholesaler and it's so affordable with the ABAC News."

-Larry Pearson – Outside Sales Representative – Columbia Ford-Kia

"When the ABAC News was originally formed in 2000, I looked at it, being the Wholesale Parts Director of the Lorensen Auto Group, as a very advantageous way to grow our wholesale business, maintain our current clientele that were already ABAC member shops and for the minimum cost of advertising in the Supporting Ad Directory, it's what I call a "no brainer!" I always felt that if I didn't support those who supported me in the ABAC, I'd be letting them down. Looking back now, after being a supporter for 23 years, I wonder how much of my business I would have never attained due to my involvement with the ABAC News! Every advertiser has the same amount of opportunity when advertising. There are no guarantees. I have competitors who advertise the same products, so I must work harder when selling my product lines. But it would be much more challenging without being listed in the Ad Directory. Everyone who knows me, as most of the shops do, knows that I will do whatever is needed to support the ABAC, which is why I try to be as involved as possible with one of the strongest and best associations in the country."

-Dave Fogarty – Wholesale Parts Director – Lorensen Auto Group

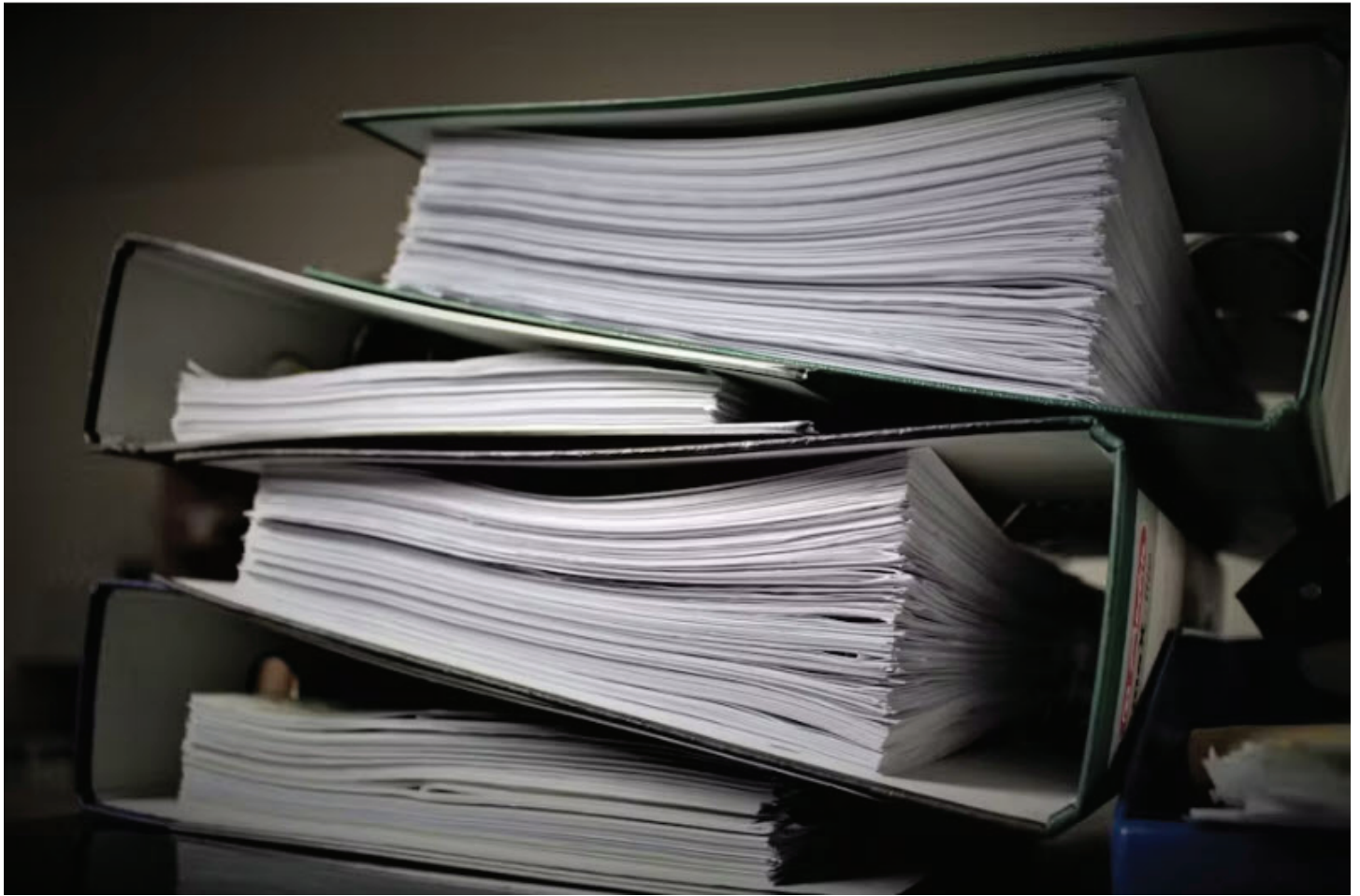
"Our involvement with the ABAC News has worked out very well. Besides our bi-monthly ad in the Supporting Advertiser's Directory, we try and sponsor any meetings that we logistically can. I would sponsor every single meeting if possible but that's only because I firmly believe that "supporting those who support you" (which is a tag line of the ABAC) is so important to an industry and association of hard-working people. The name recognition you get by advertising is great, but you still need to follow up, knock on those doors, attend those meetings, shake those hands and be visible to your potential customers. It's extremely important to advertise and let ABAC members know that our distributors advertise continuously to support their association. One of the things I've recently been involved in is the ABAC Golf Tournament. The first event last year was a huge success for the ABAC. The second one is coming up in October and the ABAC, once again, is hoping for sponsors for this event. So, my recommendation to any vendor is, become an ABAC News Supporting Advertiser and then get involved by sponsoring one of the available openings in the 2nd Annual Golf Tournament. Trust me, the ABAC recognizes those who support them!"

- Dave Esposito – Territory Sales Manager – Albert Kemperle, Inc.

To become a Supporting Advertiser in the ABAC News you can contact any ABAC Board Member listed on the back page of this newsletter or call Advertising Director Dave Fogarty at 860.227.0653 or Publisher Don Cushing at 401.578.6945 and you can get your ad running promptly.

Sumbitted by Don Cushing - abacnews13@gmail.com

Just for the Record



Good record-keeping is just good business, however you do it.

More than ever before, accurate record keeping is essential to the success of a collision repair shop. Not only do shops need detailed records for maximum insurance reimbursement, the new generation of ADAS-capable cars carries a level of liability in repair that their predecessors never did. And good records lead to good customer service, says Cecil Bullard, owner and CEO of The Institute for Automotive Business Excellence.

“Bad record keeping will cost you,” says Bullard, “in just about every way possible.”

The Backstory

“It’s about the customer, really,” Bullard says, “and the customer needs to have a good understanding of what happened with their vehicle.”

But having a process for spelling out what happened, why you did what you did, and what the ultimate solution was isn’t only important for the customer, he adds—it’s important for the success of your business, too.

“You want to make sure that if you have to look back at this later,” says Bullard. “Let’s say 14 months goes by and there’s some kind of an issue with the vehicle—you want to be able to easily and quickly go back and find out what you did, why you did it, how you did it and what the outcome was.”

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It is super important, especially for the collision industry, because we do so much business with insurance companies.”

The Problem

Collision repair shops have always kept records, but the process by which those records are kept has changed drastically over the years. Gone are the days when a shop could operate effectively with paper records and a filing cabinet, says Bullard. These days, if you’re not using the latest management software, you’re losing out on potential profit.

“Being accurate and organized and having a really good description of what happened and why it happened is essential to getting paid,” says Bullard. “The way to make money in the collision industry is to make sure that you’re literally charging everything that you can legitimately charge the insurance company. If you don’t document properly—the way the insurance companies want it documented—you’re either not going to get paid or you’re going to get paid a lot less.”

The level of detail this necessitates is impossible to achieve without the help of management software, in Bullard’s opinion. Without it, he says, you’re going to have a hard time painting an accurate picture, not only for the insurance company but for your customers, too.

There’s also the matter of warranty issues—if you can’t quickly find the answer to what was done on the car in the past, you could spend hours trying to figure out what happened.

“It’s all about time and money in the collision industry,” Bullard says. “It’s about efficiency and making sure that you’re billing for everything that’s fixed. If you’re not keeping records, you’ll go broke, plain and simple.”

Another big issue, says Bullard, is liability. Cars today have highly advanced ADAS components that must be calibrated with razor precision to avoid a malfunction that could result in another accident. And the exact fix needs to be documented with as much detail as possible, to protect you and your shop from litigation.

“I really don’t think most shops understand the amount of liability they have with modern vehicles,” Bullard warns. “If you have to go to court or if there is some question as to what was done and how it was done ... if you have a good description on a repair that was fixed correctly, it protects you from litigation. If you don’t, you’re in trouble.”

“Also, I might have to prove to the IRS how much money I made, and how and why I made it so that I don’t get audited,” he adds. “There’s multiple ways that having really good record keeping and a great story is beneficial to the business itself.”

The Solution

The best solution? A record-keeping software system designed specifically for collision shops.

“If you don’t have this kind of system,” Bullard says, “it will drive you out of business. I’m not trying to sell management systems ... I just think that business is so much more complicated today than it was even ten years ago, and there’s just no way to run your business properly without it.”

Once upon a time, he says, you could purchase a management system for your shop and use it indefinitely. But those days have come to an end.

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Technology is changing so quickly that it's impossible for the older systems to keep up, and shops need a system that can be updated regularly so it doesn't become outdated.

"A system that was written in the last five years is, in my opinion, exceptionally better than a system that was written 15 years ago. I've seen a lot of people try to limp their older systems along and it results in a lot of headaches and wasted time."

To find the best solution for your shop, Bullard suggests asking for recommendations in online collision groups, or doing a quick Google search. Take note of which systems keep popping up.

Once you've narrowed it down, compare what they offer for training, and pick the one with the most robust support.

The Aftermath

"Whenever you're going to implement a system like this it's a big deal," cautions Bullard. "There's a three to six-month learning curve. It's disruptive, and you just have to plan for the disruption. But it's certainly worth it."

Bullard says many companies have online training built into their program, but make sure you verify exactly what kind of training and support resources the system has in place before making a decision. Proper training is essential for a successful transition.

"In my opinion, it's usually worth spending the money to bring somebody in to work with your staff, kind of hand in hand over some period of time," Bullard says. "Because again, if you're not doing it right, especially in the collision industry, you can lose tens of thousands of dollars over a couple of months in billing. And so, you've got to make sure that not only do you know how to use the system, but you know how to use it to write the story that needs to be told for the insurance company."

Bullard is also of the mindset that there's no better way to learn than to dive in headfirst. Get the training, he says, then go live and "fight your way through it." Don't spend any more time than you have to straddling two different record-keeping systems.

"You need two things to be successful in anything—one is knowledge," says Bullard. "You can get the knowledge through training. Some systems have online training, some of them don't. Some of them will send somebody out or you send your people to them. Most today have something online. I see a lot of shops that are afraid to dive in the deep end though, so to speak, and fully immerse themselves in the transition. At some point you have to just get in the pool and swim, because experience is the second key to success. Knowledge can only take you so far. Experience drives you the rest of the way."

The Takeaway

The bottom line? Good record keeping is good business. Keeping accurate records not only allows you to better communicate with your customers and provide better customer service, it gives you the information you need to receive maximum insurance reimbursement and protects you from liability.

Ask yourself "what's the complaint of the customer?" and "what's the cause and what was the cure?" If you have a way to document that in detail, in a system that's easy to search and refer back to, you're golden.

Source: www.Fenderbender.com - Article by Lindsey Gainer

OEM Dealerships: Friend or Foe?



Insurers seeking out and using mis-information obtained from dealer repairers in order to deny consumers OEM-recommended repair procedures has become more commonplace.

As I've stated before, one of the greatest things that has happened to the collision repair industry in the past decade is the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) publishing and providing collision repair procedures. This was neces-

sary due to newer manufacturing technologies along with the introduction of lighter and stronger advanced construction materials, resulting in the need for special equipment and advanced knowledge. This has provided repairers the "higher authority" to refer to and support their recommendations for various processes, procedures and materials. Repairers no longer have to merely rely on their knowledge, training and experience when preparing accurate and thorough damage/repair assessments because most OEMs have provided the required/recommended repair methodology — which should leave no questions regarding what is needed in the repair. More OEMs are also offering certification programs to verify and ensure shops have the specific knowledge and equipment to perform proper and thorough repairs.

So why have vehicle manufacturers invested so much time and resources in providing updated information on how to repair their products? The reasons are quite simple: liability prevention, owner retention and brand loyalty.

Fickle Customers

As most of us know, consumers can often be fickle. It has been reported that 60% or more of consumers who have been involved in a significant collision become dissatisfied with their vehicle due to lingering loss and unresolved, repair-related issues. These problems create a loss of confidence and ongoing concern and doubts regarding post-repair function, safety and dependability, causing many owners to change to a different make of vehicle. This is not a recent issue; such concerns are what fostered the issues of diminished value (DV) in that a history of damages creates uncertainty — where a potential buyer might take a gamble on purchasing a once-damaged and repaired vehicle but only at a significantly lower price.

To fend off the loss of loyal customers/owners, the OEMs want their products to be properly repaired and maintained in order to provide their customers a satisfactory and trouble-free ownership in hopes that they stay with the brand when the time comes to purchase another vehicle. Taking this a step further, some manufacturers mandate that a repairer be certified before they can purchase and acquire structural and other parts needed for repairing their vehicles.

Riding for the Brand

Most people would think, as I once did, that if anyone was going to provide the most thorough repair it would be the authorized new car dealership's service departments and body shops.

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After all, they sell the products and should know them inside-and-out and would take special pride in maintaining them properly by adhering to the manufacturer's specifications. Besides the transfer of potential liabilities, auto manufacturers prepare repair procedure recommendations/requirements to enable and encourage collision repairers to perform proper repairs to restore damaged vehicles to pre-loss condition in safety, function, appearance and value to the best of reasonable human ability. Although the intent is clear for the manufacturer's efforts and investments to provide procedures for repairers, there is a crucial yet simple disconnect regarding the certified repairer program: the lack of assurances that certified repairers and authorized dealers are indeed performing repairs as called for by the manufacturers.

Lack of Accountability

Unfortunately, I, along with many other collision repairers, have learned and experienced through owning auto body shops that, all too often, dealership repairers do not always follow the OEM repair procedures. To make matters worse for quality-oriented independent repairers, it has become more commonplace for insurers to seek out and use misinformation obtained from some dealer repairers in their efforts to deny consumers OEM-recommended repair procedures. Insurers have increasingly been seeking out authorized dealer mechanical and body shops that do not follow OEM repair recommendations of late. They're employing such illegitimate information to deny certain procedures by providing statements such as the following, which were copied and redacted from a recent e-mail to a quality independent repairer's customer:

Mr. (Customer),

We are always willing to review any documentation to support the replacement of parts or to add any additional operations for repairs. We have reviewed the documentation that has been presented to us as well as reached out to professionals at multiple Porsche dealerships. In talking to both the service and body shop side of the Porsche dealerships, they advised that based on the damages to the vehicle, the steering column replacement would not be warranted at this time. If you or the shop has any additional information, we would be happy to review.

Thank you,

Claim Supervisor

What appears to be taking place is, because some authorized dealers (that may or may not be DRP participants) are saying they don't always follow the OEM repair procedures, this somehow establishes and supports the insurer's contention that such requirements and recommendations do not apply. As a result, they're denying payment for such procedures, some of which are safety-related. This, of course, defeats the OEM's efforts to ensure proper and thorough repairs are being carried out and robs the unwary owner/customer (and their family) of a properly performed and safe repair.

Several years ago, my company, Auto Damage Experts, Inc. (ADE), was hired by an organization that provided OEM certifications across the nation. Our responsibilities included performing on-site physical inspections of repairer candidates who sought certification. Our task was to inspect the facility and credentials to ensure it had the basic requirements as called for by the manufacturer, which included verification of the required equipment and training of their staff and their ability to obtain and follow the OEM repair procedures. This did not include any form of accountability other than that needed to become certified. There was no follow-up to verify and ensure the OEM repair procedures were being employed or if they were being employed properly to remain certified.

This all sounds good ... in theory, that is.

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The benefit to repairers in having one or more of these manufacturer certifications is that it indicates to prospective customers that the certified shop has invested in the time, training and equipment and as such is qualified to work on their vehicle — which can be a great marketing message for a repairer. However, while all this sounds great, there is one aspect of OE certifications that remains absent: accountability. The accountability to ensure that certified repairers are indeed performing repairs as prescribed is sorely lacking.

Correcting the Issue

So what can vehicle manufacturers do to correct this issue? They can start by making efforts to ensure that their authorized dealers and certified repairers are adhering to and making concerted efforts to follow proper repair procedures during each and every repair. How can this be accomplished? By performing or arranging for spot inspections of repairs (in-process and completed) and reviewing repair documents (repair assessments and printouts, i.e., scanning results, three-dimensional measurements, suspension alignment results, etc.) to verify that damage/repair assessments are being written properly and thoroughly and the proper parts and materials are being called for and — equally important — being utilized.

Those repairers that are audited and inspected and found to be in full compliance could then be identified as “top performers”. This would provide assurance to the vehicle owner and show them that the manufacturer truly cares about the ongoing welfare of their customers as well as enable the repairer to receive a report card on their performance which they could then use in their marketing. This could also play a significant role in the repairer’s ability to remain in good standing as an OEM-certified shop. It would also expose those who fail to meet the desired grade, who could then be provided with the opportunity to attain further training and counseling as an incentive to better themselves and avoid the loss of the manufacturer’s certification.

Additionally, some manufacturers mandate that a shop be certified before they can purchase and acquire structural and other parts needed for a repair of its vehicles. This would enable the OEMs to ensure that those that order their parts are performing proper repairs, encouraging certified repairers to work to avoid losing their certification and the privilege of attaining needed parts. This instilled accountability would result in better service to the OEM’s customer/owner and provide a level of assurance that their product will secure the highest possible ownership retention.

Summary

This lack of OEM oversight and accountability to ensure that proper repair processes are being carried out continuously is becoming a major concern for the collision repair industry at large. It is becoming increasingly common for insurance claims people to use authorized dealer misinformation to reduce their claim payments while making it extremely difficult for quality repairers to properly serve their customers and avoid potential liabilities. Until changes are made to correct this issue, quality repairers who encounter a dealership that provides such misinformation must keep their customers informed of such issues. I recommend that both the customer and the repairer demand that the dealership and insurer put their positions in writing and provide their reasoning as to why an OEM recommendation won’t be adhered to and will be denied so they too may share the potential liabilities in the event the unthinkable should occur.

Body shop business

Barrett has authored numerous industry trade journal/magazine articles, including several cover stories for BodyShop Business.

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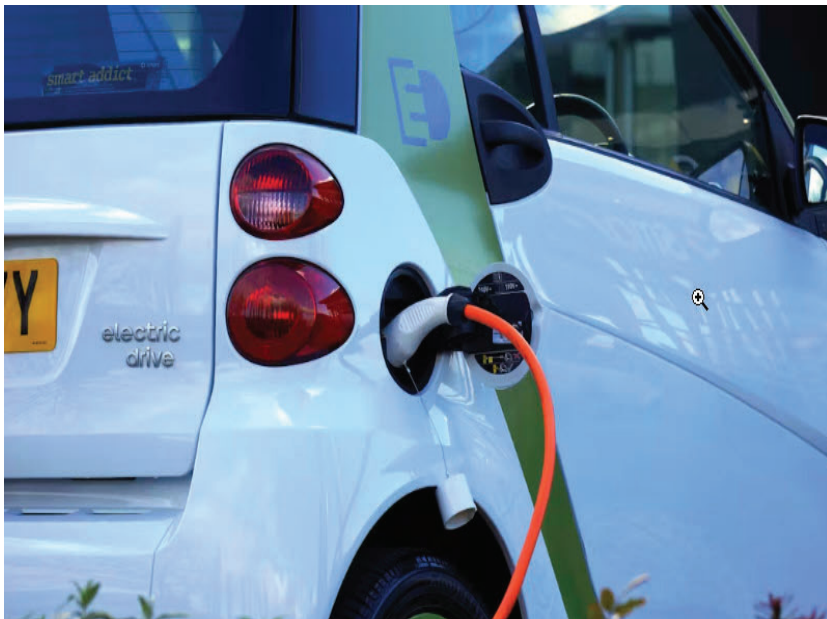
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Having grown up in a family-owned collision repair business and owner/operator of two successful collision repair facilities, his ongoing efforts as industry speaker and repairer coach-consultant are geared toward educating professionals and consumers to achieve equally successful resolutions to automotive-related property damage issues. Such issues include proper and thorough repair, reasonable repair profitability for repairers as well as equitable claim settlements for both claimants and the responsible/paying parties. ADE offers numerous professional services nationwide.



Source: www.BodyShopBusiness.com - Article by Barrett Smith

The Electric Classroom



Before shops even get into repairing EVs they have to make sure their techs have the proper training just to safely handle them.

As shops grapple with vehicles changing and becoming more electric, finding technicians who are equipped to work on EVs becomes essential in a pool of talent that is already limited.

FenderBender sat down with Troy Lachance, an instructor in the automotive program at White Mountains Community College in Berlin, New Hampshire, to talk about what technicians entering the workforce need to know and what is needed in the industry from the next generation.

An Unexpected Calling

Lachance graduated in 1993 from the program he currently teaches and then went on to work as a full-time world-class General Motors technician until 2013. Lachance never intended to become a teacher, but in 2011, he was approached by a former teacher who encouraged him to apply for a vacant position at the school.

"I just happened to get a visit from him one day saying, 'Hey, one of the other instructors is retiring. I think you've got a good personality and would be a good fit,'" Lachance recounts. "And I applied for the job and the rest is history. So you just never know where life is going take you right?"

Since then, Lachance has run his own repair shop from his home and pushed for the automotive program at WMCC to create classes dedicated to electric vehicles.

Preparing for an Electric Future

The school offers students a 15-week EV course in the traditional automotive program, or a one-year accelerated electric vehicle program, which Lachance had a part in helping create.

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There's much that students need to learn before they are able to work on an EV successfully, but the biggest point Lachance hammers home for them is attention to safety.

"It's no different than a lineman working out on the pole, you know, [on] your street corner, there's a lot of safety protocol that has to happen," Lachance says. "And we by far focus on that not only first but spend the most time with safety. And with that safety component comes the understanding of how things work."

Students listen to lessons as well as perform hands-on work. In the one-year EV program students have the chance to build an EV in the class shop. It's a great opportunity for students to work on something new without potentially endangering anybody.

EVs, Shmee-vees

Lachance encounters many students that aren't interested in learning about EVs. He asserts that regardless of anyone's feelings on the existence of EVs, as long as they exist, technicians will have to know how to deal with them.

"You don't have to like EVs," Lachance states. "... I'm neutral. But you'd be silly if you didn't recognize the increased popularity and the fact that you can make a bunch of money fixing them."

With nearly every manufacturer having an electric or hybrid option now, technicians who are qualified to work on EVs present themselves as an asset to any shop.

"The EV techs are short; there's not many of them out there. So you can work wherever you want—more or less name your price, as long as you are, you know, asking reasonable wages and, you know, you'll be in high demand," Lachance says.

Cultivating a Capable Crew

Shops looking to attract talent that can work with this emerging technology must show that they can have a fulfilling career. If students see that they can make a comfortable living working in the industry, the industry will draw in intuitive minds.

"We need intelligent, intellectual people to work on vehicles," he asserts. "... Younger people need to understand that there's a lot that emulates what they already know, right? Whether it's video games, and computers and cell phones ... there's a lot of modern electronics and computerized components that require the interest and expertise of the younger generation."

Technicians aware of and willing to adapt to the changes in the coming years, such as battery technology changing and improving, can help shops navigating oncoming changes.

Regardless of the direction the industry and the future of EVs go, Lachance's goal is to prepare his students to have the best opportunities and to keep drivers safe with the work they do.

Though he doubts many proposed EV transition goals will be met, EVs are nonetheless established in the industry and will only become more prominent. As shops look for talent to build their teams, they need to be sure their technicians can handle what is becoming an established market in the industry.

Source: www.FenderBender.com – Article by Kacey Frederick

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