

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Larry Montanez “Tells It Like It Is” at Recent ABAC Membership Meeting!



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ABAC President's Message

Bob Amendola

Continuing Education



Continuing education is an ongoing process in our industry. Blueprinting and repair procedure research should be standard practice for every repair. Pre, in-process and post scanning as well as calibrations are commonplace in today's vehicles. We must continuously train and stay current with technology to provide a safe and proper repair. I encourage our members to utilize resources like All Data, oem1stop etc. to ensure the proper procedures and safety precautions are used.

As many of you already know, you can find so much information directly from the manufacturers.

Our last meeting with Larry Montanez included information regarding the importance of following safety guidelines and wearing the proper equipment, especially in terms of hybrid and electric vehicles. These vehicles are becoming more and more prevalent and therefore, we must make continuing the education of our technicians a priority.

Ultimately, the source for which you find this information is not what matters. What matters is that we are seeking, obtaining and following those guidelines. Our customers deserve that.

We know when we are unsure of something, and it's okay not to know. What's not okay is to be unsure and guess. As repairers, we have lives in our hands.

Please continue to support your association; onwards and upwards!

Sincerely,

Bob Amendola

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

Larry Montanez Key Speaker at Latest ABAC Membership Meeting!

The ABAC has always done their best to present quality information at every ABAC Membership meeting. The bar continues to be raised with all the educational series of presentations.

The latest quarterly membership meeting was held on November 7th at the Woodwinds Restaurant in Branford, CT.

ABAC President, Bob Amendola, welcomed everyone to the meeting thanking everyone for putting aside time to attend.

"These ABAC meetings would not be as successful as they are without the direct contributions from our sponsors. So, a big thank you to our sponsors. As I do at every meeting, 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. *"Please remember that the ABAC News and the Supporting Advertisers Directory is our biggest avenue of income that our association has which helps us to do many of the things we do, including the guest speakers and presentations that we provide at our meetings."*



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The sponsors for the evening were::

- ZB Negotiations – Represented by John Walton
- Liberty Bank – Represented by Tony Rossley – Vice President
- Hunter Engineering – Represented by Michael Albrecht – Regional Manager

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With that, Bob then introduced **John Walton from ZB Negotiations**. Many members in the room know Mr. Walton from previous meetings.



The company ZB Negotiations was established in May 2005. Their personalized service is offered to automotive dealerships and shops as well as individual vehicle owners who are facing insurance related claims. Their goal is to obtain fair financial settlements for diminished value, loss of use and total loss claims. With their hands-on approach they take the mystery out of what should be done and when. This unique level of service starts when you first contact ZB Negotiations and continues through to final settlement.



Speaking next Liberty Bank – Represented by Tony Rossley – Vice President

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 next guest speaker was Michael Albrecht, Regional Manager of Hunter Engineering Company. Most of you are very familiar with Hunter Equipment as many of you use this product in your collision centers.

Hunter Engineering is proud to be celebrating 75 years of designing and building automotive service equipment in the USA. When you choose Hunter, you're investing in more than equipment, you're investing in the

American dream for the working people who design, build, and support the best service equipment in the world.

Michael then went around the room to see who is currently using their equipment and gave a presentation on real life scenarios to show the best uses of the equipment and the opportunities Hunter equipment can offer you.

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President Bob Amendola then welcomed **Keynote Speaker Larry Montanez who is Co-Owner of P&L Consultants. P&L Consultants** works with collision repair shops on estimating, production, and proper repair procedures. P&L conducts repair workshops on MIG & Resistance Welding, Measuring for Estimating, Advanced Estimating Skills.



Larry also was representing Collision Hub which, according to their website, is the Collision Repair Industry's #1 source for technical and estimating training. Collision Hub covers the gamut of Collision Repair with an unrivaled mix of technical information, collision estimating, product commentary, collision repair trends, body shop news, and auto repair related events. They deliver a wide range of information on all auto body supplies and collision repair products (such as 3M, Norton, SATA etc.) by engaging with the collision industry.

Collision Hub is run by **Kristen Felder who claims herself to be the CEO (Chief Entertainment Officer & Head Trouble Maker at Collision Hub!)**

Montanez covered many subjects on this evening. Here are just a few:

- Handling insurers/Friction with Insurers
- Increasing total losses
- High Voltage Electric Vehicles
- Points of Standard Operating Business Knowledge

Montanez's knowledge of the industry is impressive, and his "colorful" presentations are engaging and entertaining. In customary fashion, Larry made it clear to everyone in the room that he is passionate about this industry and passionate about educating repair professionals. What makes Larry so compelling is the entertaining way in which he educates.

Right off the bat, Larry grabbed the attention of everyone in the room by saying: ***"So, basically as far as friction with insurers; you're the problem, not them! And what I mean by 'you're the problem' is that many shops try to handle the business of not involving the customer, not talking to the customer and you worrying about what the customer has to pay out of their pockets. Who cares what the customer has to pay? Did you design the car? Did you buy the car? Did you put gas in it? Did you drive it? Did you damage it in an accident? Then why do you care how much it costs to fix it? The manufacturer has guidelines that tell you how to fix the car. You read it, you put the car back together using those guidelines. Then you get 'Oh we don't pay for that' from the insurer. Hey, guess what Mr. Insurer, I don't care what you won't pay for, the customer will. End of story. So, you're the problem (as the shop), not them. Stop negotiating with insurance companies."***

On photo estimates, Larry did not mince words. His view in a nutshell: ***"It's ok to say NO!"***

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Other items Montanez Discussed included:

- Importance of communicating with and educating customers.
- Knowing Department of Insurance Laws.
- Knowing Fair Supplement Practices.
- Don't try and be a lawyer in your shop.
- Avoid all the negotiations! Don't negotiate with your customer. Don't negotiate with the insurance company on behalf of the customer.
- Avoid rekeying insurance company estimates. If you must rekey estimates, at least use the KriTech Tool.
- Read the OE repair manual.
- Knowing when the best decision is to NOT repair the vehicle.
- Avoid massive supplements at the end.
- Estimating courses.
- Real time examples.
- Trends in the industry post COVID.
- Proper Documentation.
- Total losses.
- High Voltage Vehicles, including the dangers of high voltage vehicles – Life Threatening Situations
- Hybrids.
- Repair issues.
- Safety equipment.
- Storage areas.
- Proper signage.
- Total losses are predicted to be 42% of reported claims with claim volume shrinking.

Larry then fielded questions from the attendees. Montanez covered many real-life, real-time scenarios and how you can approach these situations in a professional manner to operate more efficiently and get paid.

To fully appreciate the nuanced perspective Larry Montanez brings, you really need to come hear him speak. This is just another benefit of membership. If you are not already a member, the ABAC would like you to strongly consider becoming a member today. The minimal cost of membership is immediately offset by attending just one meeting like this. We have several each year. This is just one of the benefits.

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

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

Submitted by Don Cushing - ABAC News

“On The Minds of Members”

We reached out to several attendees from the last ABAC Membership Meeting held in November to get their thoughts on Larry Montanez's presentation as well as some input on what the ABAC has been offering.

Gary Dulin - Dulin Collision Center - Milford

What are your thoughts on Larry Montanez's presentation? Was the speaker engaging?

I think Larry in his entirety is a bull and he's someone that this industry desperately needs as far as a real consultant. He's not just fabricating or bullshitting things just to get attention. Larry is completely independent. Kristen Felder is completely independent. They are there to help the independent shops and help us succeed. A lot of people don't like to hear the truth. A lot of what my business is today is due to what Larry and Kristen have put out there. I take everything with a grain of salt, but I do take what I can and run with it. We plan on getting on Collision Hub's C20 Group.

Is the information relatable/usable?

Absolutely. The battle from yesterday will be the victory today.

Did you leave the meeting with new knowledge to use in your business?

Yes. I was more interested in how the room reacted. Even some of the biggest shops had a ghostly appearance on their faces which reassured me that in that room everyone is dealing with the same problems and I'm not the only one having the same difficulties. That made me feel comfortable. Confident to move forward.

Are you receiving good education from the ABAC Meetings?

Absolutely! I go to every meeting. At every meeting I take something back to my business.

Are you satisfied with what the ABAC Board of Directors is providing for meeting content?

I don't think I'd be able to do much better myself, so yes, the ABAC does a great job of supplying information and education.

What future topics would you like to see at the ABAC Meetings?

One of my main goals, whether that be with the ABAC or on my own, would be to somehow empower a younger audience of potential employees or shop owners, since there are not a lot of young people in our industry, to be more involved. I want to get the message to them of 'Be proud. You're going into a trade and working with your hands. There's a lot of opportunities for you to be involved.'

What are your concerns in the industry?

We're in an industry right now that is dead. It's not dying, its dead. We need to get a message out to future business workers or owners before it's too late.

It would be nice to see a Trade Fair for the different Trade Schools. Invite the shop tech shop leads. We need more input from them. The curriculum is ancient. As shops, we need entry-level employees.

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Russ Swenton - Artie's Auto Body - Wolcott

What are your thoughts on Larry Montanez's presentation? Was the speaker engaging?

Larry's presentation was very professional and hit on most of the issues affecting the industry today such as the labor shortage, friction with insurance companies, including their underwritten photo estimates. It's funny how just a few years ago, insurance companies would not allow photos from a shop's licensed appraiser to be used to prepare estimates, or process supplements. Now, it's perfectly ok for insureds and/or claimants to take their own photos at the accident scene for these same insurance companies to use to process their initial estimate, which is usually about 60-70% of what it will actually cost to repair the vehicle correctly. The shop then needs to write a pre-repair supplement and wait for it to get approved before parts can be ordered and repairs scheduled. They want the shops to do their work for them without being reimbursed for the time it takes to prepare the supplement including additional photos and blueprinting the additional parts and labor required.

Is the information relatable/usable?

Larry touched on the higher cost of repairing vehicles, including the quarterly increases in paint and materials, the increase in the number of total losses, and the way the towing, storage and shop charges are being handled. He also discussed the repair process for "all electric" vehicles, and basically how the shops will need to prepare for the future.

Did you leave the meeting with new knowledge to use in your business?

Oh, very much so. Larry Montanez has his own style. His own delivery of information. He is entertaining and explains things in a way that gets your attention. Larry touched on a lot of valid points that we need to move forward in our business. It seems like every day the insurance companies are looking for us to do more with less and not compensating us for the extra work that we need to do in order to complete the repairs from start to finish.

Are you receiving good education from the ABAC Meetings?

Absolutely. That's why I go. Quality and usable information. The ABAC always brings guest speakers to the meetings with new ways to help the industry stay up to date on technology and good business practices. We in turn bring this information back to the shop and use it for the benefit of our employees and the shop in general. For example, we got information at this meeting from Hunter that we can use to set up our frame machine to do alignments. This will be a great addition to our shop so that we no longer need to send out our vehicles to have alignments done.

Are you satisfied with what the ABAC Board of Directors is providing for meeting content?

Every month is a different subject or presentation. I love how the ABAC offers a vast amount of guest speakers with a wealth of knowledge. Like I said before, it's the reason why I attend. I even attended meetings for six years prior to returning to Artie's auto Body and paid out of my own pocket because the shop I was working at did not believe that the ABAC was worth the investment and refused to become a member. I was able to pass on what I learned to the technicians so that we could all perform more efficiently.

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What future topics would you like to see at the ABAC Meetings?

Dealing with the customers. We are at the point where we must start charging our customers for the line items, parts differences and paint and material shortages that the insurance company refuses to pay. Those are some hard conversations that we need to have with our customers. Most of them understand since they have had these issues dealing with their own insurance paid health care systems, but it's always a difficult position to be involved with. It would be nice to have some extra tips that deal with customer negotiations, as the customer needs to know all of this before the repairs begin. You can't surprise them at the end of the repair. They need to be informed.

What are your concerns in the industry?

The increasing cost of paint and materials. The prices seem to increase every week. Secondly, the availability or non-availability of quality repair parts. It's getting worse. First COVID and now the manufacturer's strike. It's making it extremely difficult to complete repairs. I'd also like to see new technology and new products that we can use to help with the cost of doing business. There is a new A/C refrigerant coming out, which may mean that the latest A/C System that we just bought may need to be upgraded or replaced. It gets pretty expensive to have to keep changing and updating our current equipment.

Tony Ferraiolo - A&R Body Specialty - Wallingford**What are your thoughts on Larry Montanez's presentation? Was the speaker engaging?**

I thought it was very educational and informative with a style that only a guy like Larry Montanez could deliver. He is a very entertaining speaker! Larry pretty much commanded the attention of the crowd and saved time at the end to answer several questions.

Is the information relatable/usable?

I thought the information that Larry presented was very good, relatable to our everyday ways of doing business. The information is also very up to date for today's situations. We do use some of his ideas in our business. Some of his ideas are usable after we mold it to our business model.

Did you leave the meeting with new knowledge to use in your business?

Yes. I think as well as being informative Larry is a wealth of knowledge. He's certainly spot on with his technical advice. And only a guy like Larry can call us all out and tell us that WE are the problem. You take what you can from Larry and use it as you can with your business. If you took one thing from this meeting, it was worthwhile.

Are you receiving good education from the ABAC Meetings?

I believe so. We have received great feedback from the meetings we have had so far. Members are always prepared for knowledge.

Are you satisfied with what the ABAC Board of Directors is providing for meeting content?

We are always looking for more information. I think we have raised the bar high, and we need a bit more effort on our part to continue to supply our members with more education and relatable content.

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What future topics would you like to see at the ABAC Meetings?

I'd like to get back to some classes on estimating, office knowledge, etc. Our technical information is at a good level, and I want to see more education at the front of the shop. We have Mike Anderson coming in next meeting and I think we will get a better view of what is going on Nationally. We also have a "hands on" equipment class coming up in 2024. Keep your eyes open for and email for all of these presentations as they approach.

What are your concerns in the industry?

Shops are absorbing certain charges and not getting paid properly for what they are doing. They are either absorbing the charges or they are not doing the repairs due to not being compensated properly. They are not getting the customer involved right from the start to let them know that there may be expenses that their carrier may not cover and they, the customer, will be responsible for. I think that's the hardest thing that shops have is to bill their customers for additional charges because they are afraid that they may lose that customer, but they're going to lose their businesses if they do not profit from their work. Proper and safe repairs rather than undercutting repairs because the insurer wasn't paying for those repairs. I think that's the biggest challenge for shops is to speak with their customers.

Keeping the customer involved is the key to being properly compensated for your repairs. When the customer has skin in the game, they will begin to fight for what they are entitled to also.

Don't fight this battle alone. Your ABAC will continue to help educate you and shops on customer relations and negotiations.

Eddie Lupinek - Eddie's Auto Body - East Haddam**What are your thoughts on Larry Montanez's presentation?**

I totally enjoyed his presentation. Although he uses colorful language, I did enjoy his placement of those words in a funny way. He gets his point across in a very entertaining way. I have shared my meeting experience since then with many people in our industry because his points have stuck with me. He especially got everyone's attention when he said that WE are the problem. And then explained why!

Is the information relatable?

Yes. His subject matter certainly relates to issues that we run into almost daily. We have to understand that we must stand up for proper repairs and proper reimbursement and the insurance companies have made it clear that they are not interested in either one. The insurance company has demonstrated that many times.

Is the information usable?

Larry has a business model that is a bit different than most, however, the basic premise of what he discusses can be usable in any collision shop or business by using that core information to apply it to your business.

Was the speaker engaging?

As I mentioned earlier, I really enjoyed his presentation so yes, Larry was very engaging. He spoke in our language, and you could tell just by looking around the room that he was talking about the right information for the audience he had.

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Did you leave the meeting with new knowledge to use in your business?

This was more of a refreshing look at what we are doing. Larry does it differently than we do, due to the size and scope of his business model, but we try to take his teachings and adjust them to fit our needs.

Are you receiving good education from the ABAC Meetings?

Yes. I reflected on this past year, and I don't think our ABAC could have improved anything that was presented. Setting a high bar, as the ABAC has done, can be challenging to improve on but, as a Board of Director, I can share that we are constantly trying to commit to continuing to educate all of our members in the best way we can.

Are you satisfied with what the ABAC Board of Directors is providing for meeting content?

Yes, and we have many things that we will be offering soon.

What future topics would you like to see at the ABAC Meetings?

This idea is beyond the realm of membership meetings but personally, I would like to see more camaraderie and involvement among the shops. I'd be happy to see a "coffee hour" or something of that nature that would consist of certain shops that would share ideas and potential solutions to their problems or issues. We're not talking about discussing rates or being involved in any sort of collusion, I'd just like to see colleagues get together and share ideas on how to explain things to customers, how you're dealing with certain carriers, etc.

What are your concerns in the industry?

A big concern is the idea that Virtual Estimating that some of the insurers are trying to get us to use by taking pictures of the damage and estimating what our cost SHOULD BE. We need to get away from this as an industry and need to come back to proper repairs and proper reimbursements. As I've stated before, the insurance companies do not care about proper repairs or proper reimbursements. These virtual estimates yield a small percentage of what the cost of the repair should be. Yet, there are shops out there that use this this form of claims handling, not realizing the harm that they are bringing to their own businesses.

Thank you to our members for their feedback.

Submitted by Don Cushing - ABAC News



From the Desk of ABAC Vice-President Ashley Brunelle

SEMA SCRS RDE Recap: Leadership & Workforce Shortage



Jillian Dawley (Dawley Collision & Custom) and I attended SEMA this year on behalf of the ABAC to attend the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) Repairer Driven Education (RDE) Series. Located in the Collision Repair Section of SEMA, SCRS hosted a series of classes throughout the week focusing on topics such as operational leadership, the workforce shortage, repair planning, customer service... just to name a few! We found the classes to be exceptional and took away so many ideas to pass on to our membership moving forward. While I plan to share more content from the series in future articles etc., I would like to focus this edition on leadership and the workforce shortage as it was presented at SEMA.

In one seminar, Mike Anderson presented a class focusing on operational leadership. Operational leadership is important to consider because as leaders, we set the tone for the culture of our business. If we have a negative attitude, that negativity trickles down through our team. As Mike presented, begin with a self-assessment. As a leader, what are my strengths and weaknesses? Within that self-assessment, also asking yourself- am I the best primary contact for my shop based on personality? You may find that another team member is a better fit for that type of role. I think this is an important point to mention because the culture of your business hinges on the dynamic between you as a leader, your crew and your customers. An owner can be the leader without being the primary point of contact. It comes down to optimizing shop culture and efficiency and to do so- finding the right role for each player on the team. After evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, consider resources like a 20 group, specific books etc., any tool that will help you hone your skills and address areas of improvement as a leader. Before we can look to acquire talent, we need to establish and foster a positive work environment for our team. Taking a collaborative approach is the most effective way to help get your team on board. A team meeting can be a great way to meet with your team and have a discussion. Mike mentioned using the word “improve” instead of “change” because people subconsciously perceive the word “change” as something that will cost them something. It can be difficult to bring in new team members if your current team is practicing bad habits. Therefore, it would be best to collaborate with your current team, set expectations and SOP’s before hiring new technicians.

In the search for new technicians and overall talent acquisition, let’s begin by rebranding the industry as a “new collar job”. The ABAC Board of Directors has been working on marketing campaigns centered around doing so through social media, billboards, radio ads etc. As a shop owner, you can do your part by getting involved with your local school systems, trade schools, job fairs, etc. Participation is key. The stigma surrounding the auto body industry is misinformed and outdated. We need to show how advanced our industry is and that it is a viable career option to the younger generation and their parents.

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In another seminar we attended regarding the workforce shortage, we listened to a panel including a tech school instructor from California. A great point she mentioned was that we need to have a mentorship program in place for the new techs we are bringing in. If we don't, they will lose interest and leave the industry all together. A large part of that requires that we make a plan and place them with the right mentor within our shops. Collision Advice has a formula for mentor compensation that you can use as a framework for your technician that is training them. Another key point that we need to consider is that the upcoming generation has benefited from low unemployment rates. Therefore, they have options. They are looking for a workplace that will make them feel valued, where there is a clear path forward and that the work they are doing is important. If we want to attract new people, we need to find out what they want. We simply cannot assume that it is the same as what we think they want.

Instead of looking to hire technicians from other shops, consider growing your own. By doing so, you can avoid adopting bad habits and train someone to best fit your shop.

Resolving the technician shortage doesn't end at acquisition. We need to focus on retaining them, too. Benefits, payscales, bonuses etc. are all an important part of what it will take to retain talent. We must be competitive with the other trades. We also need to find ways to reward exceptional behavior. Mike also mentioned that people remember experiences over money. For example, rewarding a team member with a gift card to take their family out to dinner at a nice restaurant will be remembered and appreciated far longer than a monetary bonus. The type of reward will vary based on the employee. That is why it is important to know your crew and what they value. Doing so will help you retain your crew long term.

In summary, addressing the workforce shortage comes down to 3 main facets:

Operational Leadership & Shop Culture

Talent Acquisition

Employee Retention

I encourage all of our members to take these ideas and use them as food for thought within your own businesses.

Ashley Brunelle

Autoworks of Westville

Vice President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

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

For legal services, it's best to go human



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

Consumer use of online resources and artificial intelligence continues to evolve and expand in a host of fields, including legal services. Online companies like LegalZoom, ZenBusiness and Rocket Lawyer compete to provide consumers with a cheaper alternative to hiring an attorney.

One could pay a fraction to gain paperwork to help facilitate the forming of a business, drafting estate planning documents, executing contracts and so forth.

Many of these services are careful to say that they do not provide legal advice and that consumers are encouraged to obtain separate legal advice.

The entire premise is designed to steer consumers away from traditional legal services.

For many, this is a problem, potentially a very big problem.

As with most types of professional services, medical, legal, accounting, and so forth, one size really does not fit all. Relying on the “one size” can result in overlooking important state or even local regulations as well as the unique needs of the individual.

At the same time as these online legal service companies are exploding, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are likewise finding their way into most sectors of America’s business and economy, including, of course, legal services.

AI capacities are increasing in truly incredible ways. Today, the most widely used AI platform is ChatGPT with over 180 million people accessing the software since its launch in November 2022. With ChatGPT, a user inputs a question or prompt, allowing ChatGPT to then scour the internet for relevant information, ultimately producing a structured reply.

Unfortunately, as we all know, not all information gleaned from the internet is accurate or even truthful.

ChatGPT and its competitors, therefore, can be dangerous for consumers and professionals because its analytical responses, while appearing well reasoned and well written, can be just flat out wrong.

Students and lawyers alike have been cautioned against relying on these artificial intelligence sources. In one example, a judge sanctioned two New York lawyers who submitted a legal brief that included six fictitious case citations generated by an AI application. The judge sanctioned the lawyers for making false and misleading statements to the court. Ask any high school teacher about students using AI to write assignments, and I’m sure you will hear a wide range of similar stories.

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For these reasons and others, consumers and small businesses owners should be extremely cautious when using online legal services or AI programs as a substitute for hiring a lawyer. The risk you are taking on is significant, and you may end up paying more in the long run.

In most circumstances, an attorney owes a client two equally important obligations: to advocate and to counsel. The importance of legal counsel cannot be overlooked.

For most transactional services, there will be an assortment of unique considerations and ramifications that need to be analyzed and accounted for.

Online services and AI may be able to fashion bits of data or basic forms, but they cannot provide the most important element, which is the advice necessary for how to use such information, and/or what critical steps are needed to avoid pitfalls, protect yourself and your business, and account for the myriad challenges you have no ability to even see.

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: www.nhregister.com

John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese and serves as General Counsel to the ABAC. Buckley Wynne & Parese maintains offices in New Haven, Hartford and Stamford, and services clients throughout all of Connecticut. The opinions set forth in Attorney Parese's articles are for education and entertainment purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or legally binding. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this or any of Attorney Parese's articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Parese directly.



ABAC Government Relations Update



***By Andy Markowski, Esq.,
Statehouse Associates, LLC
ABAC Lobbyist***

Connecticut's EV Mandate On Hold For Now

Late last month Governor Lamont made headlines when he decided to pull his administration's regulatory proposal that would have banned the sale of any new gas-powered vehicles by 2035. Otherwise known as an electric vehicle mandate, the regulations if passed would have linked Connecticut's emissions standards to those of California, which permit manufacturers to only be able to sell new vehicles that produce zero-emissions. And while plug-in hybrids would have still been allowed, gas-powered engines would only be sold in the used car market.

While the proposed regulations that would have banned gas vehicles were not actually formally rejected, the Lamont administration made the last minute decision to remove them from the agenda pending before the legislature's Regulations Review Committee. In the days leading up to the Committee's pending vote, several lawmakers from both parties had publicly - and privately - expressed various concerns with the proposal and when it became clear the regulations would not have passed, they were pulled by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Had the regulations been formally voted down, because of the way the rulemaking process works in Connecticut, there would not have been an opportunity to make changes to them, because of the Since a vote never occurred, however, it is now possible for the agency to resubmit the regulations in another form, or the more likely scenario of the entire legislature having an opportunity to weigh in and help shape the policy.

So what are the next steps, if any, and the fate of the proposed EV mandate for Connecticut? The state legislature, which will be convening their 2024 session starting in February, is expected to introduce bills, discuss the policy and form committees to look further into the various concerns that have been raised. These concerns include, among other things: the costs and availability of EVs in the marketplace; the availability, costs to consumers, and equity of charging stations; the overall electrical generation and infrastructure necessary to support widespread EV use throughout the state and how to pay for it; added wear and tear on the roads and bridges due to heavier vehicles; and concerns about the danger of battery fires.

As state lawmakers seek to learn more and consider proposals next year, expect them to look toward collision repairers as part of their information gathering. As experts in dealing with both consumers and insurers after an accident, ABAC members have valuable information to provide.

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Lawmakers should hear about things like the added expenses of repairing an EV after a crash as compared to traditional vehicles; the increased cycle times for repairs; the increased number of replacement parts sometimes needed when repairing an EV; the additional insurance premiums that are being charged; the special battery and fire considerations for storage and handling shops must take when repairing an EV; and the capital investment and workforce training necessary for shops to be able to handle more EVs now and in the future; among many other issues. These concerns, and others, will be debated throughout the 2024 legislative session as the issue of moving towards EVs, for both passenger and commercial vehicle, will become one of the dominant issues considered in Hartford in the years ahead.

The 2024 State Legislative Session Is Right Around The Corner, Now Is A Great Time To Reach Out To Your State Lawmakers – Tell Them What Matters To You And Connecticut’s Collision Repair Industry!

Have a question? Want to express your opinion? Just want to know who now represents you in Hartford? Go to the website below and enter your home or business address to look up your state legislators; with a few quick clicks you can visit their official webpage, email them, or get their office phone number to make a call. Remember – as an ABAC member, your voice matters!

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>

As always, if you have questions on legislation or regulations or if you would like more information on an issue, please feel free to contact ABAC Lobbyist Andy Markowski at: (860) 707-3620 or aem@statehouseassociates.com.

*Information provided is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

OEMs to talk new mixed materials & designs in EVs, how to prepare for repairs

Repairers are likely familiar by now with changes in the materials used in vehicles, within battery electric vehicles (BEVs) particularly, but what does that mean in repairability, and how are manufacturing and repairs forecast to evolve?

During the second session of this year’s Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) OEM Collision Repair Technology Summit, called “North American Automotive Material Outlook and Implications to Collision Repair,” mixed materials use and the impact of new manufacturing design will be discussed in-depth.

Ducker Carlisle’s Automotive and Materials Principal Abey Abraham and Strategic Intelligence Director Bertrand Rakoto will give a presentation followed by a panel discussion with Rivian and Lucid.

The OEM Summit offers attendees the opportunity to learn how vehicles, materials, technologies, and trends are evolving in ways that will impact repair processes and businesses.

Time will be left for Q&A with the audience as well.

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Abraham and Rakoto will outline research on the expected metallic and non-metallic material strategies that collision repair facilities will encounter as OEMs increase their transitions from ICE vehicles to EVs and alternative fuels. Changes in the material makeup of vehicles include more advanced grades of steel as well as various types of aluminum, magnesium, and composites.

According to Ducker Carlisle's research, vehicles made in North America, for the most part, their suppliers use aluminum for lightweighting as it relates to chassis, suspension, structural components, and some of the engine components.

"We will walk through some of the fundamental building blocks of automotive content and how it's changing — particularly with new materials — and the impact of a lot of the EV architectures, which we'll take a look at mostly the aluminum side because that's unique," Abraham told Repairer Driven News.

Bertrand will cover mobility- and manufacturing-related automotive materials. New innovations in grades of steel will be discussed, including the adoption and adaptation of hot stamped press hardened steels and higher-grade roll forming of steels. Uses of magnesium and composites will be touched on as well.

The increasing use of aluminum shock towers by premium automakers, for example, necessitates changes in terms of proportion and dismantling because of a lot more riveted solutions or additives, Bertrand told RDN.

Also, while the Tesla-coined process, "gigacasting," (aka megacasting) may not specifically be brought up during the session it could be brought to the table in relation to new alloys and components to come, Bertrand said.

"What does that mean in terms of repairability? There are some solutions that are being developed with additives, with riveted, or bolted solutions where you cut part of the megacasting and then repair it," he said. "Training and equipment are going to be very critical for most repair shops as we see those new architectures of vehicles coming in.

"It requires an extra level of cautiousness with regards to how all the materials are put together where previously when you had steel parts every part can be slightly different, which is less of the case with aluminum. Therefore, you could work your adjustment between the parts when you rebuild the vehicle... it requires different training and different approaches on how to reassemble a vehicle that is that complex with mixed material approaches."

Companies within the North American, U.S., and Asian markets are trying to develop alloys that would be a little bit easier to repair but that's still in the early stages, Abraham added.

"We'll also cover what's happening with the production landscape... the outlook and what that means from electrification because that's a big question — how much electrification is there? And we'll also do a quick touch on what that means for the vehicle [and] vehicles in operation," Abraham said.

Megacasting is one of the processes being used by OEMs to reduce production time.

For example, Toyota's new megacasting process was recently demonstrated at its Myochi plant in Japan where it fabricated the rear third of a unibody at an event attended by Nikkei Asia. In an example given by Toyota and reported on by The Drive, a unibody built with traditional methods required 86 parts, 33 steps, and hours on an assembly line. The cast equivalent took three minutes, according to Nikkei Asia.

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The report states that Toyota aims to use megacasting to halve production times, plant investment, and manufacturing preparation lead time with the goal of selling 3.5 million EVs by 2030. Megacasting will be used to make the front and rear sections of a new electric model due out in 2026, according to Nikkei Asia.

Reuters reports that Toyota said because it has been working with die-casting for years, it has developed molds that can be quickly replaced, reducing the time to change the mold to 20 minutes versus the usual 24 hours. It estimates a 20% boost in productivity.

According to Reuters, Tesla is working on an upgrade of its gigacasting tech to die-cast almost all vehicle underbody parts in one piece.

However, it's unknown when and where the upgrade will happen.

While vehicle production is faster for automakers, megacasting methods make repairs more complex because the materials and operations used change the balance of how the vehicle is designed, Bertrand told RDN.

"When you go into a vehicle that integrates three major parts, or two major parts for Tesla, that replaces 171 pieces, you could say, 'OK, we're going to replace 20 of those 171 pieces,'" he said. "Now, if you need to replace one, you need to basically keep the integrity of the vehicle and remove entirely one piece to replace it. In most cases, the vehicle will not be salvaged; it's going to be a total loss.

"The more we see those situations, the more we'll have to consider cutting and reassembling partial parts."

During the summit session, the Ducker Carlisle team will cover collision industry preparedness for mixed material vehicle repairs, including EVs, such as where the industry may need to invest to handle the transition with more castings and integrated components in the body in white. They'll consider the effects on replacement and calibration from the increased use of glass and more advanced glass in vehicles and equipment that is needed for the EV transition.

Following the presentation, Abraham and Rakoto will bring a panel to the stage including Dan Black, Rivian service engineering-collision senior manager, and Lucid Motors Body Repair Technical Manager Matthew Pitta. They'll talk about material selections in their models and important details the industry will need to understand when repairing those vehicles.

The panel will also be asked about their certification process plans — what it means for materials availability, how their materials are evolving, and — in terms of calibration and glass — what that intersection looks like, Abraham said.

Preceding the session with Abraham and Rakoto, from 9-10:30 a.m., will be "Session I: Understanding OEM Insurance" featuring presentations from Andrew Rose, president of OnStar Insurance; Mike Slattery, head of insurance for Rivian, and Rob Spencer, president of Toyota Insurance and vice president of Toyota Motor Credit Corp.

The presenters will take the audience on a deep dive into the emerging world of OEM insurance programs, how their products are designed and underwritten to deliver unique coverage that complements their vehicles and positively impacts the consumer experience during the claims and repair process.

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com

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