

ABAC NEWS

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The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Your Car, Your Choice Who Will Fix it

By Bob Skrip

Connecticut motorists are finally being told the truth: they have the right to determine where they will have their vehicles repaired in the event of an accident.

A new law, effective Jan. 1, reinforces motorists' rights to have their auto repaired by a qualified, licensed, competent auto body shop of their own choosing.

Some repair shops that insurance companies refer policy owners to often charge less, but that's because they may use substandard parts and cut corners on repairs so even consumer safety may be in jeopardy. Deceptively referring consumers to insurance company "preferred" shops has been illegal for decades, but far too often the insurance companies have been able to bully unsuspecting consumers.

This new law is the result of years of efforts by the Auto Body Association of Connecticut in conjunction with state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, to whom we and the motoring public owe our thanks.

Also deserving of our sincere appreciation is State Sen. Joseph J. Crisco Jr., D-Woodbridge, co-chairman of the legislature's Real Estate and Insurance Committee, who was instrumental in finally getting the bill passed last year.

Specifically, the new law requires that motorists who have been involved in an accident with vehicle damage must be notified that they have a choice of repair facilities. This notification must appear on insurance identification cards, on estimates supplied by the insurance company or repair shop, and also be clearly posted on signs in all auto body shops.

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It's your car, your choice.

This is a giant step forward. It will go a long way to help educate consumers that they don't have to be

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afraid of insurance companies. It's your car, and your choice where to have it repaired.

Now it is up to consumers to take advantage of this new legislation. Consumers still must have the courage to go to the repair facility of their choice. Don't be fooled by inaccurate suggestions of out-of-pocket costs or statements about repair delays.

A good consumer should call or visit more than one repair facility to learn which shop is qualified to repair your car properly. This is critical when you want to maintain the value in that vehicle after the repair.

Beware of low-ball estimates! You have the right to be paid for a proper repair! The facility with the lowest estimate may base that estimate on using substandard, after-market parts that are not authorized for use in many vehicles. Or in many cases leave out necessary procedures needed to bring your car back to pre-loss condition. In fact, the warranty on many new cars will become void if the car is repaired with the non-approved parts.

The new legislation requires all repair facilities to post this alert:

“Notice: The customer has the right to choose the licensed repair shop where the damage to his or her motor vehicle will be repaired.”

The law also requires that consumers sign a written acknowledgement that they have been alerted to this right.

Now you know the truth.

Notices & Bulletins!

ABAC March Quarterly Meeting

March 10th, 2009

Country House Restaurant

East Haven, CT - 6:30pm

(more info will follow!)

www.OEM1stop.com

Chrysler LLC (Chrysler) and General Motors Corporation (GM), as well as the OEM Roundtable, have made strides in providing access to technical collision repair information through www.OEM1STOP.com. GM and Chrysler are providing their collision repair information **free of charge** through the Web site.

See article in this issue on pages 6-8



ABAC President Bob Skrip Skrip's Auto Body

Winter has arrived, and from what I hear, it has done our industry pretty well. For some, it came in the nick of time. Hopefully, your shop is filled with nice clean work that you can prosper from, and perhaps as a result, update some of the tools and equipment that are in need. The time to buy is now, because of the economic times we are in, our vendors and equipment manufacturers are eager to make the sale.

With that in mind, I encourage you all to schedule a visit to The Northeast 2009 trade show, this year, for the first time, being held at The Meadowlands Expo Center at Harmon Meadow, Secaucus NJ, March 20-22. This is promised to be bigger and better than ever before, with the introduction of more collision equipment vendors, as well as the addition of extensive mechanical tools and equipment, and the new location that promises some surprises for all who attend. This show is sponsored by our friends at AASP/NJ. We have a limited number of VIP tickets available to ABAC members that will give you quick access to the show. Contact any board member for your free tickets to the show. The AASP/NJ has been a supporter of The ABAC for many years, and we thank them for that support, and look forward to being there on March 20 through 22nd. Visit www.aaspnjnortheast.com for further info.

Your association is working hard to bring dynamic speakers and interesting topics to our meetings. We are working with Paint World of New Haven to bring in Mike Anderson in the coming months. Mike is one of the most sought after speakers of our industry, and promises a very interesting seminar that you will enjoy. We are also contemplating bringing back the "town hall" style meetings that will promote audience participation with a question, answer forum with board members on the panel. We as a board need your input on other topics of interest to YOU, and we will do our best to fulfill your request.

In closing, I would like to think you are all networking in one way or another with your collision repair neighbors. That is how we learn and prosper. I visit many shops and never leave without learning something. So take some time, call your neighbors shop and take a ride for a visit, and make sure if someone calls you for a visit, welcome them with open arms. The doors of my shop are always open. My welcome sign is always lit. Is yours?

Bob Skrip

Bob Skrip
President ABAC
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Would You Install Aftermarket/Alternative Parts on Your Customer's Vehicle?

Who Benefits And Who Loses?

The next time an insurance adjuster writes aftermarket/alternative parts instead of O.E.M. (original equipment mfg.) on your customer's vehicle, you (shop owners) better think twice or maybe three times before going ahead and installing these parts.

Take into consideration the following:

Many auto manufacturers have issued serious position statements regarding the installation of aftermarket/alternative parts on their vehicles. These warnings should not be taken lightly.

American Honda, for example recommends that only Honda Genuine original equipment replacement parts be used in collision repair, including all mechanical and electrical parts, body panels, and structural components. Following this recommendation, especially with regard to structural components will help avoid compromises to the structural integrity and safety of the vehicle which might occur when parts other than Honda Genuine original equipment replacement parts are used. American Honda also states that they will not be responsible for any subsequent repair costs associated with vehicle or part failures caused by the use of parts other than Honda Genuine original equipment replacement parts. Toyota Motor Sales USA and other vehicle manufacturers have similar position statements to warn everyone.

Valid questions need to be asked. Does anyone have the right to potentially compromise the structural integrity and safety of a customer's automobile? Does anyone have the right to compromise the overall appearance of a customer's automobile? Does anyone have the right to compromise the trade in resale value of a customer's automobile? Who is the most important person which creates overall success in your business? The answer should be obvious. Your customer! Why would you risk the chance of destroying the relationship you have built with every customer by potentially compromising the structural integrity, safety, and overall quality of their vehicle that you the professional craftsman have repaired?

It's about time that every collision repair owner take a good hard look in the mirror and ask the following question. Why would I create possible liability and customer relations nightmares by agreeing with an insurance adjuster to install aftermarket/alternative parts on my customer's vehicle? The answer should be fairly simple. Never give your customer a single reason not to return to your business when they are in need of quality collision repair!

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut welcomes and urges any O.E.M. parts vendors who have position statements available to contact executive secretary Heather Romanello at 203-767-5731 so this information can be listed on the ABAC website (www.abaconn.com) for all members and consumers to benefit.

AASP/NJ'S NORTHEAST™ 2009 TRADE SHOW

**32ND ANNUAL
NORTHEAST™
2009 REGIONAL
Auto Body/Automotive
Trade Show**

Friday, March 20th, 2009
6pm - 11pm

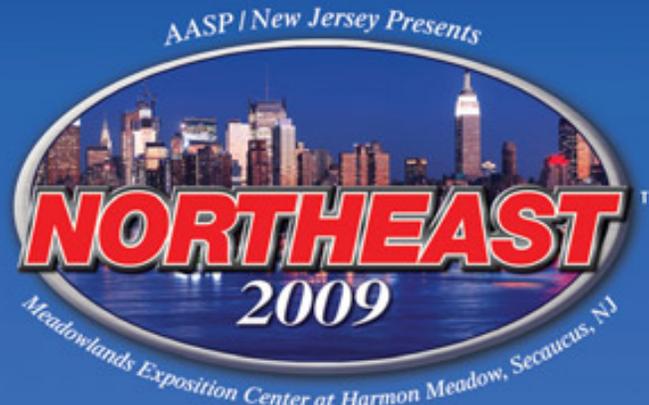
Saturday, March 21st, 2009
10am - 5pm

Sunday, March 22nd, 2009
10am - 3pm

**PRE-REGISTRATION
IS FREE! SAVE \$10**

log onto

www.aaspnjnortheast.com



**OVER
\$10,000**

IN DOOR PRIZES
WILL BE AWARDED
THROUGHOUT THE
WEEKEND!

YOU CAN WIN:

- 42" Plasma TVs
- Surround Sound Systems
- IPODs
- Laptops
- HD Camcorders
- GPS Navigation Systems



Featuring



Come see the latest in technology, equipment and training at the region's most anticipated automotive industry event. Over 100 vendors and 350 booths representing all areas of the automotive repair field.



NORTHEAST™ 2009 EVENT SCHEDULE* TO INCLUDE:

- 2009 East Coast Resolution Forum, hosted by AASP/NJ and SCRS
- ACAR Code of Ethics Meeting

ALSO FEATURING:

- AASP National Spring meeting
- I-CAR Certified Technical Training
- An informative presentation from the Database Enhancement Gateway (DEG)
- Sherwin Williams AWX Waterborne System & HP Process with Air Bake Technology seminar
- Mike Anderson, the industry's most in-demand speaker, presents his OUTSELL, UPSELL and CLOSE! seminar
- An eye-opening seminar from industry icon Erica Eversman
- NJ Compliance Training

NJGCA EVENT SCHEDULE: Please visit website for information

Visit us online for more information www.aaspnjnortheast.com

**Seminar content subject to change.*

Getting the OEM collision repair information you need doesn't have to cost a fortune

by [John Yoswick](#) *Parts & People Magazine*

For the independent collision repair shop trying to equip itself with automaker collision repair information, expenses can very quickly add up. Buying annual access to the OEM service and repair information Web sites is no small proposition, even if you forgo access to the most expensive sites, such as those of BMW (\$2,500 a year), Mercedes-Benz (\$2,950), Volvo (\$2,600), and Porsche (\$5,200).

Sign up for annual access to the repair information Web sites for just nine of the most common vehicle makes on America's highways--Chrysler, Ford, GM, Honda, Mazda, Nissan, Subaru, Toyota, and Volkswagen--and you'll be plunking down an average of nearly \$1,000 a month.

The good news is that there are ways to get a lot of OEM collision repair information without spending the equivalent of a detailer's salary. Here are some suggestions for finding the information you need less expensively.

The Web sites

Kia vehicles are probably not a large part of your shop's business, but the company remains the only automaker to make access to its service and repair information Web site absolutely free. The bad news is there's not a lot there for collision repairers: some dimension and frame specs, but not much on sectioning points, weld locations, or metal types.

GM, however, is among the automakers providing the most comprehensive collision repair information and, like Kia, has made it available at no charge. The secret, however, is to bypass the \$1,200-a-year ACDelco Web site and go to www.goodwrench.com. There you will find all the automaker's collision repair technical information at no charge, organized by vehicle, make, and model.

Are there times you think you could find the answer you need if you only had an owner's manual for a particular vehicle? Those manuals and technical service bulletins are available at no charge at the Nissan, Infiniti, Honda, and Acura Web sites.

Toyota has recently made its "Collision Repair Reference Guide" available for free through its wholesale parts Web site (www.ToyotaPartsAndService.com). By registering at the free site, you can check the searchable reference guide for high-strength steel locations, jacking and hoisting specs, wheel alignment specs, airbag component replacement information, vehicle identification charts, and more.

For other information from any of the other automaker Web sites, you'll face a fee for access. At \$350 a year, the Toyota/Scion site is among the most reasonably priced. A number of others--Honda, Saab and Suzuki--are \$500 a year. Most of the rest are \$1,000 or more per year, but all offer daily, weekly, or monthly options if you don't need ongoing access.

A chart on the National Automotive Service Task Force's Web site (<http://www.nastf.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3291>) summarizes the subscription options and charges, and provides links to the Web sites. And although it hasn't been updated for about a year, a matrix showing what collision repair information is included at each automaker's Web site is also available from the NASTF Web site (<http://www.nastf.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3450>).

Another option for finding links to the information Web sites is www.OEM1stop.com, which automakers created in recent months specifically to give collision repair shops a one-page link to all the OEM information Web sites.

The site does not contain any technical information or help shops find what they are looking for once they reach the specific automaker's site. In some cases, however, the links at www.OEM1stop.com will get users a click or two closer to the log-in page of an automaker's Web site. But the site is still not yet as complete as the NASTF listing; a handful of the automakers, including Subaru, BMW, and Audi, had not approved links to their sites from www.OEM1stop.com as of this spring.

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Manuals and CDs

Although Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Plymouth collision repair information is available through Chrysler's \$1,200-a-year Web site (www.techauthority.com), collision repairers may instead want to order printed or CD copies of the automaker's collision repair guides.

Although that's not as convenient as the instant access to the information available through the Web site, the price is right: Each guide is available for just \$2 (plus shipping), offering significant amounts of information for a fraction of the Web site access fee.

Some examples of what is available for purchase at the www.techauthority.com Web site (under "Special Products"):

- CDs with body repair manuals for many vehicles, including the Sebring/Avenger and Sebring convertible.
- Publications on such topics as welding and weld bonding, sealer and sound-deadener, plastics repair and nonstructural sheetmetal repair.
- A structural-sectioning procedure guide that provides frame dimensions and front frame-rail sectioning procedures for multiple vehicles; a truck floor partial replacement procedure; and a front lower radiator cross-member replacement procedure. Chrysler notes that most of these procedures are specific by vehicle make, not generalized across Chrysler platform vehicles. The guide also includes Chrysler's position on the use of reconditioned wheels and recycled airbags.

I-CAR online and classroom training

Just as ordering the Chrysler documents in advance isn't as convenient as being able to look information up online at the time you need it, I-CAR classes too have the disadvantage of being available only at certain times.

But while the classes in the past have been more generalized to apply across a variety of vehicles, I-CAR's agreements with automakers in recent years has made vehicle-specific training more available to independent repairers.

For example, I-CAR now offers five Volvo-specific classes, including structural and nonstructural repair, and overviews of XC90 and S40/V50 models. There also are collision repair overview classes for the 2006 Corvette Z06, the 2004 Ford F-150, and for Chrysler, Dodge, and Jeep vehicles.

But I-CAR also offers online training (www.i-car.com) that may help you get the vehicle-specific repair information you need for a car in your shop without the full expense of the OEM Web site access. Need to replace a front frame rail in a Lexus IS300, Dodge Caliber, Cadillac DTS, or Ford F-150? Replacing Boron steel panels on a Volvo XC90 or a roof on a Mazda 626?

Those are among the topics covered by the more than three dozen I-CAR online classes. Each 30- to 60-minute class is available 24/7, costs \$45, and earns you a quarter-point toward your Gold Class requirement (provided you pass the online post-test).

Third-party option

A relatively new option for access to OEM collision repair information is Alldata's "CollisionConnect," a subscription service from a company more familiar as a source of OEM information on the mechanical repair market, where it has more than 70,000 customers.

Alldata essentially has agreements with the automakers that allow it to access OEM repair information, repackage into some standardized formats across the manufacturers to make it easier for users to locate what they are looking for, and sell monthly subscriptions to access this online information.

The product includes whatever mechanical and collision information is available from the automakers for 2000 and newer vehicles: sectioning procedures, restraint system, opening and frame dimensions, weld locations, wiring diagrams, recalls

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and technical service bulletins, aluminum and alternative metals use, etc.

Subscribers who are unable to locate needed information can call Alldata, and its support staff will try to locate the information and get back to the shop within three hours. Such calls, a company spokesman said, help Alldata prioritize what types of information it adds first to the system as it arrives from the automakers.

The company said the product can help shops get OEM information for many automakers' vehicles for less than it costs to subscribe to just one or two OEM Web sites. The information, Alldata said, can help shops create or "justify" more complete estimates and help demonstrate its interest in completing repairs according to OEM recommendations.

The system has been adopted by two larger collision repair chains--Fix Auto and ABRA Auto Body & Glass--and a total of about 1,000 customers, said Dan Espersen, a former ABRA employee who is now Alldata's senior program manager for its collision product.

Espersen said the product is not a substitute for I-CAR or other training (the company even offers a discount on the product to I-CAR Gold Class businesses as well as members of some associations and franchises) but is another tool to help shops stay on top of quickly changing vehicle technology and repair procedures.

Take your pick

Whether it's to improve your shop's productivity, reduce your liability, better match OEM quality and safety, or justify your repair estimates and pricing, access to OEM information is most likely to become increasingly important in the years ahead.

The cost of getting that information will not be insignificant, but there are options that can help keep it from becoming prohibitive.

The latest on "Right to Repair"

Proponents of federal "Right to Repair" legislation, which would guarantee independent shops access to automaker service and repair information, has picked up more congressional supporters in recent months, bringing the total number of co-sponsors to more than 40.

But at less than half the number of co-sponsors a similar bill had at this time two years ago during the previous Congress, it seems unlikely the bill will move forward this year.

The Automotive Service Association (ASA) opposes the legislation, saying government involvement is unnecessary because the automakers are voluntarily making the information available.

Many other organizations in the industry say the threat of the legislation is the only reason the automakers have made the information available and that it is necessary to ensure that the industry isn't relying solely on the "good will" of the automakers.

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