

# ABAC NEWS

**JULY-AUGUST  
2010**

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*The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut*

## ABAC JUNE MEETING JAM PACKED WITH EDUCATION!

Everyone who attended the recent June 16<sup>th</sup> ABAC meeting at Roberto's Restaurant in Monroe, Ct. had the opportunity to absorb a vast array of cutting edge information and ideas on a variety of subjects.

ABAC President Bob Skrip, (Master of Ceremonies) welcomed the audience and immediately got the event rolling by recognizing the two supporting sponsors, All Star Auto Lights, & Auto Body Supplies & Paint. Skrip then introduced U.S. Senate Candidate Peter Schiff. Peter expressed his ideas on everything that is wrong with our government presently and outlined his plans to correct many of the serious problems that affect us all.

"We need to end pork-barrel spending, impose a hard cap on the national debt to rein in spending and eliminate any future bailouts!" Schiff explained that the way to stimulate our economy is through private sector job creation by providing incentives to small business and reducing regulations that prevent new businesses from starting up and creating more jobs. He said that our government needs to get back to basics, con-

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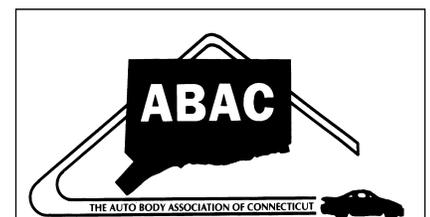
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centrating on fixing the economy, infrastructure, and education. He also believes that we should keep health care private. Peter agreed to meet with the ABAC Board of Directors in the near future.

Bob then introduced Attorney Martha Dean, a candidate for Ct. Attorney General. Martha gave a brief overview of what she would do if elected. She had some criticism for Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's overall performance. She felt that the office focused on media attention instead of tackling the tough problems that face our state. Dean, if elected promised to create a competitive prosperous staff to assist her in helping the people of Connecticut. Bob Skrip thanked Martha and urged her attentive support to the ABAC.



Bob announced to the crowd that the ABAC had hired Chris Sheehy from Auto Body Consulting

Group to be in charge of Social Media Relations. Chris has set up accounts for the association on both Facebook and Twitter, and will maintain this media exposure on a very frequent basis.



Next to be introduced was Steve Gutierrez, owner of All Star Auto Lights, the largest supplier of O.E.M. lights in the U.S.A. Steve gave a detailed presentation of what his company had to offer the ABAC members. He explained that they have an inventory of over 50,000 O.E.M. only new and reconditioned lights in stock to meet all needs for all foreign and domestic applications, including Hid-Xenon, Halogen. The company offers headlights, taillights, parking lights, and fog lamps at competi-

tive prices. Gutierrez explained that they presently have three locations, Michigan, Florida, and Tennessee to handle timely delivery. He said they have plans to open a fourth location to better serve the customers in the Northeast region. He closed by complimenting the ABAC for its efforts in helping the collision repair industry and is looking forward to having a beneficial relationship with all members both now and in the future.

The final speaker of the evening introduced by Bob Skrip was Larry Montanez from P & L Consulting. Larry gave a powerful, information-packed training presentation that had the audience on the edge of their seats. Many shop owners and managers took notes, realizing the opportunity to gain vast amounts of knowledge. Larry covered everything from damage analysis, structural repair/equipment changes, triage procedures, and much more. Larry reminded the audience of how important collision repair training and constant industry updates really are. As Larry stated, "Ignorance in a court of law is not a good thing. For example, by admitting that you were not aware of a proper repair technique or procedure means you lose!" Larry finished up by offering his company's current workshop opportunities which are given to small and large groups at very competitive prices. The individual workshops include: Pre-Production & Damage Estimating, Advanced Estimating & Negotiating, STRSW & GMAW/MIG, & a special Triage class.

Bob Skrip closed the evening by thanking the sponsors one more time & wished everyone a safe trip home.



## Measure Twice – Cut Once

*Autobody Consulting Group (ACG) is a management and marketing consultancy serving auto body repair businesses and vendor companies to the autobody industry*

By: Chris Sheehy

[Autobody Consulting Group](#)

Every once in a while I get a rather firm push-back from a client about making a specific change, or in implementing a specific process for their business. Being respectful of their decisions but being one to always want to know “why” I ask the perilous questions that must be asked and in response often hear answers like “I’ve tried that, it didn’t work”, or “that won’t work for me”.

Nothing bothers me more than to see someone shut-down to a suggestion without giving it due-diligence. Somehow the need to know “why” overwhelms me, so I push further because I know that I have been here before too and contrary to their experience for the majority of times *it* does work and *it* could work for them too. In my experience most process changes fail largely because of one of these two reasons.

1. They saw the change as an *element* and not a *process* – a spoke without a rim & hub.
2. They did not consider the *human element*.

You see, all too often change decisions are based on what somebody else has done – something someone might have told you about at an industry gathering, or something you might have read in a magazine; and all too often the time it takes to plan and carry out this change doesn’t come close to the effort needed to succeed.

While these *things* may certainly be working for someone else; that person doesn’t have your facility, your clientage, your staff headcount, your staff skill sets, your finances, or your knowledge of the change process. It worked for them because they made it work inclusive (knowingly or not) of all these things, and the time it took to get it all working might have taken months or years to get right.

So here’s what I suggest. When faced with the opportunity to make change in your business, (and change is an opportunity!) look at the big picture, think of how it could succeed and fail (that’s important, always have a back-door plan), consider how you will need to get the commitment from your staff, ask your staff for their advice (sometimes they have the best ideas on how you can make their jobs easier!), measure where you are today and know what the metric of success looks like, and plan to do a dry-run when possible. Write things down, make sketches of process flow and talk to people you trust outside your business about these changes. Often we set our own limitations biased on our experience and knowledge – getting someone from the outside could bring a whole different perspective to your strategy. Consider hiring a consultant who has the experience in the change you seek, they may add a whole different perspective on the big picture.

Careful change-planning specific to the unique demands (both positive and negative) of your business will go a long way to ensure a successful change implementation for your business. As they say, **measure twice – cut once**.

from → [Auto Body Repair News](#), [BeyondParts](#), [Collision Hub](#), [Twitter](#)

# Winning Over the Ladies

*It'll take more than flattery from your best bodyman to make women feel welcome. A female-friendly certification and smart communication make the difference.*

ELYSE LUCAS

A few months ago, Mark Kim was looking for a way to improve customer service at his collision repair center. While watching a television interview featuring a nearby automotive business, the body shop manager of J's Auto Body in Seabrook, Md., learned about a new training certification: AskPatty Certified Female Friendly status. As a small shop—spanning 3,600 square feet and employing six people—J's Auto Body relies heavily on referrals and word of mouth to generate business. Kim quickly realized that being Certified Female Friendly would help him better serve—and serve more—female customers. An AskPatty.com certified auto body shop creates an inviting and comfortable environment where women feel welcome, striving to ensure that the process of repairing a vehicle is a pleasant one. To get certified, employees study the expectations of female customers, and learn how to meet those expectations in a way that women find appealing. Even within the first two months of completing the AskPatty.com training, the staff at J's Auto Body was seeing an uptick in the number of female clients.



## REACHING WOMEN

Jody DeVere, president and chief executive officer of AskPatty.com Inc., was inspired to create the female friendly website and certification program during her tenure as president of the Women's Automotive Association in 2004 and 2005. She saw that women often experienced anxiety over their automotive needs. A hassle-free environment where information was easy to come by and questions were easily asked—and answered—seemed to be missing from the automotive experience for women.

Most practically, DeVere noted that women comprise 60 percent of car buyers and influence 85 percent of all consumer purchases. "You're losing market share if you're not addressing women," she says. Effective communication with women begins as soon as you make contact. Taking the time to listen—really listen—to what she's saying is critical. "What happens when she calls or visits your [shop] and interacts with [employees]?" DeVere asks. "Women love to talk, and we're big storytellers. If we've had a fender bender, we're going to tell the story of what happened and every other story that led up to that." To best serve the female customer, a collision repair professional needs to let a woman tell her story and ask her questions. "It makes her feel safe and more comfortable," DeVere says. "Understanding that creates a customer for life and increases referral business." So far, 50 collision repair shops across the nation have become AskPatty.com Certified Female Friendly.

## REVAMPING BUSINESS

At J's Auto Body, the customer service lesson that made the biggest impression was one about minding the details that seem to capture the attention of many a woman. Kim says training helped him focus on the small, yet significant, things that matter to women. One of the most overlooked? Good eye contact. "Things like that we had never considered before," he says. "Going through AskPatty [helped us] realize the deficiencies in our customer service."

Now that Kim and his staff have a greater appreciation for and understanding of their female customers, he's planning "major changes" to make the waiting area of the shop more inviting. Kim wants to knock out

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one of the shop's walls to allow a clear view of the office. He'll also spruce up the waiting area by rearranging chairs and adding plants to create a more inviting, open atmosphere. Also on the agenda? To maintain the shop's cleanliness and keep stifling auto body shop smells at bay.

J's website ([jsautobodyshop.com](http://jsautobodyshop.com)) also received an overhaul to better serve female customers. "It was a little outdated, so I streamlined the layout," Kim says. The site now boasts the AskPatty logo, which clicks through to ladies-only discounts and reviews of the body shop. The shop's current discounts for women include \$100 off her deductible for every \$1,000 of repairs, \$20 for referring a friend, coupons for military wives and a free car wash and light interior detailing.

Kim says one of the most valuable things he learned during training was how to have the right mindset when approaching female customers. "We're not just a body shop; we're trying to relate to [women]." He picked up valuable tips for how to connect with women online, as well. AskPatty introduced him to Internet marketing and the social networking world of Twitter and Facebook. "[AskPatty] is just a phone call away. I've talked to Jody herself several times. They're great about helping."

### **BETTER CONNECTIONS**

To continue the trend of improving customer service for women, J's plans to co-host community events with AskPatty. "We're trying to work with AskPatty and our local Girl Scouts to do an automobile care clinic," Kim says.

Women-friendly and women-focused events, Kim hopes, will increase word-of-mouth referrals. And when he sees those female customers coming through the door, he'll be ready with female friendly customer service. "[This new approach] is still fresh, but we do get a lot more women customers now, and we're more sensitive to their needs." Odds are, that'll keep the ladies happy.

**Source:** [www.fenderbender.com](http://www.fenderbender.com)

## **Ford: Aftermarket parts don't stack up to automaker parts**

Caitlin Burgess

July 22, 2010—A comparison study conducted by [Ford Motor Co.](http://Ford Motor Co) found that aftermarket parts are often inferior to those made by automakers. The study was reported in a USA Today article.

Ford compared copy radiator supports and bumper beams, isolators and brackets made for 2004 to 2007 F-150 trucks and 2005 to 2009 Mustangs. Typically, replacement parts are made of steel or magnesium; however, Ford found many were made of plastic. These are structural parts of the vehicle, and that makes the concern elevated," said Paul Masse, Ford powertrain and collision product marketing manager.

For example, air bag sensors are also attached to these parts, he said. The difference in materials could cause air bags to deploy too slowly or unnecessarily. Another issue is that consumers are often not told when nonstandard parts are used in a repair, according to Richard Steffen, district director for Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif. "People need to know," he said. "When it comes to safety-oriented parts, we believe they should be told they've got nonfactory parts." Steffen added that this doesn't mean only factory parts should be used for repairs, but that standards need to be put in place going forward.

Ford said it will push for some type of standardization and review of aftermarket parts, as well as consumer warnings when nonstandard parts are used during a repair, according to the article.

The findings were presented by Ford representatives Wednesday at the Collision Industry Conference ([CIC](#)) in Chicago.

**News From American Honda****HONDA**

## POSITION STATEMENT

**SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT OF STRUCTURAL PARTS ON HONDA AND ACURA VEHICLES**

TORRANCE, Calif., March 22, 2010 – Honda and Acura vehicles are engineered and manufactured to exacting standards and as such, are designed to help protect vehicle occupants in the event of a collision.

All elements of a collision-energy absorption system including but not limited to any structural components such as bumper reinforcement bars, bumper energy absorbers, frames, rails, fender aprons A-pillars, B pillars, and body panels must work in concert to protect the vehicle occupants and maintain cabin integrity.

All elements of an occupant supplemental restraint system including but not limited to air bags, side-curtain air bags, and air bag deployment sensors must work in concert with energy absorption components to provide proper timing for air bag deployment.

Compromising any element of a collision energy absorption system or an occupant supplemental restraint system in the repair of a collision-damaged vehicle may have an adverse effect on occupant safety in any subsequent collision.

Therefore, American Honda does not support the use of aftermarket, alternative, reverse-engineered, or anything other than original equipment Honda or Acura parts for the collision repair of any Honda or Acura vehicle.

Further, American Honda does not support the use or re-use of structural components that have been removed and salvaged or recycled from an existing vehicle that has been previously damaged. Although the parts may appear equivalent, it may be difficult to tell if the part(s) have been previously replaced with a non-OE part, or if the part has received collateral damage as the result of a prior collision. Further, the part may have been subjected to severe weathering, rust, or other detrimental environmental exposure.

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## Body Repair Prices, Auto Insurance and Inflation

### Government data shows strong rise in body repair prices over past three months.

When we last took a look at government figures for consumer price index in April, the consumer cost for collision work showed a strong uptick in the April figures, but had been rising at a slower rate than inflation over the past year. The most recent figures, including the months up to June, 2010, show that the consumer price for body work has continued that relatively strong price rise and has now surpassed the Consumer Price Index for All Items.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported this month that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all items is now just 1.05 percent higher than it was a year ago now standing at 218.0 as of June 2010. During the same one-year period, the cost of automobile insurance rose 5.06 percent over the prior year while body work rose 2.74 percent.

The price of body work rose much faster in the April-June period than in recent months however. According to the latest available U.S. government statistics, the index for body work rose 1.5 points in April, 1.5 points in May, and an additional 0.8 points in June.

The average monthly increase for bodywork over the past year was 0.23 percent per month. That is now more than twice the rate of the overall CPI which has averaged just 0.09 percent per month. The CPI All Items is intended to represent all goods and services purchased for consumption from over 200 categories.

Auto Insurance prices over the past year rose an average of 0.41 percent per month, more than twice the rate of body work and nearly four times the rate of overall inflation as measured by the CPI All Items.

The Inflation Comparison Chart shows the relative percentage increase of body work, auto insurance and the CPI All Items over the past 12 months.

## Consumer Issues Discussed at New York Association Meeting

### Nearly 100 attendees met to review Insurance Dept report on steering, legislation and assignment of proceeds.

The Westchester-Putnam-Rockland Auto Body Association (WPRABA) held a Special Vendor meeting on June 17 at the Casaletto Restaurant in Elmsford, NY. Frank Ferraro, executive advisor of WPRABA, welcomed the nearly 100 attendees to the meeting that included table top displays from some of the sponsors of the meeting.

Guest speakers included representatives from DuPont, SEM Products, AutoData VIN Labels and I-CAR. Ed Kizenberger, executive director of the New York State Auto Collision Technicians, also spoke and provided an industry update for attendees. Kizenberger started his presentation with a review of the investigation the New York State Insurance Department conducted into steering and the ongoing work of NYSACT in this area. As part of the Insurance Department's report on steering issued in early 2009, the Department defined four basic consumer rights for auto insurance consumers. The rights include:

1. While an insurance company may discuss the benefits of its direct repair program, it cannot make you choose its auto repair shop. That choice is yours.
2. Except for window glass repair, an insurance company cannot recommend a particular shop unless you

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## ABAC OFFICERS 2010

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A&R AUTO BODY - TORRINGTON

**MICHAEL WILKOWSKI**

Stanley's Auto Body - Waterbury

*The goal of the ABAC News is to provide a forum for the free expression of ideas. The opinions and ideas appearing in this publication are not necessarily representations of the ABAC and should not be construed as legal advice.*



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ask for a recommendation.

3. An insurance company cannot tell you to go to its shop to get your damaged car inspected. The insurer must meet you at some place and time reasonably convenient to you.

4. An insurance company cannot tell you that you have to repair your vehicle in order to get paid. If you have damage, the insurer must pay the cost of repairing that damage, whether or not you choose to repair the vehicle.

Kizenberger urged attendees to memorize these rights and post the handout provided for attendees prominently in their repair facilities to help inform customers. According to Kizenberger, "The amount of work it took to get the Insurance Department to actually recognize what the consumer's rights are in New York State was way more than we expected. We gave [the NYS Insurance Dept.] over 250 pages of documentation including complaints from consumers who had taken the time to document their own experiences."

Kizenberger also reviewed the Anti-Steering bill (HB527) introduced in Ohio in May. (See related article below) This bill expressly prevents insurers from recommending repair facilities unless expressly asked to do so by a consumer.

Kizenberger then reviewed the recent judicial ruling in NY finding that insurance companies cannot prohibit an insured from transferring the authority to collect the proceeds of a claim to a repair facility using an "Assignment of Proceeds".

"This is really changing the face of claims in New York State," said Kizenberger. "Insureds can assign the proceeds of their claim so that any shortfall in the claim, between what the insurer pays and what you charge, can be dealt with by you instead of creating a hassle for your customer if they had to go to small claims court to recoup the cost."

Kizenberger stressed that this should only be used as a last resort when the repair facility is unable to secure an equitable agreed price with the insurer for the cost of repair.

"Nobody really wants to go down this road," said Kizenberger. "There are so many issues facing the industry today but you always have to look at the issue of getting paid properly for the repairs. Why should one of your customers subsidize another whose insurance company does not pay an adequate amount for repairs?"

Kizenberger explained that the types of regulatory and judicial work he reviewed during the WPRABA meeting is an important part of all associations' work. "Every shop is different, but when we need to come together we must do so to get important issues addressed. It's not easy to accomplish, and there are all sorts of side issues, but we have to work together on these issues for the industry to move forward," he concluded.