

ABAC NEWS

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The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Collision Shops Gather for EPA Compliance

Over 100 shop owners and employees attended the ABAC's quarterly meeting this past September at Akzo-Nobel's Cheshire facility. ABAC President Bob Skrip thanked the people from Akzo-Nobel, the Platinum sponsor for the evening, for their generous use of their building recognizing Charles Storek, Northeast Regional Sales Manager, Ramon Soto, Senior Technical Representative, David Mastrianni, Account Manager, Neil Labanch, Account Manager and Amy Bowman, Operations Manager.



Skrip thanked everyone for taking the time to attend also recognizing Managed Air Systems and Enterprise Rent-A-Car who were also sponsors. Enterprise is now an exclusive and sole car rental sponsor for the ABAC.

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Bob then announced that Bob Hipp, Automotive Instructor at Abbott Technical School in Danbury and his automotive students have restored a 1973 VW super beetle convertible and were selling raffle tickets this evening for a chance to win it with all of the proceeds going to fund the programs, scholarships, tools and equipment, etc.



Skrip then acknowledged the supporting advertisers in the ABAC News who are promoted at every meeting with a printout on each dinner table so that all members are able to see the many vendors that support their association. Bob has now referred to these supporting advertisers as “investors”. Says Skrip, *“These people (our supporting advertisers) are always there for us by advertising in the ABAC News and financially supporting your ABAC. Let’s support those who support us”*.



Dave Pulsifer and ABAC President Bob Skrip

Board of Director Bill Romaniello then made sure that everyone had gone through the technical portion of the night’s program which included “hands on” paint spraying in the paint booth. (A must for certification). Bill introduced Dave Pulsifer from David Pulsifer Enterprises, Inc. Dave is the technical training representative for SATA Spray Equipment for EPA compliance. Dave gave a very detailed presentation for spray gun usage which would be followed by a test at the end that would allow participants to meet their training and certification compliance. Dave then handed out the certification tests for everyone to take.

Following Pulsifer was Roy Crystal of the EPA to help with any questions or concerns from the attendees. Up next was Mike Knowles from Managed Air Systems. Mike discussed the various types of filters offered by his company. He stressed the importance of documenting and keeping records organized and up to date. Mike also noted the compliance issues of older spray booths and the safety of all booths including the proper maintenance of these booths.



Bob Skrip then informed everyone of upcoming meetings including one with Ford Motor Company scheduled to

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make a presentation at the March, 2011 ABAC quarterly meeting. Watch your e-mail in-box and fax machine for updated information.

The evening came to a close with a 50/50 raffle and a raffle featuring several gift cards donated by Gary Danko and the Balise Auto Group.

Once again the Auto Body Association of Connecticut is at the forefront in educating their members and shop owners alike for the benefit of their businesses.

Submitted by Don Cushing



Consumer Reports Warns Public About Aftermarket Parts; ABPA Responds

Consumer Reports is warning the public in its October 2010 issue about aftermarket crash parts, citing several sources who question the parts' structural integrity.

The article "[Are low-cost replacement bumpers safe?](#)" bases much of its information on [Ford Motor Company's presentation at the July 2010 Collision Industry Conference \(CIC\)](#), which revealed supposed differences in structural composition between OEM and aftermarket crash parts.

The story also mentions the demonstration by industry trainer Toby Chess at the January 2010 CIC where Chess attempted to cut through an aftermarket bumper reinforcement bar with a reciprocating saw.

The story opens by telling consumers that "auto insurers have recommended or required use of aftermarket crash parts, which are often produced in overseas factories and can be significantly cheaper than parts from original equipment manufacturers. Unfortunately, the parts might also be cheaper in quality."

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The story concludes by advising consumers not to be pressured by insurers, check invoices to see if aftermarket parts were used, and “if knockoffs were used, demand that they be replaced with original equipment.”

Eileen A. Sottile, co-chair of the Auto Body Parts Association Legislation & Regulation Committee, issued the following statement in response to the Consumer Reports article:

As a publication that purports to provide a ‘reliable source of information consumers can depend on to help them distinguish hype from fact and good products from bad ones,’ Consumer Reports has sorely missed the mark with its piece, ‘Are low-cost replacement bumpers safe?,’ featured in the October 2010 article, ‘Save on car insurance.’

The aftermarket collision parts industry maintains the highest standards of quality and safety in the parts we provide to the collision repair industry. In doing so, we also ensure that there is an economical parts option available in the marketplace – a benefit that is extremely important to most Americans, whether they are fixing their own vehicle or having work done by a repair facility. The availability of aftermarket parts also helps keep the prices of car companies’ replacement parts lower, allowing for more vehicles to be repaired rather than declared total losses, thus avoiding the financial stress car owners face when they are left to pay the balance due on the loans of their totaled vehicles.

Consumer Reports bases its highly questionable recommendation that consumers ‘demand that they [aftermarket parts] be replaced with original equipment,’ on egregiously unscientific tests and unwarranted criticism from organizations that have a significant financial stake in the outcome of the debate on aftermarket parts: Ford Motor Company’s hypothetical assertions supported only by computer simulations of a couple of parts merely represent one more play by the company to create a monopoly for its own replacement parts; and quotes from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety appear to be based on presumption rather than actual research and factual data.

Rather than providing a reliable source of information for consumers, Consumer Reports is doing nothing more than re-reporting unsubstantiated hype from fierce competitors.

I expect this magazine to be held to a higher standard, and hope that Consumer Reports will involve the aftermarket industry in any future reporting on this issue and uphold its responsibility to draw its own unbiased conclusions.”

Editors Note: With regard to this article from Consumer Reports two questions may be posed to all collision repair owners:

- 1. Due to the negative publicity surrounding aftermarket parts, how popular will you be with your customer when you install aftermarket parts on their vehicle?***
- 2. What would both the financial and business reputation cost be to prove your innocence in a court of law if your customer’s air bag system did not deploy correctly in a subsequent collision due to the installation of aftermarket parts on their vehicle?***

You (collision repair owner) are the professional.

Make the right choices for your business and your customer’s best interests!

Source: www.bodyshopbusiness.com

Defining Like Kind and Quality

What does it mean when an aftermarket part is said to be 'equivalent' to OEM?

The July Collision Industry Conference presentations on various aftermarket parts heightened the call to mandate that aftermarket structural parts manufacturers ensure that they produce safe, quality parts to a standard specification that includes proper material, dimensions and form process. A case was presented at that meeting indicating that the use of material, form and thickness different than the OEM original part could lead to increased damageability or affect the vehicle's restraint systems. The conclusion to be drawn was that aftermarket structural parts must be manufactured to be of like kind and quality, or "equivalent," to OEM in order to perform like OEM.

Equivalent to OEM, or like kind quality with respect to replacement parts, is specified in regulations in 20 states, and in defining the term like kind quality, the OEM representative at CIC stated that in order to qualify as like kind and quality, a replacement aftermarket part must be "equivalent" to the OEM branded part. But what does equivalent mean?

"Which parts are being referenced, the original production parts or OEM service parts? These questions are raised by Diamond Standard after a study of four OE manufacturers' data for front bumper weight, thickness, tensile and yield strength properties to gauge their interpretation of equivalency in creating a certifiable alternative part," said Mike O'Neal, President of Diamond Standard.

Aftermarket parts manufacturer Diamond Standard has published the results of a series of tests on OEM parts conducted to measure their characteristics including dimensions and material strength, in order to illustrate the variances that exist in OEM factory parts.

1999-2004 Ford Superduty Front Bumper			
OE Part# - 1C3Z-17757-BA			
Parts Tested - 8			
Weight (lb.)			Current Service Part
High	Low	Average	
37.78	35.35	36.56	37.75
Material Thickness			Current Service Part
High	Low	Average	
0.0790	0.0714	0.0752	0.0761
Yield (psi)			Current Service Part
High	Low	Average	
44800	34700	39750	40400
Tensile			Current Service Part
High	Low	Average	
57000	45400	51200	52300

In this example, the weight of the OEM part falls within a range that can vary by plus or minus 3.3 percent. The material thickness varies by five percent, and the tensile strength shows a variance of plus or minus 11 percent from average.

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The examination of OEM parts shows that there is no single measurement of strength or dimension but there is a definite range in the parts that must be viewed as equivalent or acceptable and would not affect part performance, restraint systems and vehicle safety. Diamond Standard explains that the ranges are the realities of the initial production run on the part moving to the shorter runs of service parts or even the use of different tier 2 or 3 suppliers to manufacture the parts. Raw material spot buying, the state of the economy and volatility of the steel market can also contribute to normal and acceptable variances in material.

Equivalency is shown by this study to have a definite range. According to Diamond Standard, these results are not meant to imply that OEM manufacturers or their suppliers are in any way not diligent in their pursuit of safe, reliable and consistent quality replacement parts. Nor does it attempt to defend those aftermarket manufacturers who are knowingly not diligent in replicating the quality or safety of structural replacement parts.

"The charge for Diamond Standard is to follow the criteria built within the original part and fall within the 'acceptable' mean values of the production and service parts," said O'Neal. Achieving that mark of quality through vigorous third party testing provides the industry a true alternative to the part it replaces. "This is our assurance to the industry that Diamond Standard parts are safe and reliable alternatives to use," said O'Neal.

Source: www.collsionweek.com

Collision Repair Competition

Ray Fisher

Collision repair competition is fierce, and increasingly so these past couple years. The battle for business rages, and repair quality suffers. Is it because insurers want us to work for cheap?

Many things are squeezing the business today: overcapacity among repairers, fewer automobile collision claims, the slump of new car sales the past few years.

The new face of competition, though, is technical. New car sales are slowly increasing, and that's bringing new technologies into our shops. Those repairs require more expertise and place more demands on repairers. "Required" is the new "cheap."

Those requirements increasingly come from vehicle manufacturers. Over the past decade, they've become more interested and involved in collision repair. That's because they've realized collision repair has a direct tie to customer retention—that is, to keeping their own customers, one car purchase after another.

During the past year, manufacturers have issued more bulletins with more specifics about the design, installation, performance and other attributes of parts installed on customer vehicles. That strong awareness of quality replacement parts, especially in the structural repair sector, will assist the collision repair industry and its efforts to create standards for proper, quality repairs.

Technical knowledge coupled with efficiency will determine who remains in the collision repair industry. This doesn't make things any easier in the business today, but it's likely to lead us to a better collision industry tomorrow—and hopefully to return us to the ideal of doing a quality repair at a reasonable price at a reasonable profit margin.

Ray Fisher is the president of ASA-Michigan. This article represents his opinion and does not reflect the views of ASA-Michigan. Submit questions to editor@fenderbender.com.

Texas Dept of Ins Reminds Insurers of State Steering Laws

Insurance Commissioner expresses concern that current insurance practices may be in violation of unfair claims handling laws.

Texas Commissioner of Insurance Mike Geeslin issued a bulletin this week to remind insurers about their responsibilities to claimants regarding payment for automobile damage and the selection of a repair person or facility.

In the bulletin, addressed to insurers, agents and "representatives of the public generally," the commissioner expresses concern that some insurers' claims settlement practices may be in violation of the Texas Insurance Code (TIC) and or the Texas Administrative Code.

The commissioner reminds insurance companies that the law prohibits an insurer from directly or indirectly limiting coverage under a policy by "specifying the brand, type, kind, age, vendor, supplier, or condition of parts or products that may be used to repair the vehicle; or limiting the beneficiary of the policy from selecting a repair person or facility to repair damage to the vehicle."

In addition, the bulletin states that Texas Insurance Code (TIC) forbids an insurer from suggesting that a beneficiary must use a specific repair facility or facility on a preferred list for the repair to be covered by the policy.

As an example, the Department says that an insurer may be in violation of the law if they tell a claimant that they may be responsible for some repair costs if they choose a repair facility that is not on the insurer's list.

The Department also expressed concern that setting reimbursement rates for repair artificially low may lead to substandard repairs. The department reminds insurers that the majority of policies require insurers to pay the amount necessary to repair or replace the property with other(s) of like kind and quality. "It is an unfair claim settlement practice for insurers to pay claimants an amount for the repair of the vehicle, including parts, that is not a reasonable amount for repairing or replacing the property with other of like kind and quality or is not sufficient enough to make the repairs necessary for the manufacturer to honor the vehicle warranty."

The bulletin concludes with the warning that the Department "will enforce the rights of claimants to receive the benefits to which they are contractually entitled." The Commissioner adds that, "The Department will investigate allegations of unfair claims settlement practices, both in the context of individual cases and general business practices, and will take appropriate enforcement action when evidence of unfair claim settlement practices is demonstrated."

Source: www.collisionweek.com

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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.



A Message from the Desk of ABAC President Bob Skrip



ABAC Holiday Party Mark Your Calendars for The Social Event of the Year



It is my pleasure to announce the ABAC will be having a holiday party on Saturday Dec. 4th 2010 at the Chowder Pot Restaurant in Hartford Ct. This is an opportunity for us to celebrate and share in the holiday spirit with your family, friends and colleagues in the industry. This evening is planned as a *social party*, so we are encouraging you to bring your spouse, or significant other, bring your employees and treat it as a shop holiday party. All are invited to attend. There will be music supplied by a popular DJ, dancing, great food and conversation, and prizes as well.

For those members old enough to remember, The ABAC has held this event many times in the past and has proven to be a HUGE success.

We all worked very hard this year in our businesses, as well as our personal lives, and some have prospered while many others suffered through this economic downturn. I personally congratulate you all for surviving, we are ALL survivors by experience, God knows.. With that said, you can't deny the fact that you deserve this night out with your family and friends.

So please, be my guest, and come celebrate the holidays with us. Share a smile, a handshake, and goodwill.

Be looking for additional info on this event coming soon.