

TECHNICAL FEATURE

OEM REPAIR INFORMATION FOR ESTIMATING AND TO PROTECT YOUR LIABILITY

Having access to original equipment manufacturer (OEM) information is imperative to everyone in the collision repair process: All employees, estimators, blueprint techs, structural techs, body techs and even the refinish techs. Your goal and obligation is to ensure proper repairs to your customer: The vehicle owner. (While you are not technically obligated to the insurer, the customer would need to authorize repairs; arming them with proper information is key to their successful negotiation with an insurer, if they are dealing with them directly at any point.) Following the OEM procedures and protocols will not only lower or limit your exposure to liability, but it will also assist in reducing the number of repair days and supplements and ensure that warranties are honored. All great things for our customers!

A properly run repair facility with a blueprint process will allow you to write an accurate final invoice the first day the vehicle is touched, and the OEM repair information is only one part of the standard operating procedure (SOP) you need to enforce among your employees. Everyone must be accountable for their job duties. You should only need a supplement when the insurer will not pay to reimburse the vehicle owner properly for what you are charging to repair the vehicle, or when the issue is due to an incompetency. You must stop wasting time by re-keying and just give the insurer your final invoice every time you supplement them until they meet the price you are charging the customer. If you are not pre-measuring the vehicle, you are *not* performing a proper blueprint or doing 100 percent teardown. Stop lying to yourself. Just like you cannot see what diagnostic trouble codes (DTCs) might be present in the vehicle electronic systems, you cannot tell component misalignment by looking at gaps alone.

While writing the estimate, a.k.a. the damage report final invoice, estimators (damage assessors) must have the OEM repair information to properly determine what can and cannot be repaired, the type of substrate, the additional materials and products required and the actual costs of repairs. A recommendation from the manufacturer of a product is a requirement. (Look for an article on this soon.)

The implied warranty of merchantability requires that the product and its components meet certain minimum standards of quality, chiefly that the product be fit for the purpose for which it was designed. This requirement for OEMs includes meeting the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). The implied warranty of



fitness for this purpose imposes a similar requirement in cases in which the seller (the OEM and the dealer) knows or has reason to know (research and development and testing) of a purpose for which the goods are required, and in which the buyer (the vehicle owner and repair facility) is relying on the seller to select or furnish suitable goods. The seller then warrants that the goods are fit for that purpose.

For example, assume that the OEM tells the repair facility that the recommendation for replacement of the component (e.g., lower front uni-rail) is to section the uni-rail at Location A (short partial replacement sectioning) or Location B (longer partial replacement sectioning). If the sustained damage exceeds Location B, then full component (the entire uni-rail) replacement is required. In this example, the seller is making an implied warranty of fitness and safety. This means that the recommended repair procedure will ensure the vehicle will operate and perform as designed and intended in normal driving conditions and in a subsequent collision event. Additionally, this implies that under normal operation or in a subsequent collision event, the component or systems will also perform and operate as designed and intended. If the recommended repair procedures or recommended replacement components are not adhered to, then the liability would fall solely onto the repairer for deviating from the recommend procedures.

Estimators must be well-versed on how to look up the OEM repair information. Keep in mind that this will require studying and practicing, and probably also on your own time. It is your responsibility to perform at your job and to acquire the proper knowledge. Furthermore, the estimating database provider integrating "SOME repair information" is not the answer, and many third-party companies are also missing a lot of information. Therefore, you must go to the source: The OEM.



Why must so many in this industry circumvent the correct source, only to obtain partial information? Laziness and greed are generally the culprits that make facility owners and estimators divert from the OEM, and gravitate to the assumed "easier way," which is generally not easier, nor correct for that matter. Too many in the collision repair industry feel that experience supersedes OEM procedures. Your liability can be exposed. (Remember the John Eagle Collision case.) The amount of years that you have been performing a particular operation does not qualify you as an expert. Without continuing annual training and education on the advancements of vehicle design, technology, substrates and joining methods, your experience is meaningless. Over the past few years, vehicle designs and materials have not only changed dramatically, but electronics (safety features) and joining methods have also added to collision repair facilities' investments in newer equipment and training techniques.

Providing everyone in your shop with the latest repair data (mechanical and collision) means that the repair work your shop is performing will be completed in a competent, efficient and safe manner. Factory manuals are written for mechanics who must replace components that have a life expectancy and fail due to design flaw or exposure. The flow charts (diagnostic tests) are written based on the component failure and not based on applied impact forces sustained in a collision event. Additionally, the procedures for electronic relearning or resetting (sometimes referred to as reinitializing) only consider replacement and not removal and installing (R&I) operations. A mechanic only replaces a component, and the procedures will only mention other adjacent components and systems affected by the replacement of the non-operational component. For this reason, collision repair professionals must understand that when replacing and/or repairing components, they must review electronic and mechanical replacement procedures, regardless of the fact that all they did was R&I a component.

One major misconception we hear all the time in the collision repair industry is: "The information should be free and should be with the part when we buy it." No, it should not. The information is available online at the OEM technical website. Almost all of the OEMs offer service and repair information on their technical websites. Some ways to access these sites include the following:

- Google it: "OEM collision repair information" or "(OEM brand) collision repair information"
- I-CAR OEM Repair Technical Information (rts.i-car.com/oem-information.html)
- OEM1STOP (oem1stop.com)
- SCRS (scrs.com)
- The Database Enhancement Gateway (DEG) (degweb.org)

Many of the OEMs offer some information for free online, but the information can be limited or (in some cases) incorrect, outdated, or the last to be updated. For a nominal fee, you can access all the OEM vehicle information, which includes collision, mechanical, electrical repair manuals and service/maintenance intervals. During the repair process, the repair information must be accessed multiple times. (It can be helpful to download the manuals as PDFs and save them to the repair file.) The damage assessor will add the charge for this information – as well as the labor time to research and read the material – to the final invoice.

Some examples that will be covered during my SCRS Repairer Driven Education class ("Estimating: How to Find, Read and Understand OEM Repair Procedures," November 1, 3pm-5pm) at the 2017 SEMA Show in Las Vegas include:

- OEM procedures for pressure filling and purging coolant systems after replacement of the antifreeze/coolant;
- Lane Departure and Parking Aid re-aiming after removal and installing, or replacement of a bumper fascia/cover;
- Removing wheels that have galvanic corrosion/may require brake rotor replacement;
- Post-collision SRS inspection requirements;
- New sectioning locations on outer panels;
- Material part numbers for joining materials (such as adhesives, foams, self-piercing rivets, flow drill screws and rivets); and
- Camera re-aiming due to removing and installing a door assembly.

As always, I hope this article has given you some new insight and a better understanding of the OEM procedures. If any questions arise, please feel free to contact me. Collision Hub will be offering online self-study courses on understanding OEM repair procedures starting in the first quarter of 2018.

For more information on SEMA 2017, visit scrs.com/rde. **H&D**

Larry Montanez, CDA is co-owner of P&L Consultants with Peter Pratti Jr. 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 and Advanced Estimating Skills. P&L also conducts investigations for insurers and repair shops for improper repairs, collision reparability and estimating issues. Larry is ISO 9606-2 Certified for Audi and Mercedes-Benz and is a certified technician for multiple OEM Collision Repair Programs. P&L can be reached by contacting Larry at (718) 891-4018 (office), (917) 860-3588 (cell) or info@PnLEstimology.com.

Executive Director's Thoughts

I'm not always the one to cut to the chase, however the points made here are just that. At WMABA, we adhere to the same position as SCRS and many others: If the OEM has a procedure or recommendation, then that is what the repairer must do.

-Jordan Hendler