

# TECHNICAL FEATURE

## INVEST NOW OR IN FIVE YEARS DO SOMETHING ELSE



The world around us moves very quickly, and it has been this way forever. If someone told you in 1994 (when Audi announced the all-new aluminum A8) to invest in aluminum repair at your shop, you would have thought they were crazy. But over the next 20 years, most of the European OEs added two to three aluminum-intensive and/or hybrid-construction vehicles to their lineups. Still, many shops felt the investment in aluminum repair was not worth it because the large percentage of shops would not see these types of vehicles. To be honest, we used to agree with that. Well, in 2014, Ford announced that the 2015 F-150 would be constructed with an aluminum monocoque body over a newly advanced steel frame, and most shops went into a panic. The floodgates were about to burst open.

Cadillac added to the panic with the announcement of its 2016 CT6, a hybrid construction steel/aluminum monocoque. So for all the shops that didn't see the writing on the wall in the early 2000s, the time is coming soon and fast where the steel-to-aluminum vehicle ratio could be 1:1. By 2019, most of the European vehicles will be aluminum/steel construction, and the exotics will be mixed-material construction (steel, aluminum, carbon fiber). Additionally, Chrysler and GM have stated that their 1500 Series Pickups will be aluminum construction by 2019. Jeep has hinted that they will produce an aluminum-intensive vehicle in the next few years. Now, one can only assume that Ford and GM will produce two to three other aluminum-intensive models in two to three years.

The topic of OEM Certified Repair Programs is also worth discussing. Since the early 2000s, European OEs have had Certified Repair Facilities with specific equipment and training requirements and restricted the sale of structural parts. Although Ford does not restrict the sale of F-150 parts, Cadillac does restrict the sale of its parts. By 2020, 40 percent of the vehicles produced may very well be of mixed-material construction. Additionally, 30-40 percent of the vehicles produced will be made up of hybrid, electric or diesel propulsion, all due to the CAFE rule of 53mpg by 2025.

More and more OEMs are looking into Certified Collision Repair Programs. GM recently announced that it is looking into a more extensive program, Chrysler/FIAT is launching one later this fall and Honda recently stepped up

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its requirements. You will soon see 80-90 percent of the OEs with a Certified Program by 2020, with about 20 percent of those facilities being mixed-material facilities with restricted components.

Some of you might be wondering why should you invest. Depending on the category you fall into, you may be right to ask. Which category fits you best?

■ **Restoration, rural area (newest car is eight-10 years old), commercial fleet only, detail and bumpers only.** Answer: No, you probably don't need to invest in any tooling or training at this time, except for some aluminum outer panel cosmetic repair.

■ **Small mom-and-pop shop in a rural area (newest vehicle is five-seven years old), metropolitan poorer area (vehicles are three-10 years old), restoration.** Answer: No, you probably don't need to invest today, but you may need to look into some aluminum outer panel cosmetic repair training and tools in two to three years.

■ **Rural/country/suburban facility (vehicles are one-seven years old), DRP/Non-DRP, dealer collision facilities (non-European/exotic).** If your facility doesn't see high-end European or exotic super cars, you may need to invest in the Ford F-150 program and possibly the Cadillac program. The big three American OEs will be offering aluminum-intensive and hybrid construction vehicles in the next two to four years. We predict that in the next few years, the Ford Taurus (or whatever they will call it) and Mustang will probably be constructed with some sort of aluminum, and GM will most likely have at least two other cars similar to the CT6. (The Malibu and Camaro are good bets, too.) How far behind are Chrysler, Toyota, Nissan and even Honda?

■ **All makes and models with a good volume of high-end luxury, exotic super cars.** You are probably already invested in the whole of aluminum repair and most likely on your way to carbon fiber training, too.

Unfortunately, a large percentage of shops in the United States still do not have modern structural repair equipment, resistance welders and training to repair modern steel vehicles. This epidemic must stop. Repair facility owners

must invest in equipment, tooling and training to ensure not only safe and correct repairs, but that their technicians possess the knowledge, skills and ability to repair the vehicles. The post-repair inspection horror shows we see online and in the media every day generally start off as Diminished Value cases and explode into "bad repair" posts because of the substandard repair procedures used. We can no longer look at a job and say, "Oh boy, I can't wait to see how this comes out. I love the challenge of figuring things out." We can no longer think like cavemen and say, "We can figure it out," or, "I never had a problem before." We need to understand there are procedures and protocols from the OEM that must be followed. If you don't think this will affect you, look at all the changes over the past four years. If you don't feel the need to invest now, then plan on selling your business.

Hopefully, this article has brought to your attention the reasons why we need to act and invest now in our shops. Feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions. **H&D**

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### Executive Director's Thoughts

There is not one way in this world that advancements won't affect everyone. Think of self-driving cars, adaptive braking and cruise or even park assist. Our industry is changing, and only those on the "train" will be getting a ride. - Jordan Handler



## Aluminum Outer Body Panel Repair Workshop

This workshop consists of a 1 ½ Hour Presentation on the following:

- ✓ Aluminum Usage
- ✓ Aluminum Intensive and Hybrid Construction
- ✓ Aluminum Series and Alloys
- ✓ Repair vs. Replace Decisions
- ✓ Repair Equipment for Outer Panels
- ✓ Heating Techniques
- ✓ Hammer and Dolly Techniques
- ✓ Dent Removal Equipment and Techniques
- ✓ Reshaping Techniques

The Presentation is followed up by 3 ½ Hours of hands-on aluminum repair on hoods, doors and fender panels.

Cost \$150 per student

Contact our office at 917.860-3588 or email us [info@PnLEstimology.com](mailto:info@PnLEstimology.com) to set up a workshop training at your location and for more information.