

Hot Topics and Industry Confusion: A Conversation with Larry Montanez

As anyone who regularly reads *Hammer & Dolly* knows, Larry Montanez doesn't mince words or suffer fools gladly. One of the industry's most outspoken advocates for OEM repair procedures and proper industry training, he has offered his no-nonsense views on collision repair in our publication for years. But for this issue of *Hammer & Dolly*, we decided to do something different and have Larry be an interviewee rather than a writer. We wanted to pick his brain on some of the industry's most pressing topics and allow him to speak freely without needing to compose his thoughts into a structured article. Not surprisingly, what resulted was one of the frankest and hardest-hitting exchanges we've ever featured in this publication.

It was only a few years ago when “pre- and post-repair scanning” was a foreign concept for many shops. Why has this become the next hot topic for this industry to address, and why do shops need to get on board now?

Since the early 2000s when vehicles became more computer controlled, they have required pre- and post-repair scanning per the mechanical repair procedures. The Europeans have been requiring scanning since that time, but many OEMs let it fall to the wayside when it came to diagnosing after a collision event. In many cases, collision repairers were sending potentially unsafe vehicles with inoperable systems back on the roadways, all because there was no Malfunction Indicator Lamp [MIL] illuminated. The incorrect thought or misconception is that if there is no MIL on the dash, everything is okay. Contrarily, most vehicles do not set MILs when there is a Diagnostic Trouble Code [DTC] or issue with an electronic system. Additionally, over the years, certain OEMs required re-aiming of the parking

sensors and re-weighing of the Occupant Sensor for the discriminatory passenger SRS, but many shops never performed these procedures because they did not access the OEM repair information and no one knocked on their door and told them.

A big issue I have seen is when I am teaching a class and I mention the required wheel alignment to initialize the steering angle sensor to the backup camera after the decklid or hatch were either R&I'd or replaced. I look around the room and I get the look of 'DOH!' And then I hear from many in the class, 'I never knew that.' Scary indeed.

We have heard that some of the third-party scan tools currently available on the market do not have full coverage of certain vehicles, leading some repairers to revert back to using individual scan tools recommended by the manufacturers. What is your experience with this problem out in the field?

There are a few scanners that can perform many of the resets on many vehicles, although full coverage is not there yet. Conversely, there are literally 50 scanners that will read the vehicles for fault codes at the beginning of the damage analysis. What shops need to understand is that they *MUST* pre-scan all vehicles, even with just a simple code reader, and then the post-scans can be performed at the dealer if the equipment is not available or if the vehicle is late-model with multiple electronic systems. All vehicles require a wheel alignment check after structural repairs are completed, and some non-structural repairs require a wheel alignment check. Some OEM systems can only be reset with proprietary software while performing the wheel alignment/wheel alignment check, and that is only available to the dealers.

What are your thoughts on “one-size-fits-all” scan tools as an alternative to shops using multiple tools for multiple manufacturers?

For pre-scanning, I think they are essential. For post-scanning, it is an important operation to protect the shops' liability. Conversely, if the shop cannot perform the scan, or just has the codes cleared without diagnosing the issue, their liability could be exposed, so we recommend that all post scans be performed at the dealer. Yes, we feel that all vehicles should go to the dealer for system resets, relearning, wheel alignments and any other computer/electronic system checks and diagnosing. My reasoning is that shops may not possess the proper training and experience to perform all resets/relearns/etc. Additionally, the liability to the shop is not worth the risk; let the technicians who do it all the time do it.

Recently, Honda, FCA, Nissan and Toyota published position statements regarding pre- and post-repair scanning, while many other OEMs are expected to issue similar ones in the not-too-distant future. What are your thoughts on how OEMs have addressed this issue so far?

Most European OEs have required scanning in their mechanical repair information for years, but unless there is a separate document stating a specific operation for repairs, facilities don't know about it and insurers don't want to pay for it. It is a pretty sad state of affairs that many people are so stubborn about not reading or researching technical information.

What are some of the potential dangers in disregarding the OEMs' recommended procedures for pre-and post-repair scanning?



Larry Montanez, CDA is co-owner of P&L Consultants with Peter Pratti Jr. P&L Consultants work 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

Crashes, deaths, injuries and lawsuits, to name a few. It is the repairer who is at fault for cutting corners or not performing repairs correctly. If you don't post-scan, the liability is on the shop – not the insurer – if there is an issue after repairs that results in an incident.

We recently heard from a shop that repaired a 2016 Volkswagen Golf with a small hit to the right front bumper. He told us that this seemingly simple repair required a re-calibration of the car's radar system. And he said to us, "This wasn't a BMW; this was a car we're seeing at our shops every day." What are some examples that you've encountered where a shop misjudged the procedures needed based on the vehicle model and extent of the damage at first glance?

Not realigning/resetting/re-aiming the radar system could have caused the vehicle to inaccurately deem the distance between the Golf and another vehicle or stationary object, and could have caused the Golf to impact one of those objects. Issues we have seen include

the re-initializing of the backup camera to the steering angle sensor issue, aiming parking aids, alignment of DISTRONIC cruise control and other electronic systems. This was all due to the antiquated idea that some light on the dash will let you know if there's a problem. This way of thinking must end and end *now*.

The windshield has always been more important to the structural integrity of a car than most laypeople realize, but how has today's driver assist technology made the windshield even more crucial to a vehicle's operations?

Well, to clarify it, glass breaks, but it does assist in the transfer of the collision pulse with the assistance of the structural urethane adhesive that affixes it to the vehicle. This combination assists with not only collision pulse management, but also with the torsional stability and drivability comfort of the vehicle. Over the past few years, OEMs have attached electronic systems such as cameras, rain sensors and radars directly to the inside of the windshield. When windshields are replaced,

not only does the installer need to use the OEM urethane adhesive, but they must use the OEM glass. Knockoff/imitation glass will not always work with these sensitive electronic systems attached to the glass, and almost all of the OEMs have position statements against the use of used and aftermarket components.

It's been a couple of years now since the push for aluminum repair hit this industry. As someone who deals with shops all over the country, how would you characterize their current ability to successfully perform these repairs?

Aluminum did *not* hit the market a couple of years ago, unless you consider a couple years to be 20. This is another misconception; just because the masses don't hear about it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. The facilities that have been involved with the European aluminum repair programs are really not having an issue with aluminum repair because they took the proper training and purchased the correct equipment. The biggest problems are the shops who never repaired or worked

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with aluminum before. Most of them have only recently attended the limited training available to the masses, due to the Ford F-150, but I-CAR has had aluminum repair courses for about 15 years. Most of the European OEMs with a Certified Collision Repair Facility [CCRF] Program will require 8 to 16 hours of instructor-led, hands-on training for just one model, and another 8-12 hours of self-learning computer based training. Others will require 24-40 hours of instructor-led, hands-on training for the range of vehicles offered. Additionally, with CCRF Program for aluminum, the European OEMs are requiring 40 to 80 hours for Aluminum Welding Certification, with testing certified by AWS under ISO9606-2 Standard. Cheaper equipment is another big issue, and so is the inadequate aluminum welding equipment that has popped up out of nowhere. Everyone seems to have an aluminum welder that can do it, but the reality is that European OEMs – Tesla [USA] included – offer only an option of two or three welders from only two or three companies. The three most certified and approved welders include the Fronius TransPuls Synergic 2700, the Car-O-Liner CMI 3000 and the Wielander+Schill Inverta-Puls IP 6-2. In some cases, these machines are only sold through the dealer equipment supplier.

Where are the biggest problem areas you're seeing in modern aluminum repair?

Incorrect judgement on repair-versus-replace decisions on aluminum *and* steel vehicles. Some techs really need to listen more and follow the proper procedures and purchase the proper equipment. Also, some data-entry estimators really don't know vehicle construction and vehicle repair protocols. There are also shop owners and estimators who are too influenced by insurers on how vehicles get repaired and where components are purchased.


Many shops still do not possess a resistance welder, still have frame equipment from 25-plus years ago, have no electronic measuring, still clip cars and still use weld-on used parts and sections of vehicles. They still feel that to be a technician and make a profit, they must fix everything and that purchasing replacements parts is not real collision work. I read comments online along the lines of, 'I can fix anything and get paid 40 hours to do it and clock in only 18 and a half hours.' It is really sad that poor repairs are being performed on vehicles and that unsuspecting vehicle owners have no idea how poorly repaired their car is.

Looking ahead, what are some developments or trends you see impacting the industry soon that shops need to focus on and invest in now in order to compete in the market and perform safe repairs?

This is an easy one. Shops need to invest in equipment, training and securing the future. If not, they should fold up the shop now and move on to a different business. Aluminum, carbon fiber, mixed-material vehicles and more electric propulsion vehicles will be here in the next five years, and it'll all come from OEMs that don't build high-end luxury vehicles. Shop owners and damage assessors/estimators and managers need to study not only the OEM repair procedures and position statements, but also the laws for their states.

Insurers have no say in repair protocols, but too many shops still listen to statements like, 'We don't pay for that,' 'We don't allow that,' 'That's not necessary' and my favorite, 'Well, I worked in a shop...' People need to wake up and understand the rules and what has to be done, because the general driving public depends on safely repaired vehicles. The other issue I see – and Mike Anderson and I have spoken at length about this – is the lack of 'want' from the shop owners and techs. And by 'want,' I mean:

- the want to invest in training, either I-CAR or a third party provider, unless it is about numbers or estimating. Mike Anderson and I fill our classes all the time when it is about estimating, but for my hands-on aluminum repair workshop, the shop owners don't want to pay or host the workshop;
- the want to better themselves by reading and studying new information. I cannot tell you how many times Mike has mentioned me in his class and many have never heard of me. When I mention Mike or Toby Chess, the DEG or SCRS, I get deer-in-the-headlights looks of *WHO?*;
- the want to change their ways from antiquated procedures, tools and equipment;
- the want to not be greedy and say, 'If I fix it, I can make more money than if I replace it;' and
- the want to realize vehicles will evolve and advance and that they need to get on board or face extinction. **H&D**



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- ✓ Aluminum Intensive and Hybrid Construction
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- ✓ Heating Techniques
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