



TECHNICAL FEATURE

Replacing a Quarter Panel – the Right Way: Part 1 of 2

Replacing a rear quarter panel has become a complex operation over the past few years. We see a number of online posts by technicians who brag about their high-quality work, but a closer look reveals that this work is incorrect 90 percent of the time. Some of these technicians will argue, disagree, bicker and become belligerent with those who point out what is wrong with the repair, only to finally succumb to the truth that they did a poor job. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the excuse is the same: *“The insurer wouldn’t pay, and I have to do what I have to do to put food on my table.”* This attitude needs to change.



The Facts

Here are some things to never forget during the repair process:

1. The insurance company has no say in repair-versus-replace decisions.
2. The insurance company has no say in where the parts are purchased from.
3. The insurance company has no standing to ignore OEM repair procedures.
4. The repair facility and facility owner are responsible for performing the proper repairs. In some states, the manager, foreman, damage assessor (estimator) and technician can all be held liable for incorrect repair procedures, components and consumer fraud.
5. There is no OEM that approves, accepts, permits, recommends, condones or allows used structural, bolt-on and/or affixed components. New OEM replacement components are the only components that should be used. Not doing so could deem the vehicle an incorrect repair.
6. The OEM repair procedures for the type of attachment/joining method to use must be adhered to. Joining methods include (but are not limited to) welding (which includes MAG and MIG Brazing/Silicon Bronze for steel, MIG for aluminum or STRSW for steel), bonding only (adhesives), rivets only, rivet-bonding, weld-bonding (STRSW with adhesives) or some combination. Not doing so could deem the vehicle an incorrect repair.
7. Most OEMs provide the specific section locations or areas and measurements of these locations on many of their vehicles, while a few only offer full component replacement or replacement to a factory seam. Only Honda and Ford allow you to basically make up your own sectioning locations based on the type of substrate.
8. Many OEMs require specific equipment and tools for repairs to their vehicle. Not doing so could deem the vehicle an incorrect repair.
9. Many OEMs require specific materials, including (but not limited to) specific welding wire (steel, aluminum and Silicon Bronze), adhesives, weld-thru primer, foams and adhesives. Not doing so could deem the vehicle an incorrect repair.
10. When replacing a quarter panel, some OEMs require the vehicle to be mounted on the bench, while others allow the vehicle to be on the ground with the suspension loaded.
11. Only a few OEMs classify quarter panels as structural; most do not.
12. Most OEMs use sound-dampening foam or bonding adhesive in the wheel well to the quarter panel wheel well lip area.

BY LARRY MONTANEZ III, CDA
& JEFF LANGE, PE

Larry Montanez at



SCRS Repairer Driven Education: RDE24 - Case Study of the Procedures for Steel Quarter Panel Replacement

When: November 4, 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Where: Las Vegas Convention Center,
Upper North Hall, N241

To register: scrs.com/rde

As part of the SCRS Repairer Driven Education (RDE) Series at SEMA 2016 in Las Vegas, Larry Montanez will be offering a "Case Study of the Procedures for Steel Quarter Panel Replacement" (tinyurl.com/zrwz5z5). The program will discuss the procedures required to replace a steel quarter panel. It will also discuss the similarities (and slight differences) of quarter panel replacement of a Honda Accord, Toyota Camry and an Audi A5. The additional not-included procedures and the additional materials required to perform a proper repair following the OEM procedures will be covered as well. At the completion of the presentation, attendees will better understand the procedures and protocols to replace a quarter panel (and the associated operations and costs). They will also leave with a better understanding of the included, not-included and additional required procedures. Joining methods, such as (but not limited to) bonding; Silicon Bronze/MIG-Brazing; MAG welding; STRSW; feather, prime and block sand; and weld zone area damage and repair will also be discussed.

The presentation will look at the general steps to replacing a quarter panel and will ask some questions that you will need to answer the next time you perform this operation. As with any repair, some general operations must be performed prior to starting the job. Once the vehicle is captured and the vehicle owner is signed up, the damage analysis/triage/blueprinting processes can begin. Obviously, in this example, we will use a vehicle with a damaged quarter panel. The year, make and model is irrelevant, as we will be covering the overall operations that will be required in 95 percent of the cases. It is important to determine whether you are capable of even

repairing the vehicle. For example, if the vehicle is a late-model Audi A8, Jaguar XJ, Land Rover Range Rover or a Tesla (to name a few) and you are not a Certified Collision Repair Facility (CCRF) for that OEM, you cannot even purchase the parts and, in many cases, are not trained and equipped to repair those vehicles. The European OEMs, Tesla and Cadillac understand the importance of training – classroom, hands-on, online and ISO welding certification – and take it very seriously. After you determine if the vehicle is restricted (you can't work on it) or is non-restricted (you can work on it), you can review this list of operations to ensure proper repairs can be accomplished in a timely manner and be profitable:

1. Wash the vehicle prior to the damage analysis.
2. Walk around the vehicle for a visual inspection.
3. Take notes and photographs.
4. If the vehicle is operational (which it should be with quarter panel damage), start it, note if any MILs are illuminated and note the mileage.

5. Scan the vehicle systems even if there were no MILs present. (Not all DTCs will set a MIL.)
6. Take some quick measurements; if any misalignment is found, then pre-measure the vehicle.
7. Now it is time to start writing the damage report, but first check the OEM repair procedures. Check only with the OEM website or collision.alldata.com.
8. Have a technician disassemble the vehicle to better determine the extent of the damage.
9. Write your damage report. We recommend that all "FRAME/ STRUCTURAL" operations are at the top of the estimate. Then, all other operations should follow as you work on the vehicle in order. See below for the quarter panel categories:

- a. FRAME
- b. REAR BUMPER
- c. REAR LAMPS
- d. TRUNK LID
- e. REAR BODY PANEL
- f. QUARTER PANEL
- g. REAR GLASS
- h. WHEELS

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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

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MARKETING FEATURE

Every month, you should evaluate your website for gaps in the content, and new pages should be written to fill those gaps. For example, are there services that your shop provides that aren't covered on the website? Are there questions that your customers are asking on a regular basis that could be answered by a new page on the website? Social media should be a place to share these new pages (as well as important older pages from the website). Social activity connected to the website is a good thing, and your content strategy for your website should be integrated with your content strategy for your social media marketing.

■ **Use Geo-Targeted Facebook Ads.** Facebook is a pay-to-play platform. To get decent exposure to your posts, it will require an investment for boosting ads and creating other paid campaigns. The good news, though, is that Facebook offers the lowest cost-per-impression form of advertising available on the internet. A \$5 boost can increase a post's reach by a multiple of 10. Consider a small budget for increasing the likes to the Facebook page within your services area or for ads promoting your brand within that service area.

■ **Post a Variety of Content.** Last, and possibly most importantly, make sure you are varying and testing different types of posts. The worst rut that a Facebook page can get into is when that page gets stuck on posting one kind of thing over and over again. This is the best way to ensure that your page will be boring and lack engagement.

When you're coming up with things to post to your Facebook page, remember to mix it up and be creative. Have fun with your posts, because more people on Facebook will respond to you if you're being fun. Think about what content would be seen as interesting and useful in your local community. Then, make sure you post things that help your community to get to know you better. **H&D**

Executive Director's Thoughts

I've said all along – and Lee nails it – that businesses not present on Facebook in some capacity are missing the boat. It's a search tool, another storefront to attract new business, a customer engagement tool and much more. There's absolutely no reason or excuse to miss out on this as an opportunity to improve your customer experience. - Jordan Hendler

TECHNICAL FEATURE

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- i. REAR SUSPENSION
- j. DOOR
- k. PILLARS, ROCKER, FLOOR
- l. INFORMATION LABELS
- m. ROOF
- n. SEATS
- o. RESTRAINT SYSTEMS
- p. CONSOLE
- q. WINDSHIELD
- r. FENDER
- s. FRONT LAMPS
- t. FRONT BUMPER
- u. RADIATOR SUPPORT
- v. ELECTRICAL
- w. MISCELLANEOUS OPERATIONS AND SUBLET SERVICES (20 MINIMUM)

It is recommended that you review and look over these categories and think carefully why they are listed in this order (and even why certain categories are listed). If you would like to do a little homework, write your own estimate to compare to the one that will be shown in Part 2 of this article after SEMA. The vehicle that will be used in the presentation is a 2015 AUDI S5 QUATTRO PREMIUM PLUS. The color is white. We will be using \$50 per hour for all operations, \$25 for refinish material, \$9.75 for shop materials and \$6.95 for buffing materials. Good luck! **H&D**

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.

Jeff Lange, PE is president of Lange Technical Services, Ltd. of Deer Park, NY (www.LangeTech.net). Jeff is a Licensed New York State Professional Engineer who specializes in investigating vehicle and component failures. Lange Technical Services, Ltd. is an investigative engineering firm performing forensic vehicle examinations and analysis for accident reconstruction, products liability and insurance issues. Jeff can be reached at (631) 667-6128 or by email at Jeff.Lange@LangeTech.net.

Executive Director's Thoughts

I got stuck on this story's checklist of things to never forget, and I started thinking, "Larry, this is not really practical." But truly, he's right on all accounts. The liability is always somewhere – the less it lies with your shop, the better. I'm hoping you can find an opportunity to apply more of this thinking in your business! - *Jordan Hendler*



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