

TECHNICAL FEATURE

PROCEDURAL CIVIL WAR:

TRAINING Versus "EXPERIENCE"

There is a war going on within the collision repair industry, but many of you may not even realize it. This war could be called Procedure Civil War 1, or PCW1. The combatants can be broken into four categories. Each category would include owners, those who determine the costs of damage, those who repair structural/cosmetic damage and those who refinish the vehicles. These categories are as follows:

1. **"The Dinosaurs"** are the group that have been involved in the collision repair industry for over 45 years. They still use the equipment they purchased back in the 1970s. They are near retirement and assume that repairs have not changed much since they first started in the industry. They have little to no idea about collision repair procedures, claim to stand behind every repair and say, "I have been doing this for XX years and never had an issue."
2. **"The I-CAR Certified & Standard"** people have been in collision repair since the '80s and '90s. They took I-CAR classes during those years, but have not taken many since then. They believe the Uniform Procedures for Collision Repair (UPCRs) are the standard and that they can be used instead of the OEM procedures. This group constantly misquotes the procedures and material types, and they confuse the training I-CAR provides as being "certified." They often believe that full body sectioning (a.k.a. "clipping") a vehicle is an accepted practice, as they can use multiple I-CAR UPCR's to make the sectioning locations and leave more factory welds undisturbed.
3. **"The New Jack Real Bodymen"** feel everything is repairable. They are mostly new to the collision repair industry (two to five years) and are generally flat rate. In their minds, it is more profitable to repair than to replace, and they utilize some of the new technology and equipment in the wrong manner. The bodymen also attempt to get paid for 10 to 12 hours to repair something, but know it will only take them four hours.
4. **"The Do It by the Book Parts Changers"** follow the OEM procedures, purchase new updated modern equipment and make repair-versus-replace decisions based on OEM protocols, safety, crash management and longevity – not cost and profit. This group is made up of a wide range of personnel with varying years of experience. The one common denominator is that they

all train consistently. Additionally, this group has a general understanding of the rules and regulations and understands that the insurance company has no say on how vehicles are to be repaired and cannot approve any repairs. They know that the vehicle owner is the only one who can approve any of the work.

Keep in mind that there are a few people out there who fall into more than one category. But one thing that can easily be seen is the ignorance of facts and the widespread resistance to OEM procedures and general change. In many posts we see online, ego and pride take the lead, and logic and reasoning go right out the window. The disagreements will always be about parts changers having no skill and real bodymen figuring out how to make it work, but ultimately it always comes down to the "I have a family to feed" excuse of why that repair was being attempted. Now, some of you might be part of these epic keyboard battles, but how do we end these flare-ups and ensuing kindergarten-type name calling and memes? The crux of the issue may be right in front of our eyes.

If we look at the I-CAR website and click on the "Ask I-CAR" tab, it will take you to the Reparability Technical Support (RTS) page. I-CAR mostly gets asked, "What does I-CAR recommend?" for information on sectioning, straightening, replacement component joining methods/repair or replacement decisions. I-CAR's first response is always the same: "Follow the vehicle maker procedures." Why would they say that? It is because the OEMs designed and built the vehicle, and they provided accurate and tested repair methods. Additionally, some states are now revising the language, definitions and verbiage of what components are considered structural with the addition of seat belts and airbag components to their antiquated regulations, and we believe most will eventually follow this trend. Why are the lawmakers making these changes? We believe this shows evidence to suggest an educated decision to change for the safety of the general driving public.

It is important to remember the English language and our vocabulary. The procedures provided by the automaker are service specifications or requirements, not recommended suggestions. We must understand that these collision repair procedures are no different than service information for transmission fluid or engine oil "recommended grades" or recommended service intervals based on driving habits. How about engine repair procedures? Are they suggestions that you can deviate from? No, they are specific procedures that must be followed in the specific order to ensure proper operation. Why is it that many collision repairers want to deviate from these procedures? Many times, the technicians feel they know better, not much different than the shop estimator or insurance adjuster who make asinine statements, such as, "it is only a recommendation," or "I never had to do that when I worked on them." This ignorance must stop; people's lives depend on correct and proper repairs that restore the vehicle back to its normal operational condition as designed and intended. Here are two somewhat scary examples of not following the procedures, and the ultimate outcome:

1. **2014 Chevrolet Impala, black color, backup camera issue.** A 65-year-old woman was impacted to the left rear quarter panel and bumper cover. These items required replacement. The trunk lid was removed and installed during the repair, but the repair facility decided not to blend it. Approximately two months later, the woman was backing up into a parking spot and impacted an Audi A4 parked directly behind her. Although her vehicle sustained only scrapes and scratches, the Audi sustained a broken grille and bumper fascia. The woman was very adamant



that she was careful and observing her backup camera. We were called in for the investigation. After diagnostic testing and some research by the insurance company, we were able to relate the issue to the previous, unrelated incident. The previous shop did not have the backup camera reintroduced to the steering angle sensor, and the guidance lines and distance warnings were not aligned properly. This was the reason the woman impacted the Audi. The previous repairer was required to pay for the damages to the Audi and Chevrolet and for the wheel alignment and steering angle sensor re-aiming. No one at the original repair facility referenced the OEM procedures or warnings.

2. 2013 Toyota Camry, Occupant Weight System issue. The vehicle owner backed into a parking pole, causing a forward deformity and light scratches to the corner of the bumper cover. The bumper cover was replaced, and the vehicle was given back to the customer. About a week later, the next-door neighbor mentioned, "Hey, looks like your car was repaired. Everything okay?" The owner took his vehicle to another shop in the area and they said the color was off. The new shop offered to look over the paperwork and give him suggestions on what to do. The paperwork showed the cover was replaced with a knockoff component, and 1.0 hours were allocated to repair the bumper reinforcement. The owner gave permission to the shop to remove the bumper fascia and perform a post-repair inspection (PRI). The right-side edge of the bumper reinforcement was deformed and showed multiple tool-type impact markings and overspray. The shop then pre-measured the vehicle and performed a diagnostic scan. The vehicle measurements were acceptable, but the system scan showed the passenger seat was reading +8lbs. This was troubling, as the vehicle owner had children. The +8lbs would take a child in the lower threshold of under 37.5lbs and put them in the next higher threshold, as the child and seat would now weigh over 37.5lbs. This could cause the airbag to deploy in a collision event when it should not. The original repair facility agreed to pay for the re-repairs, which included a new OEM bumper cover and reinforcement, blends and a trip to the dealer.

As you can see, these are just two examples of what could happen by not reading the OEM procedures. Additionally, these were not major repairs. Just imagine if a uni-rail or pillar reinforcement were to be replaced. What issues could have occurred? This past weekend, I rented a 2017 GMC Yukon XL for a short trip with friends. While driving the vehicle, I noticed the vehicle had pre-collision distance warning, lane departure warning and even speed warning systems. If I veered to the left or right or got too close to the vehicle in front (passing the preset threshold), a warning lamp on the dash would illuminate, an audible buzz could be heard (the radio volume would lower) and the driver's seat would vibrate. I went to the GM pay site to look up some procedures and I read that... *Oh, I am sorry.* I will show you where to fish, how to fish and even give you tips on fishing, but I will not drop the fish off at your house, cook it for you or serve it to you. I suggest you go look it up, as all GM vehicles with these type systems have similar procedures that you will be encountering.

The days of not knowing about something or just figuring it out are over. We must follow the OEM procedures, as this ensures accurate, complete, safe and quality repairs. OEM procedures include vehicle-specific repair information, general vehicle maker information and technical service bulletins. This will require research and reading by the shop estimator and technician. Here are some general steps for information research:

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1. Get the year, make, model and VIN, as most databases work best by VIN.
2. Go to the OEM website, which is the best source for the most update information.
3. Make sure you read the general repair information and the position statements for that specific OEM, as they can provide valuable information.
4. If the information doesn't exist or you cannot find it, the next logical step would be to try and call the dealer and ask them for help. Next would be to contact the I-CAR Repairability Technical Support Portal (rts.i-car.com) for an answer. Lastly, maybe contact us for some guidance.

If there is no vehicle-specific repair information and no OEM published position statement or general procedure, you will be left with only two choices:

- a. The last attempt would be to look to the I-CAR UPCR's or published best practices. Published I-CAR best practices are inter-industry developed and vetted guidelines. ***(But keep in mind that this is a business decision and you will be solely responsible and liable.)***
- b. Do not repair the vehicle. The liability is not worth it for many.

Some might be asking, "Why not just publish a procedure if there is not one available?" This is because the OEM cannot account for every type of collision or component replacement. For example, Honda and Ford have general guidelines to explain how or where to section outer panels. Primarily, this allows some leeway for repairers to make sectioning areas based on the amount of damage. Here is an unedited example right from I-CAR's website on Ultra-High Strength Steel repairs (tinyurl.com/n7w6dty):

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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
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"But what if there isn't a procedure or OEM-specific published position statement or general procedure? Then, and only then, you can look to industry vetted and I-CAR published best practices. In this scenario, let's look at a repair vs. replace situation for a structural part that we've identified as ultra-high-strength steel (UHSS). After researching vehicle- and OEM-specific information, yielding no results, the next step would be to research I-CAR published documentation. Because the damaged part in this scenario is UHSS (over 600 MPa) and there is an inter-industry vetted and I-CAR published best practice that says damage to parts over 600 MPa should NOT be straightened, part replacement would be the only option."

Always remember from here on out that OEM repair procedures are not only essential for ensuring proper repairs, but they must also be followed to protect your liability. OEM repair procedures will also assist you in identifying and locating construction materials (mild steel, HSS, UHSS, aluminum, magnesium, carbon fiber, composites and other plastics) and provide information on diagnosing and programming a multitude of electronic systems. The OEM is the only standard, and we must adhere to their procedures.

We hope this article has helped you better understand the importance of the OEM-specific procedures and I-CAR's role in helping the industry. **H&D**

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