TECHNICAL
FEATURE

WE ARE MEANT TO EVOLVE:
WHY YOU CAN'T INSTALL USED WELD-ON COMPONENTS

PART 2 OF 2

Last month, I concluded the first part of this feature with a question I get a lot: "Let's say the technician is well-trained and can perform proper welds, and all the equipment is in top shape and the most advanced. In this case, why can't we use salvage components?" It's a good question; this article will answer it.

First, let's look at the issues with "clipping a vehicle" or using outer and inner (reinforcement) assemblies obtained from totaled-out vehicles found in junkyards.

FACTS:

1. Sorry to break the news to you technicians, shop owners and even you insurance adjusters, but you are not engineers. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you cannot produce any scientific, evidentiary proof to support your idea of what you want to attempt. Generally, the only proof given after the good old *"I know what I am doing and have been doing this for years"* (which really means you really don't know) would be monetary. The tech will claim it is *"gravy"* money, the shop owner will claim it is profitable and the insurance adjuster will claim it is cost effective and will follow up with the idiotic statement of, *"It is usual and customary."*
2. Insurance companies, insurance adjusters, independent adjusters and claims managers do not fix vehicles, so their opinions come without any in-field training, ongoing experience or even OEM technician certifications. They can total the vehicle out (pay the actual cash value), pay the costs of repairs or repair the vehicle themselves (which, obviously, will never happen).
3. *"Clipping or assembly sectioning preserves more factory spot welds and corrosion protection."* Although a very true statement written by I-CAR and mentioned in many of their classes, it is one of the worst excuses ever to support utilizing used weld-on parts. Preserving the factory spot welds and corrosion resistant materials (which are baked-on or electrostatically applied at the factory) is not as important as ensuring the repaired vehicle reacts in the same manner – in a subsequent accident – in which it was originally designed. As such, replacement of damaged components must be performed with new OEM components at the provided sectioning locations or at component mating flanges (partial or complete component replacement), using the required materials and equipment.
4. The design of the modern advanced material inner reinforcement panels makes it so they cannot be sectioned due to their metallurgical makeup. Friction (which creates heat) is

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created by the cutting of the AHSS on the vehicle and on the junkyard components, which tempers the cut areas. Dressing (grinding) of the cut area to prepare the area for welding additionally tempers the area. The welding of the cut area tempers that area further and finally dresses the weld. Remember the amount of areas that you would have cut into on the outer panel to gain access to the inner reinforcement panels. Another thing to remember: You are making up your own sectioning areas and joining methods with no scientific testing to ensure the safety of the occupants. And no, you don't know better.

Consider this scenario: You have a late-model vehicle (such as a 2016 Chevrolet Cruze) impacted in the rear. The vehicle sustained damage to the rear bumper assembly, rear body panel, trunk floor pan, trunk lid, left and right rear tail lamp assemblies, and both quarter panels sustained significant damage. Now, some uneducated and inexperienced estimator and technician will think this is repairable. (It is not.) Then, these two rocket scientists will offer to clip the vehicle (or it will be suggested by the insurance adjuster who comes to inspect the vehicle, the photo estimating virtual claims handler or a DRP manager). Many times, the shop guys will think the insurer is forcing them to do this (which they cannot) – which makes this even scarier.

Wrong move, guys. Now, the damaged vehicle that they want to "save" will need parts. To "save" more money and not total the vehicle, they will call junkyards to find a car from which to procure the clip. The vehicle they are repairing was wrecked a week or two ago, but the donor car was wrecked at some other point in the past. Although both of the vehicles are the same age, one sustained enough damage to deem the vehicle a total loss (obviously a non-greedy facility and adjuster were involved in that claim). So you are going to be repairing a vehicle using junk parts from a junked vehicle that sustained more severe damage. What's funny about this whole scenario is that this facility estimator and technician (and even the insurance adjuster) have probably attended multiple I-CAR classes. I guess they must have missed the part about how the collision energy travels throughout the entire vehicle and can cause damage in other areas of the vehicle away from, or even opposite, the point of impact.

Almost all OEMs have made the issues using junkyard, salvaged and/or used parts crystal clear, such as voiding portions of the vehicle's warranty where replacements with non-OEM parts have been made. (Yes, this is 1,000 percent true. Read the entire Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act. Insurance adjusters are not lawyers, either.) Other problems include corrosion issues with the salvaged component and *the safety to the occupants* (collision energy management and airbag deployment timing). OEMs have also stated that new, undamaged parts that are properly installed (by following the specific procedures and material) will react to a subsequent collision event in the same manner as the original parts. In a court case, this will become the final nail in the coffin for the collision repair facility.

Hopefully, this article has made you more aware of the issues with using weld-on junk parts to repair modern vehicles. Even if it made you mad, upset or angry at me, it doesn't matter as long as you read and understood it.

For more insight and information, check out the online video "Repair University Live: What Does I-CAR say?" at youtube.com/watch?v=-rOwdHZ3unE. **H&D**

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Executive Director's Thoughts

All too often, we hear of repairers who truly felt that the insurer was "requiring" them to perform an operation, when at the end of the "investigation," the insurer will relent that it was a suggestion and what they knew other repairers were doing. In walks "usual and customary." As Larry points out, what may be usual and customary isn't necessarily right. It also won't be acceptable to a judge and jury. As Momma always says, "Two wrongs most certainly do not make a right." - Jordan Hendler