# THE REALITIES of OEM Repair Information

We see it every day on social media.

"Hey, anyone ever take this door handle off before?"

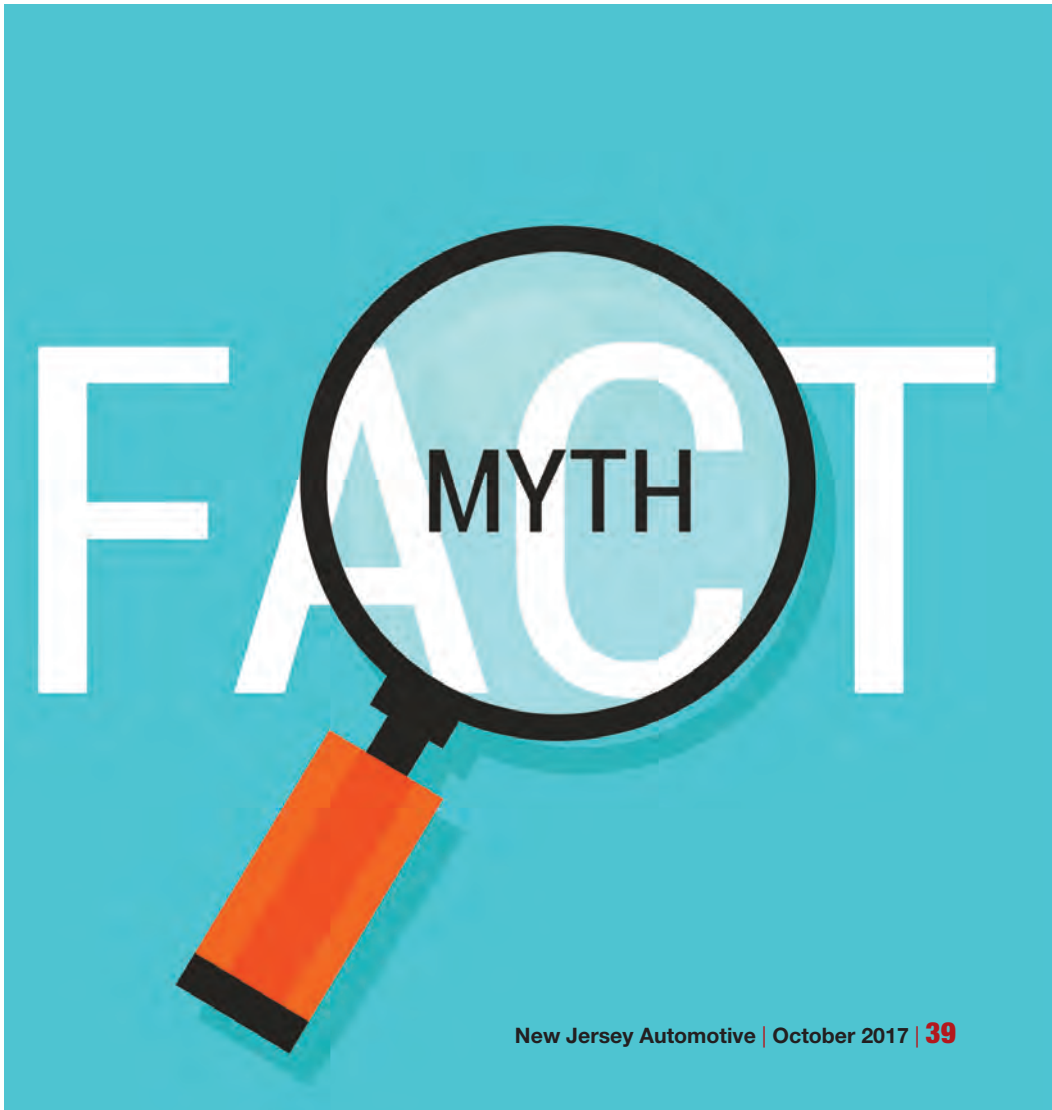
"How do you install this panel on the car?"

"Who has access to the repair information and can post it on here for me?"

Each OEM has its own way of doing things, and they even have different procedures across the range of vehicles they offer. As such, you need to reference the information on every single repair. Giving technicians tools that will help them safely restore vehicles to their pre-accident condition, as per the OEM procedures and protocols, is a necessity. As an owner of a repair facility, you have multiple things you must do to ensure things are operating successfully. In addition to all the other issues you face, it is made more difficult by the ever-changing technology in late-model vehicles.

## REASONS YOU NEED CURRENT REPAIR PROCEDURES

***Damage Assessors***: Estimators must have the OEM repair information to properly determine the actual cost of repairs. A two-screen computer set-up allows one screen to be used for the estimate and the other one to have parts and repair information open. This will make it easier to find repair procedures and replacement component numbers, substrate composition, additional materials required, etc. while forming the damage report. The more accurate the damage report, the smoother and more efficient the repair process will be. Estimators must be well-versed with how to look up the OEM repair information, and they must be able to explain the processes. Keep in mind that this will require studying and practicing on your own time. Additionally, estimating database providers integrating "some repair information" is not the answer, and many third-party companies are also missing a lot of information. This is why you must go to the source – the OEM itself.



■ ***Customer Service Representative (CSR), or Sales Personnel***: A customer's first and last impression during their experience at the facility starts and ends at the front desk. The CSR can run the VIN for recalls, campaigns or Technical Service Bulletin (TSBs) issues at **https://vinrcl.safercar.gov/vin**. A customer rarely remembers the good things about a shop, but they will always remember the bad. Providing the customer with a better experience can mean the difference between the customer coming back or being steered away in a subsequent collision event.

■ ***Technicians***: Technicians must have the OEM repair information to ensure the proper repair procedures and protocols are adhered to and guarantee the vehicle is repaired properly and safely as defined by the OEM requirements. This will also give the technician the reasons, proof and documentation as to why something can or cannot be sectioned or repaired or why the component is being changed in a different manner than it was installed at the factory.

■ ***Parts manager***: This person must have access to the OEM repair information to ensure not only that the proper components are ordered, but that the proper materials, hardware and products to affix the replacement components are ordered correctly. Many of the rivets, bolts and nuts that require replacement are difficult for the dealership parts personnel to find because they are not used to looking them up, as these products are rarely asked for. By providing the parts numbers from the repair manual, it makes the job of dealership parts personnel easier and ensures a quick turnaround for you on the delivery of those products.

Too many in the collision repair industry feel that experience trumps everything and that OEM procedures are just there to sell parts. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your liability can be exposed (remember the John Eagle case in Texas), and incorrect repair attempts may be made due to lack of knowledge of the material you are working on. The amount of years that you have been doing something doesn't qualify you as an expert. Without annual training and education on the advancements of vehicle design, technology, substrates and joining methods, your experience is meaningless.

Over the past seven years, vehicles have changed dramatically in structural material design, electronics (safety features) and joining methods, which have required collision repair facilities to purchase different equipment and obtain new training techniques. The vehicles being produced today are unlike anything most of the industry has experienced, seen or even worked on.

Need proof? Look no further than the industry-wide panic over the announcement of the 2015 Ford F-150, which was no big deal or even a worry for the seasoned and highly-trained European OEM Certified Collision Repair Facilities (CCRF), as those technicians and facilities have been working on aluminum intensive vehicles since the mid-1990s.

Ignorance is not an excuse.

Collision repair professionals must understand that when replacing and/or repairing components, they must review electronic and mechanical replacement procedures, even if all they did was R&I a component. The following are some examples:

■ When replacing a front door assembly with a back-up camera (affixed to the deck lid, hatch, tailgate and lift gate), you must review the mechanical procedures for replacement of the camera assembly and associated components. Many of the mirror assemblies on late-model vehicles have cameras and sensors associated with the blind spot monitoring system, lane departure system, all-around camera and/or back-up camera. Because you R&I'd the mirror to replace the door assembly, you may have to realign or initialize the position of the camera to the module, other cameras or sensors. This information will be in the mechanical manual for replacement of these components.

■ You are replacing a headlamp or tail lamp assembly that requires the front or rear bumper fascia to be removed. If the vehicle has parking sensors, all-around cameras, lane departure or rear approach safety systems, you may have to realign these systems. This information will be in the mechanical manual for replacement of these components.

■ After a collision – any collision – no matter how mild or significant, with or without an airbag component deployment, the passenger-seat Occupant Weight System (OWS) will generally require reweighing and sensitivity checks. This information will be in the mechanical manual for replacement of these components.

One major misconception we hear all the time in the collision repair industry

is, "The information should be free, and should be with the part when we buy it." No, it should not. The information is available online at the OEM technical website. Almost all OEMs offer service and repair information on their technical websites.

There are multiple ways to find access to these sites:

- Google it: "OEM collision repair information" or "(OEM Brand) collision repair information"

- I-CAR OEM Repair Technical Information **(rts.i-car.com/oem-information.html)**

- OEM1STOP (**oem1stop.com/**)

- SCRS (**scrs.com**)

- The Database Enhancement Gateway (DEG) (**degweb.org)**

Many of the OEMs offer some information for free online, but the information can be limited. For a small fee, you can access all the information, which includes collision, mechanical, electrical and service/maintenance repair manuals. The repair information must be accessed multiple times once the vehicle enters the repair facility. (You can download the manuals as PDFs and save them to the file.) Additionally, the damage assessor will need to charge the customer for not only the fee for access (plus mark-up) to the OEM site, but also for the time to look up and review the information (for which the insurer will have to reimburse that vehicle owner).

The only way to become proficient and efficient with obtaining the OEM repair information is to CHANGE your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) tomorrow and *apply* these revisions to each and every repair order. The following may be helpful as a new SOP change in your facility:

- When writing the damage report, first go to the OEM website, pay for access, print the invoice to a PDF and save it to the Repair Order Folder.

- Print the PDF for each of the manuals.

- Write your damage report and reference the manuals in each section of the vehicle you are working on (and adjacent components associated with the required repairs).

- Take note of products and materials required for the replacement. If these components are not in the Estimating Database, add a line and manually write in the product or material description, price and part number. (This will not only assist the technician, but also help the parts manager order the correct items).

- Make each person involved with the repair order accountable for reviewing the OEM procedures with a sign-off checklist.

- Make sure the electronic file has all the information, and have an offsite cloud storage.

As always, I hope this article has given you some new insight and a better understanding of the OEM procedures. If any questions arise, please feel free to contact me. Collision Hub will be offering online self-study courses on understanding OEM repair procedures starting in the first quarter of 2018. NJA

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