



# NEWS • REPORT

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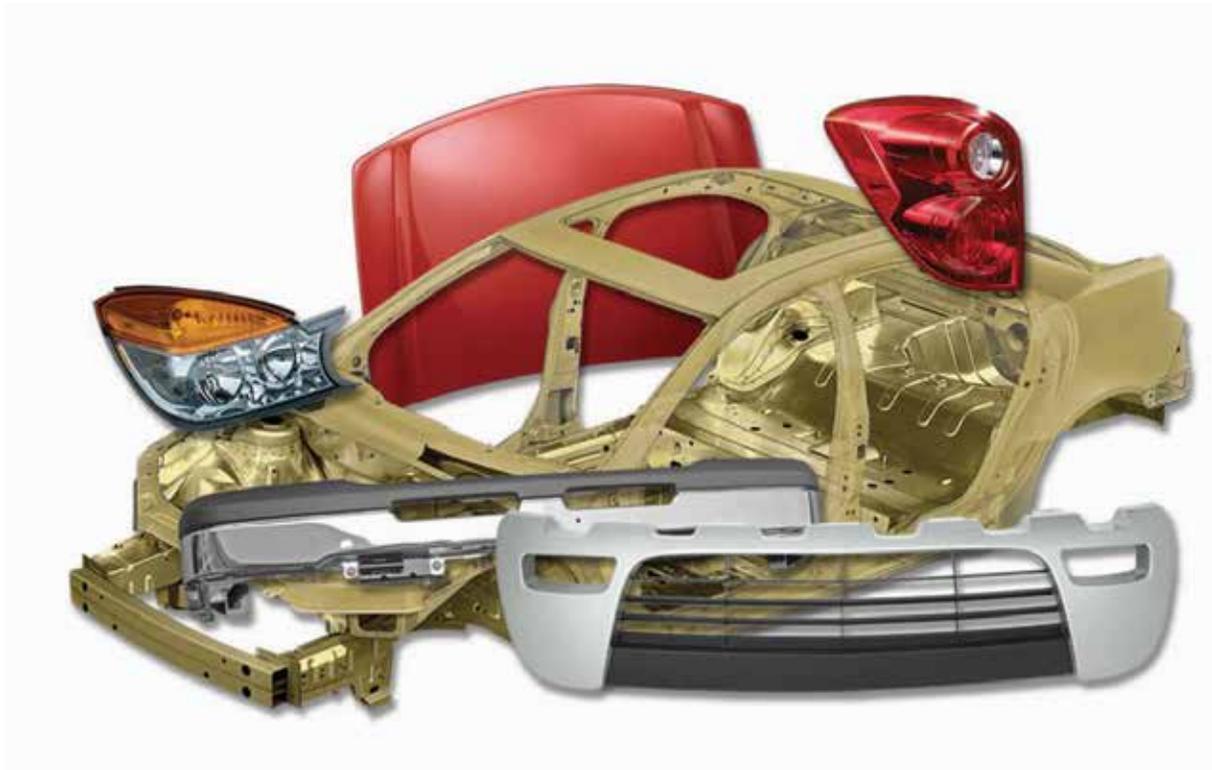


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# Contents

President’s Letter ..... 3  
 From the Editor ..... 3  
 Join Now Application ..... 3  
 Getting Paid for Body Materials .....5-7  
 Code of Ethics ..... 11  
 Address Change Form..... 11  
 Scanning and Recalibration: Big Picture Thinking..... 12-13  
 “Who Pays for What?” survey ..... 14  
 Advice from a Pumpkin ..... 16  
 Free for Members NDABA Classified Ads..... 16

# Advertisers

Gateway Chevrolet.....Inside Front Cover  
 Sturdevant’s Refinish Supply Center ..... 2  
 Straight and Square ..... 2  
 Rydell Auto Center..... 4  
 Nordstrom’s Automotive, Inc..... 6  
 Minot Automotive Center ..... 7  
 Fargo-Moorhead Auto Dealers.....8-9  
 Valley Imports ..... 10  
 Corwin Wholesale Parts ..... 10  
 DentMan Paintless Dent Repair ..... 15  
 Luther Family Ford ..... 15  
 Auto Value Parts Stores..... 16  
 St. Paul-Mpls. Wholesale Parts Association/dentsmart ..... Inside Back Cover  
 Luther Parts Express ..... Back Cover

## Thank You!!!!

Issues for NDABA News Report

Issue	Copy Deadline	Printing Date
February-March	Mar. 1	Mar. 15
<i>(Note: Dates for the pre-convention issue may vary.)</i>		
May-June	June 1	June 15
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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Don't look now, but Fall is in the air. Summer flew right by and was not as long as we all would have liked.

This does have some positives though. Gone are the mosquitos and the heat and humidity. Hopefully, the very same weather gods that gave us a late Spring and short Summer reward us with a nice long Fall so the farmers can get things done before the snow flies.

Fall also brings football season. Doesn't matter if it's high school, college or pro football, it is a great time to go tailgating or sit back and relax.

And before you know it, road construction season ends and the white stuff will be flying. Enjoy the ride.

Scott Heintzman, NDABA President

## FROM THE EDITOR:

A fellow member of the association has discovered what might be a problem in the future for some of us. It is searching for the paint code on GM pickups.

If you go to this link you will understand where I'm coming from:

<https://www.gm-trucks.com/forums/topic/207287-2018-sierra-no-rpo-sticker/>.

If you would like a digital copy of that link, send a message to me at [email.ndabnews@westriv.com](mailto:email.ndabnews@westriv.com) and I'll send it to you.

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*By Barrett Smith*

*Reprinted with permission from BodyShop Business, a Babcox Media publication*

***How do most collision repair facilities calculate body materials on a vehicle, for example, replacing a truck outer bedside panel. Bonding panel adhesive, drill bits, weld-through primer, seam sealer, self-etching primer, welding supplies, etc. In the past, we have cost itemized to bill the insurance companies.***

***Also, are the insurance companies required by law to reimburse body shops for this additional cost? Some insurers have stated these body materials are included with paint materials.***

Thank you for your questions. Let me address these in the order you asked them.

### ***How do most collision repair facilities calculate body materials on a vehicle?***

The methods collision repairers use to determine their material costs vary. Most repairers simply fail to list or charge for “body materials” and therefore lose their actual cost and fail to earn profits.

Some repairers rely upon:

- The antiquated method of using the fictitious, fabricated and often inaccurate formula of “refinish material rate (in dollars) multiplied by published estimated refinish labor guide times.” This rate is generally determined by insurers prescribing them as “prevailing competitive pricing.” These values have little accuracy or legitimacy relative to true costs and reasonable profit structures. As an example,

this “rate” is applied to all repairs regardless if the finish is white, silver or red and whether or not the colors can cover (as some may require more applied coats, requiring more mixed materials). Because “refinish materials” pertain to those materials used in refinish prep and application, “body materials” are not taken into consideration, so repairers tend to not list them and provide such materials at no charge.

- Some shops employ paint/jobber weight and measurement systems where the paint and materials usage is calculated at the time of mixing. These programs rarely if ever take into account allied or ancillary products such as razor blades, rags, sandpaper, disposable cups, liners, tack-rags and many other products used in refinish prep and application. These calculators and methods do not address body materials employed as necessary to bring a damaged panel to the condition (“new out of the box”) needed for

refinishing.

- Some shops use programs that take into account all material and ancillary products (based on various things such as areas being refinished) that are based on actual costs plus desired mark-up. These systems provide the user with the ability to add body materials in the quantities used and accurate pricing with desired profit margins.

It’s important to understand what the difference is between paint materials (aka refinish materials) and body materials and what they entail. I encourage everyone to read and thoroughly understand the P-pages. As I tell my repairer coaching/consulting clients, “The ‘P’ in P-Pages stands for profit!”

Where the P-pages are mute on a point, it’s up to the businessperson to fill the gap and make their assessment based on their professional experience, training and knowledge.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Getting Paid ...

(Continued from previous page)

### A Thousand Cuts

The lack of charging properly for body materials can be a huge loss to a repairer over a period of time; it's like "a slow death by a thousand cuts."

To use your example, you have a truck bedside with a 1.0-hour dent. You get paid to repair and refinish it, and the small quantity of body materials needed may include a grinding disc, minor amounts of epoxy/catalyzed primer, body filler, several stages of sandpaper, primer/sealer, guide coat, masking tape, masking paper and car cover, etc., to bring it to the condition where the labor guide's refinish times would then apply. Not a huge deal as you may lose \$50 or so at full "retail" pricing and \$25 in actual costs for unpaid body repair materials. Keep in mind that, at 10% net, \$25 equates to the bottom-line net profit on a \$250 repair.

Now consider replacing the same bedside and the many materials and quantities you would use, from spot-weld drill bits to seam sealers, while receiving the same paint and material allowance as in the 1.0 labor example above.

As to how to establish pricing, this is up to the individual repairer. They may elect to continue to give them away at no charge, employ the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP), use the "cost-plus" method, or establish resale pricing to achieve their desired profit margin. It's not uncommon for service providers in other industries (e.g. plumbing, heating/A/C, lawnmower repair, etc.) to mark up materials 100% or more.

Repairers should charge for all incurred costs for body repair-related activities in a manner that allows for a reasonable return on their investment. Not billing for body materials would be no different than only charging for the actual cost of labor without markup.

### Markup vs. Margin

"Markup" and one's profit "margin" are calculated differently. The amount you mark up your materials doesn't equal your profit margin percentage. Understand the difference so you can more accurately set your markups to make the profit you're expecting.

Regardless of what method you use, you should make a reasonable return on all investments made. After all, this is why it's considered your business rather than your hobby!

### ***In the past, we have cost-itemized to bill the insurance companies.***

I encourage repairers to prepare accurate billing and submit it to their customer. As a courtesy to your customer, you could submit your estimate and billings to the insurer. This brings up your other question.

### ***Are the insurance companies required by law to reimburse body shops for this additional cost?***

The only time an insurer would be responsible for a repairer's billing is if, for example, a repair was performed on one of their own fleet vehicles. Otherwise, anything that a repairer does that involves the insurer is done as a courtesy to the repairer's true customer. And the customer, as defined by most states, is the party who signs the repairer's repair authorization/contract

Note: one caveat to this is when a repairer has an agreement/contract with an insurer under a DRP, as there may be certain restrictions and obligations that preclude them from normal and customary business practices.

### ***Some insurance companies have stated these body materials are included with paint materials.***

Of course they have! Why wouldn't they? The reason insurers make such assertions is quite simple...they often work!



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In my 35-plus years in the collision repair industry as a shop manager, owner and industry consultant interacting with thousands of repairers over the years, I've learned that such assertions by insurers work due to the fragmentation and divisiveness of repairers and their failure to come together to discuss such issues. Many have learned what they know from the insurance industry.

**Consider that the educational sessions at large industry gatherings where training is offered are often funded or influenced by insurers.**

**Because repairers do not interact with other repairers in their market, they often rely on information from claims people who visit their shop for inspections. It often goes something like this:**

**"Hey Joe, you get around to all the shops in the area...what are shops charging to set-up and pull nowadays?" Or, "Hey Joe, what are insurers paying for body materials?" And of course the insurer tells them what the insurer wants them to hear.**

The simple fact is that most body shops are owned and operated by people who are great at fixing cars but not so great at running a business. So rather than rely on their own education and understanding, they look to others to advise them on how to run their business. As a second-generation body shop owner, I was once one of those people.

Insurers will gladly educate repairers on what they want them to hear and do. Repairers must take control of their own businesses and determine their own pricing as it pertains to their specific business in their specific marketplace and base their pricing structure on sound business practices – pricing that will not merely enable them to survive but thrive.

## Summary

Determining one's pricing is a balancing act. It must be competitive based on the level of services offered but provide sufficient profit to remain sustainable. Those who have lower overhead can offer lower pricing to entice a greater volume of work. Or, they may establish a higher pricing structure and do fewer repairs but at significantly higher margins/profit. Those who have high overhead will be compelled to know their true cost of operation and determine the profit margins needed to charge what is needed to cover their costs and earn a reasonable profit.

*Barrett Smith, AAM, is the founder and president of Auto Damage Experts Inc., which has been providing automotive inspection and expert legal services nationwide since 1997. He can be reached at (813) 657-6705 or barrett@autodamageexperts.com.*

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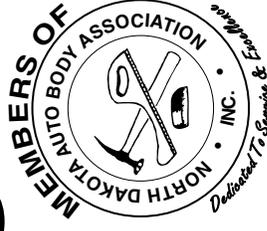
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4. *To employ the most skilled mechanics obtainable.*
5. *To use only proven merchandise of high quality sold by reputable firms.*
6. *To itemize all parts and adjustments in the price charges for services rendered.*
7. *To retain all replaced parts for the customer's inspection.*
8. *To uphold the high standards of our profession, always seeking to correct any and all abuses within the automotive service industry.*
9. *To uphold the integrity of all members of the North Dakota Auto Body Association.*

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# Scanning and Recalibration: Big Picture Thinking

By Mitch Becker

*Reprinted with permission from BodyShop Business, a Babcox Media publication*

Throughout my life, I've heard the phrase, "Do you get the picture?" Another phrase is, "You're not seeing the big picture."

These are interesting lines we hear when we have tunnel vision on a subject or task at hand. Tunnel vision or focusing on a small part of a bigger issue can cripple one's ability to effectively resolve issues or problems. Why? Because we start addressing a specific piece of a much bigger issue that needs to be corrected or resolved, which leads to the main problem never getting fixed and a recurring symptom of that problem repeatedly sapping time and energy. This is the fireman's approach to problems. We run around putting out fires but never fix what's causing them.

This tunnel vision can stunt our evolution to new repair procedures needed to repair today's vehicles. "We've always done it this way" and "You're the only one asking for that procedure" have become some of the most dangerous statements in the collision repair industry.

We all, for the most part, are resistant to change. Change takes us away from our comfort zone. It also challenges us to learn new things. Nowhere is this more true than in body shops. Learning how all the new electronics work and how the sensors factor in for proper operation of the advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) has been a daunting task. No longer is it simple R&I of a bumper cover.

That brings us to a new spectrum of additions to repairs. What is the big picture for the repair? We need to be sure that the customer, shop and insurer are all on the same page.

The goal:

- Repair the vehicle to pre-loss condition

- Repair all damaged parts
- Replace parts that cannot be repaired
- Corrosion-protect all areas applicable to work
- Refinish vehicle
- Restore all systems and features to operation

The body work and replacement of parts typically is our comfort zone, as is corrosion protection and refinish. The systems and features in today's vehicles are the complex part. It's hard for any of us to fathom how some of the electronics work. Now, we have to factor them into the repair process.

## Critical to Operation

ADAS components such as blind spot monitoring, radar, adaptive cruise control, emergency automatic braking and a long list of others are becoming the norm in new vehicles. Understanding what is at stake if repairs are not done correctly is something all of us should be aware of. These features are designed to save lives. Plain and simple, an incorrect procedure may lead to an issue or problem that could cost everyone.

The computers react to inputs from sensors. These inputs or series of inputs cause an output from the computer. These outputs may be a passive response such as a warning light or vibration in the seat or steering wheel. Active responses would be steering the vehicle or applying brakes in response to the perceived danger. Computer information must be accurate to get a proper response. Garbage in means garbage out. What this statement is generalizing is that the responses or outputs may be wrong if the inputs are incorrect.

## Bumper Covers

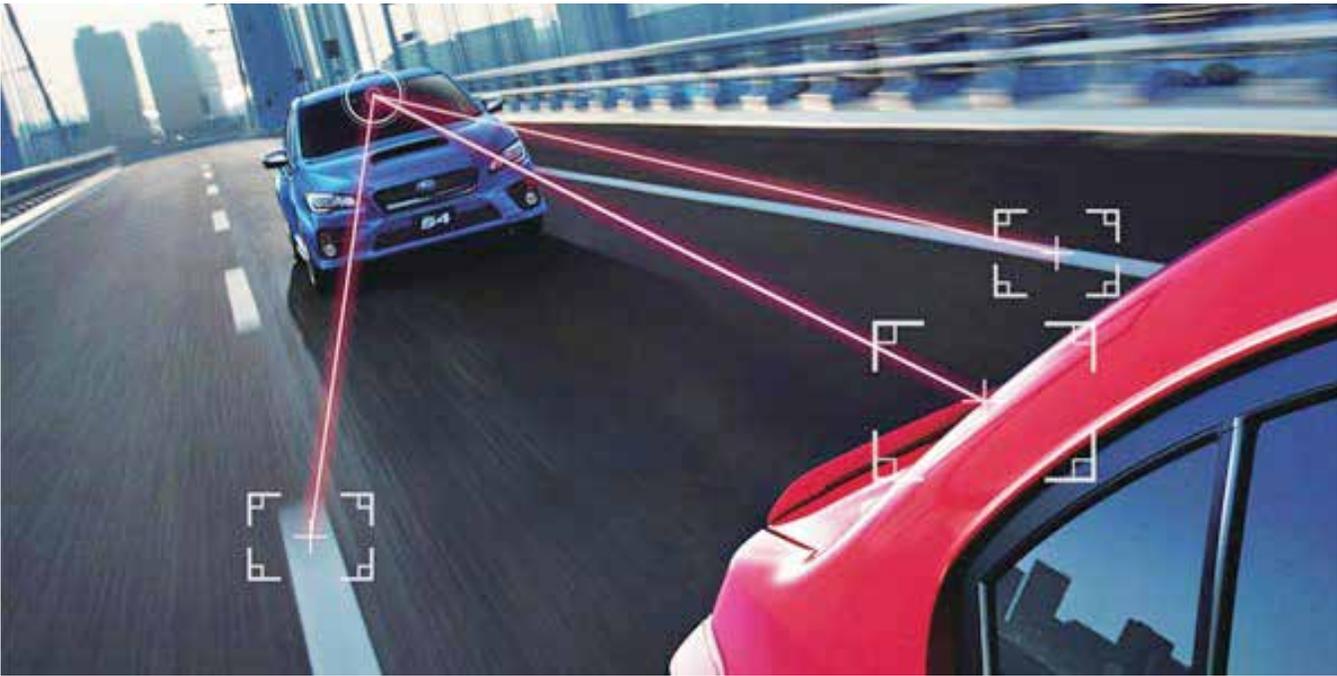
We've been talking for some time now in the repair industry about limitations of repairs to vehicles. Most shops understand that doing any type of repairs on bumper covers where blind spot radars are located is not permissible. Painting or refinishing procedures also have limitations during repair as the mil thickness of paint has the ability to limit sensors. Even differences in plastic density from OE bumpers to aftermarket bumper covers is a concern. All this is factored into the repairability of the bumper cover.

In the recent past, R&I'ing a bumper cover was easy. Today, a simple R&I with no repairs may require a blind spot recalibration per the vehicle manufacturer. Simply put, the sensor must not be altered or interfered with.

## How Do You Know A Sensor is Aimed Right?

We know the sensor can't be interfered with, but what about aiming correctly – that's a new problem in the equation. When a quarter panel is replaced, the damage may include the mounting bracket or the area the mounting bracket attaches to. Brackets may be damaged, repaired or replaced. How critical do you think is that they're mounted exactly as required? In today's world of electronics, millimeters may as well be miles. Tolerances are extremely tight on these mounting brackets and the attachment of the radars. A slight deviation can have a large effect on system performance.

One of the problems I've run into is that the specs on where these mounting brackets go and how they mount are either hard to find or vague. I've seen where Hyundai and



Kia have an alignment indicator. You mount the indicator to the bracket and check against the vehicle for contact and flushness. Once that is determined to be in spec, a blind spot recalibration can be done.

On other vehicles, a comparative measurement from the undamaged side or even another vehicle may be required. A set-up and measure for the upper body may be needed. Think about that for a second. I know many shops that struggle with upper body measuring. Now we need to set up and measure for repairs that never needed that before.

So let's put this into perspective: a 2018 Hyundai Santa Fe equipped with blind spot detection comes into your shop with damage to the left rear. There is no damage to the bumper cover, but the quarter panel is damaged. The panel is repairable but the damage has changed the shape where the bracket is mounted. There are no kinks in the metal, but it's proven that the bracket has moved. The technician finishes the metal work and the body filler looks great. So what could be the problem?

Did the technician repair the quarter panel back to exactly the way a new quarter panel would be? After all, body filler was used. Is the bracket aimed according to Hyundai requirements? You won't know until

after you paint and reassemble the vehicle and fails to recalibrate. Now you have three choices:

- Do a comparative measurement from the undamaged side or another vehicle
- Order a Hyundai aiming kit
- Sub to a dealer or outside service that has a mounting guide and equipment

The bracket has to be correctly mounted, so no matter which way you go, there is an added expense. It's hard to imagine that, for a damaged quarter panel, there would be the cost of an aiming bracket and a recalibration of the blind spot sensor too.

No matter where the vehicle is damaged, we need to look at the big picture of what's being repaired and how it affects sensors and brackets. Radiator supports with radar must be mounted correctly so as to avoid aiming issues. Slight deviations can have a dramatic effect on systems functioning correctly. And remember, there will be no light on the dash to tell you something is wrong.

### **Trust Who Does Your Recalibrations**

You can buy the best tools in the world and watch a person not trained or skilled use them incorrectly.

During recalibrations, if the targets are not correct, you can recalibrate the vehicle wrong. You will get a successful recalibration to the wrong parameters. Having the correct tool and proper training is an absolute, not an option. I've witnessed technicians adjusting targets to get a successful recalibration. I've also seen people use cameras with photos of targets to recalibrate sensors. These are dangerous situations. The vehicle assumes the technician put the target in the right location and angle. You can have a dead-wrong successful recalibration. The bottom line is we're starting to see some ingenious ways of cheating the system.

### **Summary**

There are so many changes occurring in our industry that it's hard to keep up: a shop asking for set-up and measure on a damaged quarter panel. A recalibration for just a wheel alignment. All these things are happening right now. We just need to be open to change in procedures and remember days gone past.

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*Mitch Becker has been a collision industry trainer for 30 years. He can be reached at (612) 865-6229 or mb227701@gmail.com.*

# “Who Pays for What?” survey finds growing percentage of shops billing for and being paid to match OEM texture of seam-sealer; latest survey open through July

**Mike Anderson of Collision Advice believes the “Who Pays for What?” surveys he has been conducting for several years in conjunction with CRASH Network are building awareness in the industry about “not-included” labor operations shops are performing but may not think to bill for on estimates and invoices.**

One example he points to: The labor to match the OEM appearance of seam-sealer, a not-included procedure that can be very time-consuming for a technician. A “Who Pays for What?” survey back in 2016 found that just over half of shops had never billed for this. The same survey earlier this year found that had declined, with about 60 percent of shops now having made an effort to collect for this labor.

More importantly, Anderson said, a higher percentage of those seeking to be paid for this procedure when it is done report being paid regularly by the eight largest auto insurers. Back in 2016, only about one-third (34%) of shops said they were paid “always” or “most of the time” when they billed for the labor to duplicate the OEM texture of seam-sealer. That had jumped seven percentage points, to 41%, in this year’s survey.

“Participating in the surveys can be a reminder of this sort of ‘not-included’ procedures your shop is doing, and they survey reports include resources and ideas on how to better negotiate to be paid for those procedures,” Anderson said.

He said the latest of the four 2019 “Who Pays for What?” surveys, which focuses on not-included frame and mechanical labor operations and includes some all-new questions to offer the industry even more helpful information, is open now through the end of July at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R7Y7FRZ>.

Survey participants receive a report with complete survey findings at no charge, broken down by region, insurer and DRP vs. non-DRP. The report also includes analysis and resources to help shops better understand and use the information presented.

Anderson said the survey, which will take about 15-25 minutes, can be completed by anyone in a shop familiar with the shop’s billing practices and the payment practices of at least some of the largest national insurers. Each shop’s individual responses are held in the strictest confidence; only aggregated data is released.

The results of previous surveys are also available online (<https://www.crashnetwork.com/collisionadvice>).

*Collision Advice (www.CollisionAdvice.com) is an independent training and consulting firm featuring some of the most respected and experienced experts in the collision repair industry. CRASH Network (www.CrashNetwork.com) is a subscription newsletter offering news and information not available from other industry sources.*

*FOR MORE INFORMATION: John Yoswick, [info@CrashNetwork.com](mailto:info@CrashNetwork.com), (503) 335-0393.*



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