



# Cougar Accident Repair Centre

## Success in a challenging industry

Virgil Blennerhasset, General Manager of Cougar Accident Repair Centre, has been working in independent bodyshop repair for over 20 years, making him the perfect person for us to talk to about the Accident Repair Industry.

Speaking to him about how this industry has developed over the decades, he says that the past five years have seen a lot of changes develop in the wider automotive market in a short amount of time. These changes have affected the way in which his team work, which has also had an influence on the way he runs his business.

Virgil observes that some of the biggest challenges in the bodyshop include keeping up to speed with the latest technology in the industry, changes in manufacturers' materials and increased investments in the appropriate training as a result. Virgil says that due to the new materials that cars are made of, it's "critical" to choose the right method of repair as quickly as possible. Not only this, but he believes that his team should always be very well experienced and trained to be able to use new bodyshop materials in the best way possible. Doing this, ensures that materials are used properly and will see the company getting the best out of their repairs.

Virgil makes the reference that bodyshop repairs can be a 'distress purchase', as people rarely want to have their car fixed, or be in an accident. And for this reason, he preserves that Cougar has to maintain a high level of service from the beginning of the process right to the end, to deliver high-quality customer service. Much professionalism and pride is put into the work in the centre, which is why Virgil and his team have been working with 3M for as long Cougar has been open.

Virgil speaks highly of 3M: "We've always worked with 3M. Cougar as a business has been in operation for over 20 years and 3M has always been a product of choice us".

3M is always looking to develop products alongside the changes in car manufacturing. An example he gives of changes in the industry include the amends to adhering panels, which are



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now bonded instead of welded onto vehicles. He adds that 3M has helped him tackle bodyshop challenges by keeping him and his team up to speed with these fast-changing technologies.

Learning how to use new materials and tools has been a big challenge for Virgil and his team too, and in the case of bonding he adds that it was 3M technicians who came into the bodyshop and did all of his staff's training. Virgil praises the work of his local 3M point of contact, Dave Andrews, who will "make sure the products suits", his bodyshop and is an "improvement" on what they already have.

In this fast-paced and niche industry, it's becoming evermore clear that you have to be proactive and at the forefront of new technology. To quote Virgil, "you have to be on the coalface," and "without the help of companies like 3M it would make something that's difficult even harder".

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