

## The “Keys” to Success: **Understanding the Importance of OEM Repair Procedures**

In today’s world, vehicle construction and technology are changing rapidly. Even within one OEM's line of vehicles, a single addition or update can completely change the way a repair is performed. A sunroof, for example, can change the types of welds and their location and the types of adhesives required for a repair. There are so many things to consider when restoring the vehicle to pre-accident crash worthiness — to ensure that in the event of an accident, crash energy is absorbed and managed like it was intended by the carmaker. So, how do shops keep up with the changing industry while still ensuring safe and reliable vehicle repairs? It all starts with creating a solid repair plan.



## Researching OEM guidance

It sounds simple, but you'd be surprised how many technicians overlook the research step. Even shops that consult specific OEM repair procedures can miss valuable information in bulletins, work instructions, and position statements. All of this information is important for planning and scheduling a repair. The key is knowing where to find the repair procedures and sourcing any other relevant information specific to the make and model of the vehicle being repaired.



**OEM repair procedures:** Search the manufacturer's website for up-to-date process guides rather than sourcing information from a third-party. While some third-party sources pull directly from the manufacturer's site, your most reliable and up-to-date source will always be the OEM site. There you will find the step-by-step procedure for the repair.



**Bulletins, work instructions, and position statements:** It is a best practice to search OEM websites for any bulletins and positioning statements important to the repair. These documents can contain information that applies to multiple lines of vehicles and may not be mentioned in a model-specific repair procedure. These documents are also great tools for identifying not included but required operations that should be added to the repair estimate.

OEM repair procedures and work instructions often require pre-scans and post-scans for all repairs, and even include how to prepare for calibration. Whether a pre-scan is required or not, there are advantages to doing them. Many advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) functions will not trigger a Malfunction Indicator Lamp (MIL) on the dash, which is why all vehicles should be pre-scanned prior to any disassembly. Understanding diagnostics and testing for other common procedures are highly recommended. While it may seem unimportant, scanning can help identify key functions in vehicle communication in the event of a collision that may not be visible during the repair process or even a test drive.

## Achieving success in the end

We all know that optimizing cycle times is extremely important for a shop's productivity and bottom line. However, shortening the repair time should not mean skipping steps that could result in improper or unsafe repairs. Taking the time to learn, be thorough, and accurate throughout the repair process goes a long way in both restoring the vehicle's safety and the shop being properly compensated.



**Documentation:** Taking note of the procedure at the time of repair is key. If a vehicle needs reinspection, the original repair order should include a copy of the OEM repair procedures used, before and after photos, and the detailed report of any scan.



**Accuracy:** Checking OEM repair procedures before starting work can also help write more accurate estimates, order the correct parts, and source the proper products. If work is being outsourced, having the procedures on hand can also help the technician give precise directions to the vendor – helping eliminate misguidance and rework.



**Product Selection:** Like with any set of directions, OEMs note the tools and products for use to achieve the best results. There are a variety of product lines and options available for shops, but many repair procedures will callout specific brands, even specific products, or part numbers, that are recommended for use in the repair. It is crucial to use materials that are listed in OEM procedures. For example, when choosing a seam sealer, pick a brand that has all the tools you need to match the look and function of the OEM original seam.



**Continued Learning:** Keeping up with industry trends as you work on vehicles is a best practice you should practice throughout your career. Many online forums and chat groups contain misguided, outdated, and incorrect information – so these may not be your best source of up-to-date repair information. Learning processes and techniques from experienced and trained technicians, researching procedures from trusted online sources or in-person training can only benefit you, your shop, and your customers.

These best practices can be a winning combination to help shops achieve its goals. Remember, OEM procedures are tested processes fully vetted by the manufacturer based on the vehicle structure and factual data. It is in a shop's best interest to adopt these practices even if they differ, even slightly, than what you may think is best.

After all, we are all working towards the same goal – repairing and delivering the vehicle to pre-accident crash worthiness and to help ensure the safety of our customers in that vehicle. Every single vehicle that is repaired needs to be able to potentially withstand the same or worse collision again while protecting the occupants as originally designed. This creates a vital need to stay up to date with the most recent OEM repair procedures, training, and education.

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