COMPLEX MATERIALS

DRIVING CHANGES TO AUTO REPAIR INDUSTRY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Kent Ledingham, president of the Manitoba Motor Dealers Association

If you've shopped for a new vehicle recently, you know that there are more options available than ever before.

An array of choice related to performance characteristics, safety features, and entertainment options exists alongside your favourite style or colour. But look beyond the 'bells and whistles' and you'll find that a growing number of vehicles are being manufactured using more complex materials, such as boron steel, aluminum and even carbon fibre.

These complex materials are strong, flexible and lightweight. They allow automakers to produce more energy efficient vehicles that meet new environmental standards without compromising safety features of the vehicle.

All vehicle repairs must be done in accordance with the Original Equipment Manufacturer's (OEM) guidelines. The use of complex materials, combined with the increased use of advanced collision avoidance technologies, is leading to large-scale change in the vehicle repair industry.

By 2018, half of all vehicles on the road in Manitoba will contain at least some complex materials.

Ryan Kehl, past president of the Automotive Trades Association – Manitoba (ATA) says the repair industry is evolving in response to the shift in manufacturing.

"Repairing vehicles with complex materials will require a different set of skills, tools, equipment and facilities than we use for more traditional steel bodies. For instance, aluminum work must be kept separate from the rest of the body shop as it can cause corrosion when it comes into contact with other metals like steel," Kehl says.

"The industry is working hard to prepare for these changes by creating the necessary infrastructure and training staff on the latest techniques. Manitoba Public Insurance has been supporting our efforts by offering appropriate training and helping us ensure our facilities meet the new requirements."

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Members of the Manitoba Motor Dealers Association (MMDA) have also been anticipating changes to vehicle repairs and working to adapt their operations. Kent Ledingham, president of the MMDA says the implications for all repair shops are significant.

"For those dealers with body shops, this has meant providing new training for staff, making changes to the structure of facilities, and acquiring new equipment. We recognize that this investment is critical to the health and future of the repair industry," Ledingham says.

Drivers who own vehicles containing these complex materials will require all repairs to be in compliance with manufacturer guidelines and by an OEM-qualified or certified repair shop.

Manitoba Public Insurance's technical experts currently support the industry with the provision of training courses through I-CAR® Canada. This premiere training and recognition program, operated by the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, provides skills updating for the collision repair industry. Manitoba Public Insurance is working with the repair industry to ensure all shops have the opportunity to undergo training to meet requirements for complex materials.

"These changes are dictated by the manufacturers, and we're supporting the industry through training and research to ensure Manitobans have access to safe repairs," says Ward Keith, Manitoba Public Insurance vice-president, Business Development & Communications and Chief Product Officer. "To assist vehicle owners in finding qualified repair services, we've posted a list of repair shops in Manitoba who meet the manufacturer standards on our website at mpi.mb.ca."

DID YOU KNOW?

- A growing number of new vehicles are being manufactured with complex materials such as boron steel, aluminum and carbon fibre.
- The Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) is the company that made the original vehicle part – it can be the vehicle manufacturer or the maker of a specialized component.
- Specialized safety features need to follow manufacturer guidelines for proper repair.
- If you have a vehicle that contains complex materials, you may need to have it repaired at an OEM-qualified repair shop.
- A list of OEM-qualified repair shops is available at mpi.mb.ca, or you can contact your dealer for assistance.