



CAR CARE CORNER TM

If You Only Knew...Would You Accept These Collision Repair Procedures?

(NAPSA)—If you are one of the many who suffer the misfortune of an automobile accident, you need to quickly overcome the confusion, frustration and/or anger caused by the event to make sure your interests are protected.

Ford Motor Company has provided the examples below to highlight a few important repair procedures that might occur during your time in a body shop, along with suggestions on how to help make sure you and your vehicle stay on the right track.

Parts Used for Repairs

If you are like most auto owners, you assume parts made by your vehicle manufacturer will be used to repair collision damage to your vehicle. Not necessarily so. "Imitation" or "aftermarket" parts made overseas and parts salvaged from other vehicles often are used in repairs.

Recommendation: You have the right to choose the types of parts used to repair collision damage to your vehicle. Before repairs begin, make sure you know what parts have been specified, then make certain both your insurer and repairer know which types of parts you want to be used.

Airbag Replacement

More than 75,000 airbags are stolen every year, according to estimates by the Insurance Information Institute. Carfax.com, the Internet vehicle inspection firm, estimates that one in every 25 repairs requiring airbag replacement ends up with installation of a bogus airbag or no airbag at all.

Recommendations: Check the repair invoice—After the

collision repair, ask your repairer for a copy of the parts invoice to make sure replacement airbags were purchased from an authorized dealer. In the case of Ford, its dealers are the exclusive distributors of genuine replacement airbags, and Ford recommends that repairs be made only with these parts.

Airbag Cover—Fake airbag covers are being used to hide the fact that a new airbag has not been installed. A couple of telltale signs: Bogus covers rarely have the vehicle's logo on them, and the color of fake covers may vary, even if the cover fits well—the color of a genuine cover will match the rest of the vehicle exactly.

When in Doubt, Go to Your Dealer—If you have any doubts at all, have your vehicle checked by an authorized dealer. Undeployed airbags are extremely dangerous—do not attempt to troubleshoot if you suspect problems.

Remanufactured Wheels

Wheels are crucial safety items that often are damaged in collisions. A large industry has emerged that takes many of these damaged wheels and "remanufactures" them for reuse.

During the unregulated remanufacturing process, steel or aluminum is removed from the wheel. Removal of base material, as well as certain other remanufacturing techniques, can alter performance and durability, and raises safety concerns, according to several automakers.

Recommendations: You have the right to choose the type of replacement wheels used to repair

collision damage to your vehicle. Check with your insurer and repairer to make sure you know the type of replacement wheels being used.

If you select remanufactured wheels, be sure to obtain a written warranty from the remanufacturer, and confirm that the remanufacturer's identity and the date the wheels were remanufactured are permanently marked on the wheels.

Front and Rear "Clips"

If your vehicle has suffered major front- or rear-end damage, a front or rear "clip" may be used for repairs. This practice involves replacing the entire section of the damaged vehicle with a similar section from a "donor" vehicle—usually one that has been declared a total loss.

Most manufacturers recommend against the use of such procedures because serious doubt exists about their ability to return vehicles to pre-accident condition.

In some states, your vehicle must be retitled as a "rebuilt" or "salvage" vehicle if the clip procedure is used. This designation will substantially reduce your vehicle's resale value.

Recommendations: It is very likely the use of a clip will void your vehicle manufacturer's warranty for the vehicle, the parts replaced and any damage to the original vehicle caused by the clip. If you agree with the use of a clip to repair your vehicle, make sure to obtain a written warranty from your insurer, repairer and/or the supplier of the clip.