

Time for a change

Knowing that changes are afoot in the collision repair industry, more than 300 participants gathered for the Canadian Collision Industry Forum in Toronto in January.

An introduction to life with waterborne paint, updates from the recycled and aftermarket parts sectors, and some novel ideas regarding DRPs were on the agenda at the most recent CCIF meeting.

All five major paint companies gave a glimpse of the equipment changes and training commitments that bodyshops can expect when the federal government's VOC legislation comes to fruition. Although there will be formulation changes to many of the materials used in auto refinish, the conversion to waterborne basecoat will be the single biggest challenge, said Bruce Henderson of DuPont Performance Coatings. He added that training — of preppers, painters and management — is critical to success in this initiative.

To improve direct-repair programs, a survey of repairers conducted last year suggests that repairers want more

involvement in building the programs. The survey was conducted by Carlew & Associates and sponsored by BASF, Coyote Vision Group, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes and 3M. It was presented at CCIF by Beryl Carlew.

Some of the report's recommendations for best practices (which were derived from the survey interviews) focused on making DRP agreements more like a two-way contract, in which the expected behavior of both parties is laid out, there are frequent performance reviews, and there are clear corrective actions spelled out in the agreement.



CCIF's chairman's council represents many years of experience in the collision repair industry. From left: Mike Bryan, CCIF administrator; Ken Boulton, The Dominion of Canada General Insurance; Dana Alexander, Dana's Collision Centre; Glen Hickey, Auto Parts Network; Sharon Wells, Collision Clinic; Ken Friesen, Concours Collision Centres; and Larry Jefferies, CARSTAR Automotive Canada.



Showing team spirit, members of the CertifiedFirst Network and representatives of PPG were easily recognizable.

WELL SAID

"It's challenging, but this is still a profitable industry. You just have to do everything right, not just a few things right." *Larry Jefferies, CARSTAR Automotive Canada, and chairman of CCIF*

"You need to get body, paint and management working together to the detriment of the competition." *Mark Olson, VeriFacts Automotive*

"Dealing with the brutal facts is the one thing every business must do in order to be a great business." *Rick Keister, Keystone Automotive*

"We know that more insurers are looking at how they can use more parts from [the recycling] industry." *Steve Fletcher, executive director, Ontario Automotive Recyclers Association*

"If you treat them right, pay them right and appreciate them — they'll do their best. I'm so proud of my people." *Franco Gobbato, owner, Formula One Collision*

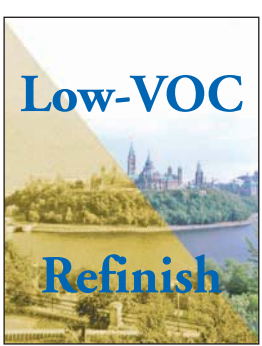
Regarding the transition to waterborne basecoat:

"It will be easier than the transition from 1K to 2K paints." *Rick Valin, BASF*

"The process of spraying waterborne paint is pretty similar [to solvent-based]. Managing the external factors is critical." *Delando Hawthorne, Akzo Nobel*

"The evaporation rate of water is determined by air temperature, humidity and air flow. Warmer, drier conditions will improve productivity." *Mark Sceeles, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes*

"The apprehensions people have about spraying waterborne basecoat go away once they're trained on it." *Delando Hawthorne, Akzo Nobel*



Take pride in jumping through hoops

Rick Keister of Keystone Automotive introduced the audience to the concept of a "hoop jumper." He explained that his former company, a supplier of remanufactured mechanical parts, sold to large companies under a private label. Thus, as a little company selling to large companies, "we realized we had no alternative but to jump through hoops for the buyer."

As a hoop jumper, "we could have tried to change our position, but instead we became the best hoop jumper in the business. We focused on what the customer wanted, not what we wanted. We recognized who had the power, and it wasn't us."



Meet the Keystone team: Rick Keister, Merv Heffernan, Patrick Turcotte, Steve Fletcher, OARA



In his view, collision repair facilities that have a specific niche should fare well in the future, as will good shops located in small markets. For shops in a competitive metropolitan market, "figure out who your real customer is," he counsels.

On the accreditation front, Jay Perry reported that there is strong support for the criteria that have been proposed so far. An email survey sent out in January showed that most of the points pertaining to the shop's business practices and equipment had the approval of respondents. The next steps for this CCIF committee are to address the aspects of accreditation that will deal with human resources in the industry, and to concisely communicate the benefits of accreditation to the industry nationally.

"We must show the link between accreditation and profitability," says Perry.

Positive changes for parts and materials

Steve Fletcher, executive director of the Ontario Automotive Recyclers Association, explored the interdependency of recyclers, insurance carriers and collision repair operations in his presentation. He noted that if the goal is to use more recycled parts in order to reduce severity, then repairers need the right motivation to use recycled parts. "Recycled parts must offer the same total compensation as other types of parts," he explains. "The concept of total compensation incorporates mark-up, clean up and total billable hours."

Changes are still imminent for the refinishing side of the business. The federal government is still quoting an implementation date of January 1, 2009 for new low-VOC regula-

tions that would force paint companies to reformulate their coating materials. Michelle Raizenne said Environment Canada is still evaluating the feedback it received from the industry during the consultation period in the fall of 2006.

At least some of that industry feedback called for a later implementation date, Jan. 1, 2010.

Be prepared for waterborne

Representatives from the five major paint companies presented information on various aspects of the conversion to waterborne basecoat.

How does one assess the readiness of your shop for conversion? Mark Sceeles of Sherwin-Williams makes these suggestions:

- You may require the ability to control temperature and humidity in the booth and the shop.
- You will require clean, pressurized air. Coalescing filters are suggested, and they must be well maintained.
- You must have an adequate volume of pressurized air, and new equipment may increase the draw on existing compressors. Tools are available from suppliers to calculate your air needs.
- You will require proper spray equipment. All items used with waterborne coatings must be made of corrosion resistant materials, such as plastic, aluminum or stainless steel.
- You will require adequate air flow in the booth.

With current coatings, the solvents can be adjusted to increase or decrease curing time, "but water only has one speed," explains Sceeles. "The evaporation rate is determined by air temperature, humidity and air flow. Warmer, drier conditions will increase productivity."

Sceeles notes that depending on the shop's current equipment, the investment necessary to convert can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars.

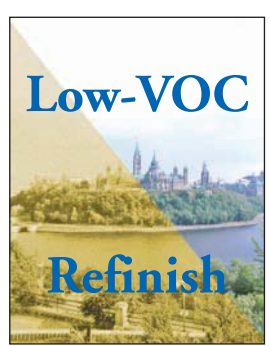
When it comes to actually spraying the paint, the process is fairly similar to current practices, says Delando Hawthorne of Akzo Nobel. However, "managing the external factors (air flow, temperature and humidity) is critical."

He also notes that the color doesn't show up as quickly with waterborne coatings.

Bruce Henderson of DuPont explained why air flow is so important for curing waterborne coatings. As the coating dries, a vapor barrier forms over the coating. Air movement is needed to break up the barrier and allow the moisture to dissipate. Henderson suggests a minimum air speed in the booth of 0.6 ft/s. Portable air systems may be used. They generally draw their air from the compressed air supply.

The air must also be free of dust, dirt or silicone, Henderson noted.

Retrofit systems that redirect hot air from the booth's plenum are also available. Gene Ivey of Junair explained that his company's QAD system adds motors on each side of the plenum to redirect the air to nozzles in the corners of the booth. The moving air disturbs the water-soaked area



which forms at the surface of the film, and reduces flash and cure times. Junair is represented in Canada by R.S. Finishing Systems Inc. and Sprayline Systems Inc.

Speaking about safety issues, Debbie Nucciarone of PPG explained that all the same safety precautions that apply to solventborne coatings also apply to waterborne. In fact, although there is much less solvent in the waterborne formulation, some of those solvents may be even more absorptive to skin than those in current solventborne coatings.

She noted that shops will have to maintain a separate waste stream for waterborne products, and separate gun

cleaning systems. The waste sludge from waterborne coatings must be disposed according to local regulations.

John Nicholson, an independent environmental engineer, reminded participants of the severity the VOC issue. VOC emissions contribute to air pollution, and air pollution is responsible for 5000 premature deaths per year, he said.

Environmental issues will be the focus of the next CCIF meeting on April 21 in Vancouver. Go to www.ccif.net for further details.