

PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Pouring green cash into the radiator

Document fluid used, and other minor services, or you are giving it away free

BY TOM MCGEE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

At this time of year, we see many vehicles that have minor front-end damage. It is pretty common to be at an intersection and see a car slide on the snow or ice and hit the car in front of it. And this makes great work for collision repair shops.

But when vehicles with this type of damage arrive at your shop, does your repair plan address all the damage?

Structural alignment

When I perform an estimate audit or am in a shop and I see a core support being replaced, several things go through my mind. First, was the vehicle measured to determine if there is structural misalignment? Shops should measure a vehicle as part of their repair planning. We need to be able to say, "Yes, there is misalignment; here is where and how far out of specs it is," or, "There is no structural damage." If there is, we know it up front and correct it as part of a planned repair flow. It shouldn't be a surprise during the repair. We also need to consider what is now dependent on the alignment of the core support, rails and bumper. What about the sensors, cameras, sonars and radar units that are being mounted in the front of the vehicle? We need to really consider how they are going to operate following repairs if there is structural misalignment that was not identified and not corrected.

Materials and methods

Let's say it was determined that the core

support needs to be replaced. The next questions should be, "What is it made out of?" and, "How is it attached?" We need to determine what tools, equipment and supplies are needed for that material and attachment method. If it's a welded-on part, then the repair plan needs to include the repair and refinish of weld damage done to the adjacent parts. Include repair and refinish time to the upper rails, aprons and lower rails. Remember paint times need to include inner and outer surfaces. Your staff is doing this work; you just may not be getting paid to do it.

Disable and re-enable

Let's stay with the idea that the core support is being replaced. Did the repair planner include disconnect and reconnect the negative battery cable, removal or repositioning of wiring and electronics within 12" of the areas to be welded, disable and re-enable the airbag, hybrid or other systems? These are critical to preventing damage to the vehicle or dangerous situations for the technician.

Fluid types and capacities

I audit several estimates every month and find it very common to see that the esti-

imator replaced a radiator and a condenser. The problem is that for the radiator, they either did not include the coolant or they include one gallon. When they add a cost for the gallon, they do not consider the capacity of the system or the type that is required. They just put in a dollar figure that usually ends with .00.

What is the coolant capacity of a 2013 Ford Truck F 250 4WD Super Duty with a 6.2L V8? If the estimator did not include any coolant or only charged for one gallon, the cooling system was filled with your green cash! They filled the system, but it was done for free. This vehicle has a capacity of 25.4 quarts or 24 liters. With a 50/50 mix, you need 6.4 gallons to fill the system.

On the condenser they do better, but it's still common not to charge for the oil that needs to be installed when a part is replaced. They also frequently list recover and recycle both refrigerant and coolant. Not an easy task if it was left at the intersection where the collision occurred!

Cooling system capacities

I would encourage you to develop a standard operating procedure that provides for consistently documenting the fluid types and capacities required for the vehicles you are repairing. If you aren't determining the type and capacity of the cooling system on the repair plan, then just remember that the liquid your staff is using to fill the system is your green cash. To help you see the differences in fluid capacities, we have developed a list of vehicles and their cooling system capacities. Try it free for a limited time by going to www.atonline-training.com/abrn1501. ■

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