



National Associations

with Chasidy Rae Sisk

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CARA Held Estimating Seminar on October 25

On Saturday, October 25, the Choice Autobody Repair Association (CARA) held an educational meeting for their Southwestern Michigan chapter at the Firekeepers Casino in Battle Creek, MI. Designed for shop owners, managers, estimators, paint and materials manufacturers and suppliers, and OEM parts manufacturers and suppliers, the seminar featured three guest presenters who educated attendees on blueprinting practices and the importance of proper documentation. CARA President **Rick Finney** explains, “the whole idea for the meeting is to better educate shops on estimating and damage analysis practices. In order to be successful, we have to perform certain operations on a daily basis, and these need to be included on our paperwork so we can be reimbursed for these procedures.”

The meeting ran from 10AM until 6PM and included lunch as well as snacks and drinks. Tickets to attend CARA’s estimating seminar were sold for \$50 with the spouses of collision repair professionals paying a discounted rate of \$35.

The three very special guest speakers who presented at CARA’s meeting on October 25 were **Rick Palmer**, President and CEO of Computer Logic, Inc.; **Chuck Gosney**, President of Collision Billing Services; and Cleveland Attorney **Peter Traska**. In addition, Finney provided updates on several topics discussed at the association’s last meeting.

Palmer began the seminar by talking about itemization in estimates and the importance of accurately reporting the true cost of paint and materials. Finney says, “we don’t do this correctly a lot of times in this industry, so Palmer taught collision repair shop owners to be more accurate in their blueprints and billing as it pertains to material and paint costs.”

Palmer’s topics of discussion included the following: improving profits and not losing business with paint and materials, the size of the gap between revenue and cost, what the gross profit margin should be, “You Can’t Manage What You Don’t Measure,” and getting insurers to properly pay for paint and materials. He em-

phasized the importance of “doing the right thing, for the right reason, the right way.”

Palmer also explained why the collision repair industry needs PM-CLogic: “insurers and repairers both agree that documenting the actual paint and material items used in the repair process is the proper and preferred method to use for reimbursement of these costs. The old method of using a refinish hour multiplier to pay for paint and materials is obviously outdated and needs to be replaced with an accurate calculation of actual paint and materials used to repair each unique vehicle. By accurately documenting all paint and materials used for a repair, PMCLogic takes the guesswork out of paint and materials costing.”

Next, Gosney spoke about the importance of documentation for collision repair facilities. He explained that it is important to understand the P-Pages and other documents in order to provide an accurate analysis of the vehicle’s damage and to receive proper compensation for all necessary labor and refinish operations. Furthermore, Gosney elaborated that, even if a representative from the insurance company denies payment of a labor or refinish operation that was performed on a vehicle, that operation must remain documented on the facility’s final invoice. After all, how can a repair facility expect to be paid for an operation if they don’t ask to be paid for their labor? Gosney believes that using Collision Billing Services on each vehicle would eliminate some of these problems and stressed that the collision repair facilities are the only ones who can alleviate this problem.

Finney states, “the insurers often want shops to remove some procedures from the blueprint because they won’t pay for them, but whatever you do has to stay on the final paperwork, even if the insurance company refuses reimbursement. We held this meeting in order to share information and try to help shops communicate better with each other because we can better serve the consumer by improving communication with our peers. We had open discussions at our meeting about what has and has not benefitted our mem-

ber shops and their customers.”

Finally, Traska led attendees in a discussion about the legal issues currently being pursued around the country with an emphasis on the importance of proper preparation of blueprint paperwork which is necessary in order for shops to get paid for the operations performed. Continuing the emphasis on proper repair documentation, Traska agreed with Palmer and Gosney about the importance of using data base information and itemization of paint and materials information that help the shop owners better understand their businesses and to be properly compensated for their services.

Finney said “the topic of the 1963 Consent Decree was also discussed at the meeting. Many shop owners in attendance knew of it and exactly why it was written. Some of the shop owners in attendance were not aware of it previously but were very surprised to find out that the issues that we, as shop

owners, face today, such as steering, rate suppressions, labor operation denials and more, are nothing new to our industry, and in fact, in 1963, 265 insurers signed a Consent Decree drafted by the U.S. Justice Department and Attorney General Robert Kennedy.”

Finney is grateful to Titia Gray, Director of the Southwest Michigan Chapter of CARA, and other members of her chapter for doing such a great job setting up the meeting and arranging for sponsorship. He notes, “CARA is trying to build up membership in Michigan, and we are hopeful that events like this will help to get collision repair shops and paint and parts vendors, as well as manufacturers, working together for the betterment of our consumers and our industry... In my opinion, the meeting was very successful, and I believe that everyone in attendance came away from the meeting with some positive thoughts

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and realized that we can accomplish almost anything by working together because other repair shop owners should not be considered our enemies but our allies!”

These types of educational seminars are important to CARA members “because the way the collision repair industry is going, we have a lot more demands on us with newer vehicles and how we deal with things. These changes are a burden, so it’s very important that the association and our members work together to become

better educated and stay in business; we have to be profitable to take care of our customers,” Finney explains. “It’s imperative that we share ideas and work together to best serve our customers because doing right by them and ensuring their safety is the most important aspect of what we do as collision repair professionals.”

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Pro Spot Shines

plying the necessary equipment to collision repair shops. “We work with the technicians, using their feedback to make sure our equipment is user friendly,” said Ashley. They designed a special research and development area where engineers can build new things and test them out.

During the tour, Ashley explained some of the challenges with aluminum

during the repair process. “Aluminum doesn’t have a memory like steel and is also sensitive to heat. The repair process requires a different approach. It’s not impossible, it’s not harder, it’s just different,” she said. “These shops are just going to have to learn a new procedure for preparing the aluminum.”

“You can’t weld on aluminum the same way you would on steel because on a spot weld pressure and heat creates a resistance,” said Ashley. “With aluminum, you can’t heat it up because it becomes brittle and will break.



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