

# PAINT POINTS

Changes in paint colors and body materials have complicated the collision repair process. Here are tools and tips to help.

By Gregg Wartgow

## [ COLLISION & PAINTING ]

**S**ome of those dents, scratches, and rust spots you notice in the service bay might seem like more of a nuisance than anything. But ignoring even minor cosmetic damage can hurt a fleet's image—and may lead to more problematic issues down the road.

Today's fleet technicians are also dealing with a wider variety of construction materials, including steel, aluminum, and composites. Because of this, it's beneficial to have a strategy in place to streamline workflows and tackle exterior repairs with the right knowledge, tools, and processes to ensure as quick a turnaround as possible.

Even within the same make, materials can differ. For instance, Ford's Transit, Transit Connect, and E-Series vans have steel bodies, while Ford's F-Series trucks have bodies made of high-strength, military-grade aluminum alloy panels.

Shops should be aware of this and should think about in which bay these vehicles are placed.

"To prevent cross-metal contamination that could lead to vehicle corrosion, aluminum vehicles undergoing repairs should be separated from vehicles undergoing steel repairs," said Gerry Bonanni, senior engineer for paint and body repair at Ford Motor Company.

"Furthermore, equipment used to repair aluminum body panels must be maintained separately from steel repair equipment."

Regardless of vehicle or material type, Bonanni stressed the importance of making sure any collision repair, whether a minor ding or major body damage, is performed by a trained technician and to OE workshop manual procedures, along with industry guidelines and training for collision repair.

"There are naturally different processes needed to repair steel or aluminum, including welding, riveting, dent extraction, and other techniques," Bonanni said. "Our manuals show the vehicle's structure, what it is made of, and repair procedures. We expect professional technicians to know how to carry out these procedures and to understand what the collision repair industry mandates."

### How coatings can cause confusion

"On the coatings side, all of your Class 8 trucks in the USMCA (United States, Mexico, and Canada) space are now painted basecoat/clearcoat," said Joe Wood, VP of global commercial vehicle coatings at Axalta, a supplier of automotive paints and coatings. "That is much different than in the past when there was a mixed bag of basecoat/clearcoat and monocoat."

» Customer demand is driving new paint colors, which may require different primers.

Photo: PPG Industries