OEM vs. Aftermarket Parts

Industry Experts Offer Their Insights.

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- Ten Marketing Ideas That Work
- First Look at Auto Glass Week™ in 2011
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### GGG Glass Group

**GGS 506 PAD**

**GGS 504 PAD**

**GGS 503 PAD**

**GGS 501 PAD**

**GGS 502 PAD**

**GGS 505 PAD**

### Year | Model | GGG Part# | NAGS#
--- | --- | --- | ---
**Audi**
| 05-10 | A3 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2580, 3203 |
| 05-08 | A4 / S4 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2579, 2691, 2947, 2948 |
| 08- | A5 / S5 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2912, 2913 |
| 10- | A5 Conv. | GGS 506 PAD | FW 3195, 3216 |
| 05-10 | A6 / S6 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2530, 2545, 2797, 2798 |
| 04-09 | A8 / S8 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2399, 2633, 2806, 3085 |
| 07-11 | TT Coupe | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2725 |
| 08-11 | TT Roadster | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2898 |
| 07-10 | Q7 | GGS 506 PAD | FW 2637, 2887 |

**Lexus**
| 02-06 | ES | GGS 503 PAD | FW 2277 |
| 07-09 | ES | GGS 504 PAD | FW 2684, 2685 |
| 05-07 | GS | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2570, 2688 |
| 08- | GS | GGS 502 PAD | FW 2996 |
| 03-09 | GX | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2366, 2681 |
| 05-07 | IS | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2624 |
| 08- | IS | GGS 502 PAD | FW 2624, 3299 |
| 10- | IS Conv. | GGS 505 PAD | FW 3116, 3275 |
| 00-06 | LS | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2222, 2472 |
| 07- | LS | GGS 503 PAD | FW 2728, 2760, 2762, 2764 |
| 98-07 | LX | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2378, 2379, 2519, 2520 |
| 08- | LX | GGS 503 PAD | FW 2909 |
| 04-09 | RX | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2390, 2414, 2621, 2622 |
| 10- | RX | GGS 504 PAD | FW 3053, 3054, 3152, 3153, 3270, 3271 |

**Porsche**
| 11- | Cayenne | GGS 506 PAD | FW 3287, 3288, 3289 |
| 10- | Panamera | GGS 506 PAD | FW 3173 |

**Toyota**
| 03-10 | Avalon | GGS 501 PAD | FW 2354, 2534, 2980 |
| 11- | Sienna | GGS 504 PAD | FW 3199, 3241 |

**VW**
| 11- | Touareg | GGS 506 PAD | FW 3285, 3286 |

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Shhh …

by Penny Stacey

The quality OEM versus aftermarket parts debate certainly is not a new one in the industry, but in recent months it’s become an increasingly prevalent controversy in both the auto glass and collision repair industries. Just this month, it has achieved new visibility with the release of a Consumer Reports article encouraging consumers to demand OEM parts in some instances.

On page 18, you’ll see an inside look at this issue from the perspectives of several industry experts who offered their insights into the differences, the possibilities for making “OE-like” products and more. You’ll also see a call from an industry executive for aftermarket parts manufacturers to come forward and prove their products live up to the standards set by OE manufacturers (see page 6).

But it seems many are silent on the subject. During one of my interviews, I asked one industry expert why he thinks manufacturers and others are so tight-lipped on the issue.

“OE manufacturers often use different or looser specs for aftermarket products.”

—Russ Corsi

But what happens when insurers are pushing cheaper, aftermarket products? What do you do then? And, how do you determine what’s safe?

I’d like to hear your thoughts on this. I hear from readers who struggle with glass quality on a daily basis. But how are you dealing with these problems? And how do you choose whether to use OE or aftermarket glass in any given installation? Is it up to the consumer, or the insurer or some other entity?

I’m looking forward to learning your thoughts on the topic, and hope to feature them in a future article written about the installer’s perspective on the OEM versus aftermarket issue. Hopefully, together we can get to the bottom of the issue—and can remove the hush that seems to strike the industry when the topic arises.

Please e-mail me at pstacey@glass.com, or give me a call at 540/7220-5584, ext. 148.

P.S. In other news, the dates have been set for next year’s Auto Glass Week™ event, which will be held in Memphis, Tenn., September 15-17. Turn to page 20 for the dates and details, and be sure to check out the event website, www.autoglassweek.com, for more information.

Penny Stacey is the editor of AGRR magazine.
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The Aftermarket Issue

by Alan Epley

RECENTLY, FORD MOTOR Company raised the issue of replacing automobile structural crash parts with original equipment manufactured (OEM) parts versus aftermarket parts and consumer safety. Ford's testing results disclosed that there are significant differences in the raw materials that compose the OEM and aftermarket parts. The difference was so extreme that Ford engineer Roger Chen rated the material comparison as being “like tofu versus a rock.” The results also indicated that, in addition to raw material differences, the testing showed that manufacturing processes used in making aftermarket parts were inferior when compared to those used in making OEM parts.

Over the course of the last several months, the Independent Glass Association (IGA) has been voicing concerns over the quality of windshields in the same regard. Members have reported incidents whereby the rearview mirror has been detaching from the windshield and taking shards of glass with it. Other comments received by the association from its members have included clarity issues and the fact that windshields are not being cut to the exact opening of the vehicle.

Questions must be raised. Do aftermarket windshields afford the same amount of protection to vehicle occupants in the event of a rollover accident or in the deployment of the passenger side airbag? Is the fact that a shop installs a windshield in accordance with the Auto Glass Replacement Safety Standard (AGRSS) enough to offset any safety factors that may be compromised due to the installation of inferior glass? While we debate these issues, we must consider that officials at Ford Motor Co. raised concerns about comparision of the structural parts of an automobile. Isn't the windshield a structural part of a vehicle?

Structural Stability

Since the windshield is a structural part of an automobile and an integral part of a vehicle's safety system, the Independent Glass Association (IGA) is taking the initiative to include windshields in the discussion and is making every effort to have them included in the testing process. The association is planning to establish a tracking system to facilitate the tracking of inferior glass in the marketplace. Once established, shops will have the ability to report defective glass to the IGA, which will, in turn, monitor glass for defect patterns. In addition, the IGA is discussing the inclusion of automobile replacement glass into the testing procedures by the big three automobile manufacturers. Thus far, I am happy to report that those discussions are progressing and there is receptivity from manufacturers to do so.

On a related matter, Consumer Reports magazine recently reported that consumers must insist on OEM replacement parts in the event that their vehicle has been damaged in a crash. The article points out that insurance companies pressure automotive repair shops to use aftermarket replacement parts in an effort to contain the cost of a claim, but may compromise consumer safety in the process. And naturally, the aftermarket parts manufacturers argue that the cited Ford testing was flawed.

The Time is Now

The IGA believes that the time to make the determination as to the relevance of this debate is now. Are aftermarket parts every bit as good as OEM parts? Every insurance company, governmental authority, parts manufacturer and repair shop has the responsibility to protect the consumer by making certain that every motor vehicle, whether damaged in an accident or in need of a replacement windshield, is restored to its pre-loss condition.

The IGA believes that the debate initiated by the testing of OEM and aftermarket parts conducted by Ford Motor Co. must be expanded to include automobile glass and undertaken by more manufacturers, including General Motors and Chrysler. And the burden to contradict those results with factual proof remains the responsibility of the aftermarket parts and glass manufacturers. A windshield that will not support the roof in the event of a rollover or the airbag in the event that it is deployed is unacceptable at any cost.

Alan Epley is president of the Independent Glass Association (IGA). He also serves as president of Southern Glass and Plastic in Columbia, S.C. Mr. Epley’s opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.

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Benefiting from Product Diversification

by Carl Tompkins

FOR YEARS I’VE HAD THE opportunity to share the benefits of adding new products and services to a core product type that represents the majority of an organization’s income. I refer to this as product diversification. What remains surprising is how many companies struggle with this subject, failing to benefit from its merits.

Motivation

I’ll start with some motivational concepts in order to make sure that you are willing to pursue product diversification. First off, so many people within the AGR industry suffer from having only one product to sell—auto glass. This creates enormous vulnerability to failure—if something goes haywire in the industry, eliminating your ability to sell auto glass, you’re out of business. A fallback plan for business survival is essential and, at minimum, requires your ability to sell auto glass, wiper blades, or glass cleaners to customers, which simplifies marketing toward benefiting from product diversification. From my own assessments of companies, I’ve found the first reason for failure often is that a company has no other products to sell. The second is that there is no persistence in the sale of the additional products. One company in Pennsylvania did poorly with its additional product sales and, following my review of the company program, discovered that the only thing missing was that the company’s employees were not promoting the product with every potential customer.

The second benefit of product diversification is new and additional revenue. For every auto glass replacement sold, product diversification creates the means to increase sales dollars by at least 15% (if not 20%) percent per job.

Also, product diversification does eliminate a lot of stress in the workplace as it keeps you from putting all your eggs in one basket. Having visited many glass shops over the years, those that seem to be most at ease with the difficult conditions that arise in the auto glass replacement industry are those that have more than one product to sell.

Getting Started

Adding new products and services to your business starts off with what is most important: product expertise. You must be knowledgeable in the features and benefits of the product, the competition, how to sell it, how to install it (if not an over-the-counter product sale), how to warranty it, and how to buy it. This knowledge allows you to associate with the best brands of products, receive adequate support from a manufacturer, and deliver an effective marketing approach that adds profit. A study conducted recently through Belmont University revealed that on the list of the top ten reasons why businesses fail, the sixth of these was adding new products that drag down the profitable ones. The risk of this occurrence is eliminated through product expertise.

The second most important step of effective product diversification is selecting products that complement your core business. For instance, auto glass installation companies would be advised to find products that relate to the automobile and, going even further, that relate to auto glass. Examples might be wiper blades or glass cleaners. This is important because it allows you to focus on one category of customers, which simplifies marketing and training and reduces selling costs.

The third element of effective product diversification is employee training. People within your organization must understand every element of product diversification, such as its importance and the role it plays in creating success. Next, they must be trained to sell the product and then receive proper management support to make it happen. Finally, management must measure each employee’s success and create proper forms of recognition.

Persistence

Persistence also plays an important role in product diversification. From my own assessments of companies that have not done well in product diversification, I’ve found the first reason for failure often is that a company has no other products to sell. The second is that there is no persistence in the sale of the additional products. One company in Pennsylvania did poorly with its additional product sales and, following my review of the company program, discovered that the only thing missing was that the company’s employees were not promoting the product with every potential customer.

Once the proper training and measurement procedures had taken place, they sold add-on products to 71 percent of their customers. Keep in mind that a customer willing to buy a core product from your company is six to seven times more likely to purchase additional products and services than someone who is merely shopping; make sure to take advantage of this selling opportunity.

All four of these points are critical toward benefiting from product diversification, but, again, should be followed in their written order to ensure that your time spent in growing your business yields rewarding dividends.

Carl Tompkins is the global marketing resources manager for SIKA Corp. in Madison Heights, Mich. He is based in Spokane, Wash. Mr. Tompkins’ opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.
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Part Ordering Made Easy

by Rob Rust

Once upon a time, when an independent shop owner or technician needed to provide a quote to a customer, he/she likely would have had to have taken the person’s phone number and promised to have given them a call back after looking up pricing for the glass part needed and doing the necessary calculations.

In the near past, sometimes this has required a call to one or more distributors to find the most economical price for the part in mind. And, in more recent years, while much of this information has been available online, it’s required customer service representatives or technicians to visit multiple websites and comparison-shop them—all while the customer waits impatiently.

Changing Times

Now, step into 2010. Gone are the days of multiple phone calls to multiple suppliers. The auto glass business has actually become quite unique in that shop owners and technicians are now able to price products in real time using a variety of software systems—all while speaking to the customer on the phone. This not only eliminates callbacks to customers—but probably saves many of them as well, as they no longer have the chance to shop around and find someone else with a ready-made “deal” while you’re calling around for pricing from your suppliers, all to find out when you call back that the work has already been given to one of your competitors.

We live in an “I-want-it-now” world. But none of that’s an issue anymore. Using the software available to us in today’s market, all of this can be avoided.

Modern software has the ability to gather those price and availability times and automatically select, markup and order those parts—all while the customer waits patiently.

Driving Technology

Rob Rust is the point-of-sale software sales manager for Quest Software in St. Johns, Mich. Mr. Rust’s opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.
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The 4400 Series

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UltraWiz® Quick Release
4408-Q
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UltraWiz® Quick Release
4413-Q
Select the 13” 4013-L for hard to reach adhesive in tight interior areas

UltraWiz® Quick Release
4418-Q
Select the 18” 4018-L to extend your cutting reach below the dashboard

UltraWiz® Quick Release
4424-Q
Select the 24” 4024-L, our longest knife, to extend your cutting reach below the deepest dashboard

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The 5200 Series

5202-M 1”
5201-M ¾”
5204-M 1½”

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GUARDIAN INDUSTRIES HAS formed a joint partnership with a company called LRST LLC. The joint venture was formed “to manage and grow its retail auto glass business,” according to a company statement.

LRST LLC was formed by four equal partners—former Pittsburgh Glass Works (PGW) executives Jim Latch and Marc Talbert, along with former GlasPro/Elite Auto Glass founders Jerry Ray and Neil Smith. The new joint venture will be named Guardian Auto Glass LLC.

Guardian will have the majority ownership in the new Guardian Auto joint venture company.

“We see the new joint venture enhancing Guardian’s current operations as well as key in developing a nationwide presence,” says Mike Morrison, president of Guardian’s Automotive group. “Guardian is focusing on growing all its businesses and we anticipate greater and stronger opportunities in the automotive retail glass (ARG) segment as a result of this strategic decision.”

With the formation of Guardian Auto, the new retail joint venture will be managed and operated by the LRST partners. Latch was involved in the creation of LYNX Services and had responsibility for PPG’s ARG distribution and services business. Talbert was president of PPG Auto Glass and also had responsibility for PGW’s ARG distribution business.

Ray and Smith were two of the founders and owners of the 34-store GlasPro/Elite retail business that was purchased by Belron in 2005. They previously partnered in the formation of Western Windshields.
LEGAL NEWS

Safelite Fined $52,000 by Texas Dept. of Insurance

Safelite Glass Corp. recently was fined $52,000 by the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) for allegedly providing continuing education (CE) courses in the state after its provider registration and course certifications had expired.

According to the final consent order, Safelite initially registered as a continuing education provider (for insurance courses) in May 1993, and, as the state of Texas began using Sircon for administration of the CE program, Safelite registered as a Sircon provider from September 2007 through September 2009, with its registration expiring on September 3, 2009. It re-registered as a provider on December 16, 2009.

In addition, the TDI alleges that registration for four of the CE courses Safelite teaches also had expired prior to September 2009. TDI claims that each of the four courses was taught between October 2007 and February 2009, before the company re-registered the courses on March 31, 2009.

Though the company did re-register the courses, TDI alleges all four courses were taught numerous times between October 2009 and November 2009, before the Safelite re-registered as a CE provider in December 2009.

“The situation in Texas was caused by an unfortunate administrative error—one we’re taking strong measures to prevent in the future by working with a compliance liaison and submitting quarterly compliance reports to the Texas Department of Insurance,” says Safelite spokesperson Melina Metzger.

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# Price Points
## Competitive Pricing and Stats

## 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt

For its recurring price points department, AGRR surveyed five major cities in the United States for the windshield replacement on a 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt (two-door coupe). As usual, the companies were told that insurance will not be involved and the customer wishes to pay for the windshield out of pocket.

AGRR also asked shops to break out parts and labor. When available, this is noted below. In some cases, shops were not willing to provide the breakdown—or would only include a portion of it—and this is noted accordingly.

### Replacement Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
<th>Glass Price</th>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>Urethane Kit</th>
<th>Glass % off NAGS</th>
<th>% off NAGS Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boise, Idaho</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shop #1</strong></td>
<td>$205.00</td>
<td>$115.00</td>
<td>$90.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shop #2</strong></td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shop #3</strong></td>
<td>$687.55</td>
<td>$398.55</td>
<td>$89.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shop #4</strong></td>
<td>$198.00</td>
<td>$113.00</td>
<td>$85.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>$272.64</td>
<td>$208.85</td>
<td>$88.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>$202.50</td>
<td>$115.00</td>
<td>$89.00</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-49.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Hartford, Conn.** | **Shop #1** | $220.00     | $142.00 | $48.00       | $30.00           | -37.4            | -35.8            |
|                    | **Shop #2** | $185.00     | $145.00 | $40.00       | N/A              | -36.1            | -46.0            |
|                    | **Shop #3** | $279.05     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -38.6            |
|                    | **Average** | $238.51     | $143.50 | $44.00       | N/A              | -36.7            | -30.4            |
|                    | **Median**  | $272.00     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -20.6            |

| **Helena, Mont.** | **Shop #1** | $235.00     | $125.00 | $110.00      | N/A              | -44.9            | -31.4            |
|                  | **Shop #2** | $210.00     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -38.7            |
|                  | **Shop #3** | $219.00     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -36.1            |
|                  | **Average** | $254.95     | $180.00 | $105.00      | N/A              | -20.6            | -25.8            |
|                  | **Median**  | $227.00     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -33.8            |

| **New Orleans, La.** | **Shop #1** | $185.00     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | -66.0            | -46.0            |
|                     | **Shop #2** | $245.84     | $121.06 | $85.00       | $20.00           | -46.6            | -28.3            |
|                     | **Shop #3** | $222.94     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -35.0            |
|                     | **Average** | $215.70     | $127.53 | $80.00       | N/A              | -43.8            | -37.1            |
|                     | **Median**  | $215.97     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -37.0            |

| **Sacramento, Calif.** | **Shop #1** | $189.10     | $129.10 | $60.00       | N/A              | -43.1            | -44.8            |
|                      | **Shop #2** | $210.00     | $90.00  | $100.00      | $20.00           | -60.3            | -38.7            |
|                      | **Shop #3** | $212.85     | N/A     | N/A          | N/A              | N/A              | -37.9            |
|                      | **Average** | $212.51     | $114.93 | $80.00       | $20.00           | -49.3            | -38.0            |
|                      | **Median**  | $211.43     | $125.70 | $80.00       | N/A              | -44.6            | -38.3            |

### Replacement Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
<th>Glass Price</th>
<th>Glass % Off NAGS</th>
<th>% off NAGS Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nat’l Average</strong></td>
<td>$238.86</td>
<td>$156.12</td>
<td>-31.1</td>
<td>-30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nat’l Median</strong></td>
<td>$215.93</td>
<td>$127.40</td>
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NORTHSTAR

Automotive Glass

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In these tough market conditions, it’s hard to compete when your competitor is buying parts several dollars cheaper than you. You can increase profits on your existing retail sales and add a new revenue stream with wholesale carry out! Even if you’re not ready to add wholesale, we can still help you get the world’s best buys on purchases of 500 to 1,000 windshields. You can order windshields in as few as 5 pieces per part number and tempered in as few as 3 pieces per part number to minimize your storage space.

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NORTHSTAR is proud to celebrate its 10th year with Bo Roberts of Northstar Auto Glass in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

With aggressive pricing from NORTHSTAR and a wide variety of glass parts, Bo Roberts, his son Chris and Mark Wendt, along with their hard work and dedication have built a very strong and solid independent wholesale and retail auto glass business in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
Companies from all over the world will gather in Las Vegas to display the best they have to offer at the Specialty Equipment Market Association’s (SEMA) annual show. SEMA, which takes place November 2-5 in Las Vegas, has divided the more than 1,500 exhibitors into 12 sections to make the show more visitor-friendly.

In addition to auto glass business opportunities, attendees will be looking to add new services to their companies. Once of the most popular add-ons for auto glass shops is window tinting, and shows like SEMA can provide an introduction to new products for companies testing the water. Attendees can talk to window film manufacturers and learn about the product, observe demonstrations and mingle with other tinters who know the challenges and benefits to learning the window tint business.

Read on for more information on growing and expanding your business with window film.

Film Debut
Booth #12225: Sun-Gard

Sun-Gard® will debut its newest film lines at this year’s SEMA show, including the new charcoal automotive window film series. This 1.5 premium-grade film is available in high-performance or non-reflective films.

Independent Referrals
Booth #12265: Delta Kits

Delta Kits, based in Eugene, Ore., has developed and launched a new referral website. The website, www.windshieldreferral.com, is a portal for independent windshield repair companies to gain visibility and attract customers. Companies can obtain a free listing on the website and other analysis options are also available. Representatives from Delta Kits will be available to answer questions about the new website and show attendees how it works.

Ride the Wave
Booth #12610: Glass Technology Inc.

Durango, Colo.-based Glass Technology will bring its new UV curing technology called Diamond BluWave™, which can be paired with the company’s product, Diamond Clear Resins™. According to the company, the high-intensity LED UV technology of Diamond BluWave allows for a break to cure quickly and with a strong bond.

Glass Technology also will provide information about its headlight restoration technology.

Revisit Repair

While visiting new companies to learn about add-ons don’t forget about old favorites. Along with window film exhibitors, auto glass repair companies will be showing their latest products and services on the SEMA show floor.

Happy Anniversary
Booth #1325: American Standard Window Film

American Standard Window Film (ASWF), a division of Erickson International and based in Las Vegas, will celebrate its one-year anniversary at the SEMA show this year. ASWF will be showcasing its five lines of automotive films. The lines also feature point-of-purchase marketing materials and retail displays.

Sun-Gard will also show its new paint protection product, DefenZall paint protection film, which has a seven-year manufacturer’s warranty. Both products will be available for hands-on installation demonstrations.

by Katie Hodge
Super Solar
Booth #11925: SunTek/Commonwealth Laminating & Coating
This year at SEMA SunTek/Commonwealth Laminating & Coating will offer a close-up look at its newest automotive window film.
The company will showcase its CarbonXP™ film, which is available in seven different VLTs (5, 18, 35, 45, 55, 70 and 80 percent) and has a lifetime warranty against peeling, cracking, adhesive failure and fading.
www.suntekfilms.com

Interactive Activity
Booth #11959: Nexfil USA
Nexfil USA will provide booth visitors with a first-hand look at its line of films. The company will have demo cars on-site for attendees to see actual installation of its films. Nexfil USA has also made its Nano IR films interactive by allowing attendees to perform heat-rejection testing, which will allow them to see the results first-hand.
www.nexfilusa.com

Enjoy the View
Booth #12317: WINTECH
Buena Park, Calif.-based WINTECH will showcase a few of its film products including NANO technology-based, environmentally friendly, energy-saving films. These films are designed to protect the consumer from the sun’s harmful UV rays and feature spectrally selective coatings.
www.wintechfilm.com

Taking Care
Booth #11811: Solutia
Solutia will roll into Las Vegas with plenty to show. The St. Louis-based company will display its various film lines including LLumar, Hüper Optik, FormulaOne high-performance auto tint and V-Kool. In addition to the film lines, paint protection film and high-performance film installation demonstrations, Solutia also will feature its new line of car care kits for consumers. The Window Film Care Kit and a Paint Protection Care Kit will both be available and can provide businesses an add-on option for customers, according to the company.
www.llumar.com

Beyond the Floor
Outside of the show floor, SEMA also educates and entertains. There are plenty of educational opportunities available to those in attendance. On the schedule this year are seminars on topics ranging from “New Car Buyer’s Aftermarket Intentions” to “Borrowing Money in Today’s Credit Jungle” to “Stand Out From the Crowd: Defining Your Company’s Value Proposition.” And for those in attendance who learn better hands-on, SEMA also has an enormous volume of demonstrations taking place on the show floor.

Entertainment and special guests will grace the stages and entertain attendees during the show. James Gregory, once described as “America’s Funniest Man,” will keep the crowd laughing at the SEMA Industry Awards Banquet. Other special guests include legendary off-road racer Rod Hall, Stacey David from SPEED’s show “Gearz,” MTV host Funkmaster Flex, the “Queen of Cars” Genevieve Chappell and many more. Visit www.semashow.com for more information including hotel reservations, show registration and a complete list of exhibitors.

Breaking News
Booth #12115: AGRR Magazine, WINDOW FILM Magazine
AGRR magazine and its sister publication, WINDOW FILM magazine, will be on-site with all the latest news and industry updates directly from the show floor. Stop by to find out how to receive the daily glassBYTES.com™ and weekly Focus on Film newsletters, pick up a copy of recent magazines or sign up to receive them digitally to catch up on all of the latest auto glass and window film news.

Six Picks
Booth #11911: 3M
The 3M Company will exhibit a full display of its window film lines. The St. Paul, Minn.-based company will bring its color-stable automotive window film, ceramic series automotive window film, Crystalline automotive film, FX HP automotive window film and its newest addition—FX Premium automotive window film. Each of the six lines offers 99 percent UV protection and a sun protection factor up to 1,000.
www.3M.com

Katie Hodge is an assistant editor for AGRR magazine.
"Don’t let your insurance company pressure you into using aftermarket collision-repair body parts, especially safety-related ones.” This warning appeared in the October issue of *Consumer Reports* (CR) magazine as a caution to consumers, in light of many recent open discussions about whether aftermarket and OEM parts are of like kind and quality.

The article also followed the recent release of a video by Ford showing a saw cutting through two different bumpers, one made by Ford and one by an aftermarket manufacturer. In the video, available on line at AGRR magazine’s www.agrrmag.com/studio page, an engineer shows that a saw easily cuts through an aftermarket bumper, while the Ford bumper actually dulls the saw’s blades and resists being cut.

CR goes on to urge consumers to go so far as to go back to a repair shop if non-OEM parts have been installed—and warns against insurers that might demand the use of cheap, aftermarket parts. “If your car has already been repaired, check your invoices or ask your insurer to see whether aftermarket parts were used. If knock-offs were used, demand that they be replaced with original-equipment,” adds the report.

While these arguments (and the recent video) often revolve around collision repair parts, the CR warning includes any “safety-related” parts—and we in the auto glass industry are fully aware of the role a windshield plays in a vehicle’s safety equation. So AGRR sought out several industry experts with their thoughts on this controversial subject.

### The Differences

The most important question to answer, when it comes to OEM and aftermarket windshields, is this: are there actual differences in the end product? Is one safer than the other, or safer for the end customer?

Many are tight-lipped on the issue; several major U.S. OEM manufacturers declined to be interviewed on the topic. Guardian Automotive president Mike Morrison offered his thoughts, but advised AGRR magazine there’s no definitive answer.

“We don’t discount [ignore] one or the other,” he said during an interview in late-August (see related story in September/October AGRR, page 30). “We say the OE business is here and the aftermarket is here.”

Chevrolet glass engineer Tom Hagen has a different take on the issue, from a technical perspective.

“I guess, as the OE, I would say if [the glass] meets every requirement on the engineering side, which obviously would be all of the dimensional data, it meets all the solar performance and transmission data, if it meets all the quality standards for distortion, noise transmission and things like that, it would be OE-equivalent,” he says.

But there are other items to consider, he says.

“Having said that, I did leave out all the regulatory requirements such as Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards,” says Hagen. “There is wide separation there. Some are very good, and some are not very good. OE to me sets a very different standard on the parts. I cannot control the aftermarket so I cannot say whether it meets OE standards.”

Industry consultant Russ Corsi, who worked for PPG for many years in the auto glass arena, offers a similar outlook.

Editor’s Note: This article is the first in a series.
“It’s possible [to create an OEE] product,” he says. “The manufacturer would have to get the engineering data and use that data to develop the tooling. That’s the first step.”

But the next step is crucial.

“The inspection process is what’s critical,” Corsi says. “Typically the OEM products have very strict criteria and very tight tolerances. So you can make an aftermarket product, but it won’t necessarily meet the original-equipment specifications.”

And when the tolerances do differ, sometimes the human touch of an aftermarket installer is what makes an aftermarket product still work.

“A lot of OE product is installed robotically on an assembly line,” he says, “but if you have a piece of glass that is being installed in the aftermarket, if the size is a little different, [the installer] can make it work in a way that’s safe for the vehicle and its occupants.”

Corsi explains that windshields are checked on a particular fixture for bend and other tolerances, and uses this to offer an example of differences that could be found in the parts.

“Let’s say the off bend for the original-equipment windshield is 2 mm off the fixture, but the [aftermarket manufacturer] might discover that 4 mm off works just fine,” he says. “Aftermarket manufacturers operate in a different realm of specifications that will still work with the installation.”

Corsi also says he feels that suppliers that make OE products—but might not make OE across the board—have a different set of tools available to make glass products, and that plays a role as well.

“If you’re strictly an aftermarket supplier, it’s obviously a lot more difficult to make a product to the same specifications,” he says. “You might not have the equipment to meet the specs that an OE can.”

Still, though, Corsi says OE suppliers might not always use the same tolerances for their aftermarket products.

“OE manufacturers often use different or looser specs for aftermarket products,” he says.

www.agrrmag.com

“The Burden of Proof

While it is up to manufacturers to provide quality products, installers also have a responsibility to make sure the products they utilize are safe, Corsi says.

“The key is to make sure it’s going to work and that the consumer is happy, and that it’s going to fit properly and safely,” he says. “That’s part of the AGRSS Standard as well.”

But still, he says, manufacturers should take a look at the products in the factory to ensure that fit won’t be a problem. “Quality manufacturers should trial-install the glass in the vehicles to make sure there aren’t any issues,” Corsi adds.

“We Choose Not to Use Aftermarket”

When Rich Lutton, owner of Metro Glass in Omaha, Neb., purchased his auto glass business four years ago, he focused mainly on using aftermarket parts—due to price and what he heard from others.

“We didn’t know the difference in an aftermarket and an OEM product, and we thought we had to go with the aftermarket to meet pricing needs,” he says.

But today, Lutton aims to only use OEM parts whenever possible.

“We choose not to use glass from the aftermarket manufacturers,” he says, “and when people call us we tell them we use OEM glass.”

However, there are some instances where he’s found aftermarket is a necessity.

“When I pull up a 1995 Saturn, and the OEM windshield is going to make it a $500 job that’s worth more than the car, I give the customer a choice,” says Lutton. “We explain everything to our customers…”

And what about the customer’s delay? Fortunately for Lutton, who does mostly in-shop work, the customer had left the vehicle at the business, so there was no further interruption for him. But he says he also learned from the experience, that, beyond the OEM versus aftermarket debate, not all aftermarket manufacturers are created equal.

“There are several different variations of aftermarket quality and some are better than others,” he adds.

And though the business has lost some potential customers with his decision to use OEM only, Lutton says it’s paid off in the long run.

“We’ve never looked back,” he says. “We’ve lost a lot of customers, but that’s okay—we feel we’ve gained better customers who are willing to pay more for safety.”

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The Burden of Proof

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What are your thoughts on this issue? Please e-mail pstacey@glass.com.

Penny Stacey is the editor of AGRR magazine.
If your calendar isn’t already marked, you’ll want to be sure to start planning early to be in Memphis, Tenn., next September. For the first time, all of the major auto glass groups have announced that they will join together in 2011 for one educational and exhibition event, Auto Glass Week™ to be held September 15-17, 2011, at the Memphis Cook Convention Center and Memphis Marriott Downtown.

The 2011 event will bring together the Auto Glass Replacement Safety Standards (AGRSS) Council Inc., the Independent Glass Association (IGA), the National Glass Association (NGA), National Windshield Repair Association (NWRA), and AGRR magazine’s Pilkington Classic Auto Glass Technician Olympics and the Walt Gorman Memorial Windshield Repair Olympics for one event in one venue. The International Window Film Tint-Off and Conference also will be held concurrently.

“This joint event is an incredible testament to the desire by all the groups to preserve and advance the auto glass industry as a unique industry,” said a joint statement issued by the groups. “We all believe in the future of the auto glass industry.”

Auto Glass Week will be managed by AGRR magazine.

The Venue

The 2011 Auto Glass Week will take place in the heart of Memphis at the Memphis Marriott Downtown and the Memphis Cook Convention Center. The hotel, which boasts the title of “largest hotel in Memphis,” has spectacular views of the skyline and the convenience of being just a few steps from the competitions and seminars.

The 19-floor hotel and convention center are attached by a short skywalk.

Home of the Blues: Memphis, Tenn.

You may want to consider adding some time on to your stay in Memphis (or bringing a spouse along), as there is much to do in the city. The city is known for its exceptional barbecue, blues music and rock ‘n roll history. Attendees can take a stroll down Beale Street, which honors many of Memphis’ most famous and influential musicians, to take in the sights and sounds of this famous stretch of restaurants, bars and stores. With close proximity to both shopping and the Mississippi River, visitors will have the option to enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities. Graceland, the home of the legendary Elvis Presley, is just a short drive and almost anywhere you go in Memphis you can find traditional Memphis barbecue.

Other local attractions include the nearby National Civil Rights Museum, AutoZone Park and the FedEx Forum.
and feature a fitness center, indoor pool, coffee shop and a UPS store for shipping needs. The hotel is located on the Memphis trolley line, which provides attendees with easy transportation to restaurants, shopping and other attractions.

Attendees can stay at the hotel for the low room rate of $99, which includes free Internet. Reserve your room by contacting the Memphis Marriott Downtown at 901/527-7300.

More to Come

Further details will be announced in the coming months. Be sure to watch glassBYTEs.com™, along with the event website, www.autoglassweek.com, for more information as it is released. If you’re interested in competing in either the AGTO or WRO, please contact Holly Biller at hbiller@glass.com or at 540/720-5584, ext. 123.
10 Ways That Work to Market Your Business

by Debra Levy

No matter whether the market is up or down, business owners are always looking for new ways to attract business, get customers to notice you and to keep past customers as repeaters. Following are new ideas designed for auto glass businesses to market themselves simply and economically, that I’ve seen work.

1. Attend both traditional and non-traditional events. It’s often helpful to attend both auto and insurance events where you might be able to reach out. But also consider attending less traditional events such as bridal shows, safety events, antique car shows and environmental events (especially for windshield repair businesses) to speak people about your services. Customize your offerings for the event in question. For example, at an environmental show, promote your efforts to be green. At bridal shows, perhaps you could offer car safety packets and hold a drawing and award one lucky bride-to-be a coupon for future service.

2. Wrap your vehicle. Show what you do and how you can help by having your company vehicles wrapped in a way that shows potential customers clearly what you do. If cost is an issue, you might be able to barter with a wrap provider, such as a window film company, to provide work or even referrals in return for the service.

3. Network everywhere. Look into joining your local Chamber of Commerce to meet other business owners and potential customers. Offering demonstrations is a major part of this—especially for windshield repair technicians, who can easily and economically demonstrate the service they provide to potential customers who might not have even known that it exists.

4. E-mails are as good as gold.

E-mail is going to be the future of the auto glass industry, and collecting e-mails from your customers and potential customers can create marketing lists for the future. Once you’ve compiled the e-mail addresses, every time you have a special or something exciting that happens, you can inform past and potential customers of this. You also can market seasonally using the e-mail list you develop. For example, in the fall you might send out press releases, warning potential customers about back-to-school dangers and suggesting they pay attention to the cleanliness of their windshields at this time for safety purposes.

5. Market to keep customers from cradle-to-grave.

Aim to get that customer for life. Record the date of a customer’s wedding and send him/her a card on that date saying “Happy Anniversary.” You also can track children’s ages, so when a customer’s child is nearing driving age, you can send a new driver alert.

Others have found success conducting demonstrations for drivers’ education students and sponsoring small scholarships for graduating high school seniors.


Many auto glass shop owners have found success with becoming certified child safety seat inspectors and using this ability either at local safety fairs, or even having customizers bring the vehicles into their shops. This helps potential customers not only come to recognize your brand, but also helps show your company is an authority on matters related to safety.

7. Become registered with the Auto Glass Replacement Safety Standards (AGRSS) Council. By becoming AGRSS-registered, you not only can utilize the registered logo in your marketing, but also can become listed on www.safewindshields.org, where many consumers locate auto glass businesses, and can utilize your status as an AGRSS-registered shop to show customers exactly how committed you are to safety and your customers’ well-being.

8. Be a big fish in a small pond.

This piece of advice comes from Cindy Rowe, founder of Rowe Auto Glass in Harrisburg, Pa. Early on, company founder Cindy Rowe-Taylor made a decision to dominate the local, market of Harrisburg, Pa., and that she did for more than 20 years until she and her husband, David Taylor, sold their company in 2008.

Others can use the same strategy. Try to make everyone in the town in which you live start thinking about your business when they need auto glass repair or replacement work. Using this mindset, you can be the big fish in the pond, if you choose the size of the pond carefully.

9. Utilize social media.

It’s all over the media these days—Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and the other social media sites out there. But you might be asking yourself, “Why bother?” Well, the main reason to “bother” with these sites is that’s where all your customers (and potential customers) are.

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If you have a television commercial, you might consider placing this on YouTube. If not, you might simply make a page about your company on Facebook and encourage your customers to “like” it. Everytime someone “likes” your company, your name will be popping up on the Facebook newsfeeds of your customers’ Facebook friends. It’s free, so there’s no economical investment—just a little time in setting it up and updating every so often to keep your name popping up on those same customers’ newsfeeds.

10 Publicize your company. Always remember that a lot of what you do is promote-able. Send out press releases about what you’re doing, or come up with an innovative press release that will get media attention.

For example, several months ago United Kingdom-based Auto Windscreens issued a press release about how people might respond to being cheated on by a spouse or significant other and highlighted that many of those surveyed advised they would be prone to damage the spouse/significant other’s vehicle’s glass. The story was picked up in newspapers across the world, each of which referenced the company’s name.

If you attend Chamber of Commerce meetings, participate in local activities, or attend industry conferences, promote that, too. Newspapers often are looking for local companies to highlight and this is a simple way to get some extra exposure.

Debra Levy is the publisher of AGRR magazine and the president of AGRR’s parent company, Key Communications Inc.
Repairing the Edge Crack

by Richard Campfield

Editor’s Note: This is the first part in a series.

CRACK REPAIR HAS BEEN A part of the windshield repair industry for more than two decades.

The most important and critical component of crack repair is the resin used. You must know a resin’s properties and use the right resins. The resins have to be able to deal with four stresses, excluding the thermal stress from exposure.

The Edge Crack

Ninety percent of cracks repairs are edge cracks due to both residual stress and induced stress at the edge of the windshield. As with any adhesive application you must understand the stresses you are dealing with in order to obtain a proper bond.

Residual stress is created during the annealing or cooling process after the glass has been bent and molded and comes out of the oven. The level or magnitude of residual stress can be limited by controlling the cooling rate through the annealing range. This prevents molecules from splitting apart by the varying rates of cooling occurring at the edge area. This phenomenon causes a perimeter band of residual tensile stress and is hence the weakest area of the windshield. Very quick cooling results in high stress levels while slow cooling reduces the levels and hence increases the time and cost to manufacture the windshield. A band of tension exists just in from the edge. This tensile stress will taper to zero usually 1.5 inches from the edge. This area is called the “weak spot” by windshield manufacturing engineers.

Induced Stress

Induced stress comes from the installation and is also referred to as “installation stress.” This is the stress that causes the fracture in the “weak spot” to crack and is also why nine out of ten cracks will be longer than 6 inches. Because the windshield is being glued to the vehicle at its weakest area, the residual stress is both increased in magnitude and expands to about 2 inches in from the edge. You can feel the induced stress by knocking with your knuckle at the edge and going inward until you feel and hear it change. This usually occurs 4 to 5 inches inward. This is the stress your resin must be able to handle. This stress causes the fracture to split apart (outward or perpendicular to the crack), creating a gap. The stress upon cracking is relieved for the time being and then the opposing lamination stress pulls the crack back together, usually after it has cracked 8-12 inches and the crack stops. This is why an edge crack has a wide gap at the edge and it has to be pried open at the point to inject resin.

If the resin does not have the strength to hold the stress at the edge or it loses strength after exposure, it will look like this after a few months.

The lamination stress is why stone breaks outside of the “weak spot” do not crack without an outside force, such as temperature change.
Lamination Stress

The lamination stress is why stone breaks out of the “weak spot” do not crack without an outside force, such as temperature change (see Figure 2). This is an inward stress from the bonding of the PVB to the glass. This is the stress that stops the crack when it becomes greater than the induced stress, which is usually at 8-12 inches.

Surface Tension

There are mechanical bonds and a chemical bond to be achieved. The strongest and most durable bond to glass is achieved with acrylic adhesives. Surface tension is created with acrylics because they are attracted to the glass and not the PVB, so when they are cured they will pull off of the PVB as the molecules crosslink/chemically bond with the glass. Since there is no chemical bond to the PVB, you must bond mechanically to the PVB or the repair will have a line of refraction, which is a separation between the resin and the PVB. The resin viscosity controls and determines this bond to the PVB. The viscosity has to be such that it is mechanical enough to stay put while curing (see the field tests in (my) Patent No. 5,425,827).

Working with different temperatures affects the windshield repair resin and can call for alternative resin applications, which we will cover later in this series. In the next issue, I will cover the tools needed to repair edge cracks and their functions.

Richard Campfield is the founder and president of Ultra Bond Inc. in Grand Junction, Colo. Mr. Campfield’s opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.
Scratch Removal Standards

by Mike Boyle

Standards are important in any industry. They create a benchmark, a process and a guide. And, when they’re available, they also give an industry the opportunity to show consumers and customers how something is done, the quality of a service and more.

Today the auto glass industry has two main standards, one for replacement, the Auto Glass Replacement Safety Standard (AGRSS™), and one for repair, the Repair of Laminated Auto Glass Standard (ROLAGS™).

Both were developed by industry groups that are committed to quality and wanted to further the professionalism of the industry, and today both are used as benchmarks for work. The ROLAGS Standard, specifically, governs not only what type of auto glass damage can be repaired but also the process that should be followed, performance of the final repair and more. It was the result of many years of work by a group of people committed to the growth of the repair industry from both the National Windshield Repair Association (NWRA) and the National Glass Association.

In fact, the NWRA recently became the secretariat for future administration of the ROLAGS Standard, which is an official ANSI-recognized standard.

Where Now?

But what’s next? Should the NWRA and those on the ROLAGS committee stop with what they’ve already developed? No, they shouldn’t. The ROLAGS Standard is reviewed and updated periodically, to make sure that it’s always current and in-line with the industry’s current needs.

Changes are made through a detailed process followed by the ROLAGS committee and monitored by ANSI.

But that’s not the only other step. The NWRA, and its parent organization, the Global Glass Conservation Alliance (GGCA), also continually monitor the needs of the industry to determine whether other standards are needed. And, as the need for scratch removal of architectural glass has grown in recent years, the Scratch Removal Council, also a part of the GGCA, has determined that there should be standards for this process as well. The group currently is in the process of undertaking this effort.

Though it’s still early in the process, much like the ROLAGS Standard, we anticipate that the new scratch removal standards will address not only the process for removing a scratch, but also the types of damage and how they vary.

Get Involved Now

One of the most important parts of developing a standard like this is to make sure that those developing the standard represent a fair cross-section of those whom the standards will affect. That means the group should consist of retailers offering the service, those who manufacture the equipment and ideally some end-users of the service as well.

If you are in any of these groups, or another related to the scratch removal field, the time to get involved is now. Please visit www.glassconservation.org today to share your thoughts with us, or e-mail me personally at mboyle@nwraassn.org.

We look forward to working with you—and to developing scratch removal as a common practice.

Mike Boyle is the past president of the NWRA. He also serves as president of Glass Mechanix in Bend, Ore. Mr. Boyle’s opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.

Mark Your Calendar!

The National Windshield Repair Association will hold its annual conference as part of Auto Glass Week™ 2011 in Memphis, Tenn., September 15-17. See page 20 for more information.

mboyle@nwraassn.org

■
THE REPAIR OF LAMINATED Auto Glass Standards (ROLAGS) Committee met in Las Vegas in October for its first time under the auspices of a new secretariat, the National Windshield Repair Association.

The committee chose a new chairperson—Keith Beveridge of Novus—and also reconstituted its marketing committee, which will be chaired by Rich Campfield of Ultrabond. Members also voted to review operating procedures and to wait to submit a set of changes to the standard to ANSI until recommendations from the Product Performance Subcommittee are completed and ready.

“We plan to move quickly to make up some transition time,” said Beveridge. “And new participants are always welcome to be part of the process.”

The ROLAGS Committee is an ANSI-accredited standards developer that has developed the standard for windshield repair. Its next in-person meeting of the full committee will be held in March.

BRIEFLY …

NOVUS Glass has new franchisees in Richmond, Ind., and Troy, Va. The new Indiana franchise is owned by Gary Hamilton, and Matt and Amy Morris are the new proprietors of the Virginia franchise … Glasspro Systems has moved its headquarters to New Port, N.C. The company previously was located in Rockville, Ill. (�建www.glassprosystems.com) …

COMPANY NEWS

An App for Glass: United Kingdom-Based Auto Windscreens Launches iPhone “Chip Checker”

United Kingdom-based Auto Windscreens has designed an iPhone application that allows consumers to take photos of chips in their windshields to determine whether the damage is repairable.

The application, developed by the United Kingdom-based Auto Windscreens, allows consumers to not only determine whether the rock chips in their windshields are repairable by the company’s standards but also to book the work on their phones. In addition, the application includes a list of United Kingdom-based insurers in a section called “Is It Free?” to allow potential customers to tell quickly if a deductible will apply to the work.

The first step included in the application has the user select the area of the windshield in which the damage is located. Then, the iPhone is used to take a photo of the damage (using a credit card to keep the appropriate distance between the phone and the windshield). A circle then appears on top of the damage; if the damage fits inside the circle, Auto Windscreens deems the rock chip repairable and offers the consumer a form within the application to provide details on the type of car, preferred date for appointment and personal contact info.

The system is estimated to permit rock chips one centimeter or smaller to be repaired. Visit www.agrrmag.com/studio and click on the September newscast to view a video demo of the application.
Dow Names New Global Marketing Director for Adhesives

Dow Automotive Systems has named Tony Buchan as its global marketing director for adhesives. Effective immediately, Buchan assumes responsibility for overall business growth and technology innovation, focusing on all adhesive technologies across OEM, aftermarket and commercial transportation market segments, as well as major Tier 1 suppliers and distribution partners.

Before joining Dow, Buchan was regional vice president for the business unit industry at Sika AG. While at Sika, he held several other positions including: vice president, corporate transportation, and industry general manager for the United Kingdom (UK). Prior to that, Buchan held a variety of leadership positions at Dow Automotive, Dexter and ITW Plexus.

Buchan, who will be based in the UK, holds a degree in chemistry from UCC in Ireland.

Safelite Announces New Market Managers

Safelite AutoGlass recently promoted Chuck Pertzh to general manager of the company’s Des Moines, Iowa, market, and hired Jeff Gillespie to serve as the company’s Wichita, Kan., market manager.

Pertzh worked as a technician for Auto Glass Center for 13 years before becoming a store manager in Iowa City. After serving as store manager for four years for Auto Glass Center, Pertzh was placed in charge of the two largest stores in the Des Moines market, where he spent six years managing their growth, according to Safelite, which he joined through its acquisition of Auto Glass Center last year.

Gillespie previously worked with Payless Cashways for 13 years in various roles, including store manager. He then spent eight years as an area manager with Coinstar Entertainment Services.

Glass Doctor named Billy Culpepper of the Glass Doctor of Metro Atlanta franchise the National Service Professional of the Year during its 2010 Annual Reunion Conference in San Antonio.
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www.agrrmag.com  November/December 2010  AGRR 31
When Bob Birkhauser, president of AEGIS Tools International, and his wife, Caryn, operations manager, purchased a 35-acre farm eight years ago, they thought doing some gardening and farming in their spare time would simply be a fun pastime.

“Originally we were looking at these agricultural opportunities as a hobby,” says Bob, who spent summers on farms in Ohio while growing up and learned to drive a tractor before he was 10 years old.

Caryn, who was raised in New York City and has a degree in agricultural economics, agrees. “I was looking at something that was going to be relaxing in my later years,” she says.

However, their daughters, Liz, 28, and Katie, 26, had other plans in mind. Two years ago, Liz (who also works at AEGIS during the winter months) decided to launch a community-supported agricultural farm (CSA) on the land. She began cultivating the land and began planting a variety of herbs both for medicinal and cooking purposes, vegetables, edible flowers, and some fruits. So far they’ve planted five acres of the land and plan to expand that area next year with both hops (which are used to brew beer) and mushrooms.

Liz currently has subscribers who receive weekly CSA boxes of produce grown on the farm. “She delivers every Thursday and has two delivery drop-offs,” says Caryn. “Each subscriber receives one of those big, reusable shopping bags overflowing with food.”

Likewise, their other daughter, Katie, is in the process of moving from her home in Olympia, Wash., to farm the land as well. She is a plant scientist with a background in mushrooms and fungus-related products. After returning to Wisconsin, she’ll continue to work as a consultant for Planted Productions LLC on its Life Box™ project; the company develops and sells packaging materials infused with seeds and fungi that can be planted after use.

While the Birkhausers don’t currently have any livestock on the farm, Caryn says they hope to add chicken and sheep next year. All of the crops are grown using organic methods, and they are in the process of obtaining certification. They also are planning to be a certified biodynamic farm.

“Everything at the farm must be there for at least three purposes—to repel deer, attract pollinators, improve the soil, etc.,” says Caryn, “It gets very complex, but it’s like treating the farm as a complete living system. You’re really creating a community.”

The Birkhausers’ son, Steve, 22, also has taken an interest.

“He worked at a landscape company and he’s going back to school for construction management. He’ll also take classes on farm equipment maintenance,” says Caryn.

And now that all three of their children are involved, the Birkhausers say their hobby has become a second business of sorts, and they’ve named the farm “Birch House Farms LLC” (as Birkhauser means “birch house” in German).

“When we got started, this didn’t have to work economically,” says Bob. “It was just something we had around us, and now that the kids are involved it has to work.”

And the Birkhausers are no strangers to family business; Bob’s parents, Robert and Bette, founded Auto Glass Specialists (known for its “Little Red Truck” branding), and Bob invented his own windshield repair system—and launched AEGIS—in 1982.
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