

## Utilizing Damage Appraisal Tools

Creating accurate damage appraisals isn't easy, and becomes even harder when you do not utilize the tools available. There are many industry sources that will help you document the individual repair steps needed to complete a repair. Since the key to creating an accurate damage appraisal is to itemize each step, let's look at how some of those tools can help you perfect this part of the repair process.

The first tool is contained in your estimating database. The internal procedure pages will illustrate steps required to remove a bumper with notes such as, "after headlamps are removed." Once you select R&I for the headlamps you might also find a note signifying they need to be aligned once reinstalled. You also want to become familiar with the procedure pages (P-pages) associated with your estimating system. The P-pages offer information related to what is and is not an included operation, as well as how times are calculated so you can validate each step.

Another tool I like is the Society of Collision Repair Specialists Guide to Complete Repair Planning. Using five key areas of Body, Paint, Structural, Mechanical and Detail, they itemize individual steps often missed when creating a damage appraisal. Some of what they identify are actually available in your estimating system database, and it is always best to use the database option rather than create a manual line. When that unique description fits a repair you are documenting, use the wording just as it is written in the guide. This will help you build consistency in your appraisals by using a common description. They also have an automated version called the Blueprint Optimization Tool which is available on a subscription basis.

The I-CAR Repairability Technical Support portal is another valuable tool that helps you identify processes for a specific make and model vehicle. This portal covers areas such as OEM Calibration Requirements, OEM Partial Part Replacement options, OEM Restraints System Part Replacement requirements, OEM Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Disable procedures, and OEM Glass Replacement processes as well as best practices for each. Reviewing the procedures in these categories gives you important information related to key vehicle systems and allows you to itemize essential repair steps.

A favorite tool of mine is the 3M Collision Application Procedures. It contains detailed procedures providing specifics in the collision repair process which are invaluable for documenting repair steps. The SOP for cavity wax not only tells you it needs to be applied in three coats but specifies that the panel should be cleaned prior to application. Under the Adhesive, Coatings and Sealers category they explain where and how each product should be applied. Reviewing the guides will show the big difference between seam sealers, adhesives and foams, and that using one where another one is required can cause issues. Documenting the right item on your damage appraisal will ensure the proper product is used and applied correctly.

An owner's manual might seem like an odd place to find helpful appraisal information, but they actually have a lot to offer. You can find information about tire replacement requirements, accepted coolant types, and specific options like adaptive headlamps. Owner's manuals can be found easily through an internet search which will then allow you to copy and paste information into your appraisal line notes.

The Database Enhancement Gateway is more than just a site to provide feedback and make recommendations for estimating database improvements. It also serves as a valuable source of information. I encourage you to search the inquiry database for the vehicle you are evaluating damage on to see what others have submitted. It was probably recognized by the estimating database provider but not corrected in their system yet. Just cite the inquiry number and take advantage of the resolution in your damage appraisal. Visit the website for damage appraisal tips and follow the link to their YouTube page.

ALLDATA Collision is really a must-have for anyone creating a damage appraisal and although it has a cost, it provides a great return on investment for those that use it. ALLDATA identifies steps required to complete a task, has an ADAS Quick Reference function that displays calibration requirements and a breakdown of Diagnostic Trouble Codes.

We all have heard that a picture is worth a thousand words, and this couldn't be truer when it comes to the importance of using photos when validating a repair. The Collision Industry Conference met with a group of insurers, repairers and industry partners to create Best Practices Guidelines for Digital Imaging. These guidelines describe how to take initial four corner photographs, instrument panel/warning light photos, loss related photos and unrelated damage photos. The part I like best is how they illustrate taking the four corner photos. If you follow the example you actually capture two adjacent planes of the vehicle, and when you are finished you have two angles on each panel.

All of the above are great tools to provide documentation information when appraising damage. However, they are not a replacement for Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) repair procedures. The tools I have mentioned help the appraiser with the *why* and *what*, but the repair procedures will give the technician the *how*. Once vehicle damage is documented and you have decided to commence with repairs, you must provide the proper procedures to them in order to perform the repair as the OEM prescribes.

As I said at the beginning, creating accurate damage appraisals isn't easy. I hope I have shown the value of how some tools of the trade can make your job easier. I encourage you to take a couple of the appraisals you have completed and apply what I have mentioned to see what you might have missed. Items missed are generally tasks your technicians and painters are performing, but without proper documentation no one is getting paid for those operations. Completing the research upfront during the initial appraisal will reduce supplements, improve touch time and decrease cycle time - all of which will undoubtedly improve customer satisfaction.