Increasing Efficiency

Start with thorough inspection and plan to cut down cycle times.

— *Dave S. Clark*

Completely changing the approach to estimating, planning and carrying out a repair is a major initiative, but if done correctly it can eliminate inefficiencies and drastically reduce cycle times. That was the key takeaway message from the Advanced Production Management workshop held in May, at the Color Compass Training Centre in Edmonton.

Improved processes

Offered through BASF as part of its Vision Plus University programs, the course goes through a step-by-step process that starts with changing the way an estimate is performed on a vehicle. Rather than visually inspecting the car, writing an estimate, ordering the parts, and starting the disassembly and repair, the process starts with disassembly and a thorough inspection.

"Generally you write an estimate, get the parts ordered and the vehicle is dispatched to the technician. The tech will then begin the repair, tear it down, sometimes break something and see if more parts are needed," says Allen Palechek, business development manager of Carlson Body Shop Supply, a division of Color Compass. "We can have as many as three or four parts orders on one job when it's done like that. We only want to have one or two."

Disassembly First

Under the Advanced Production Management system, the process starts with a pre-wash to clearly display the damage and remove any contaminants.

Following that, the vehicle is visually mapped to identify parts that need replacement, also noting unrelated damage.

Then, disassembly for repair is started. The entire damaged area is taken apart, as well as any adjacent areas that may be hiding damage. The training also covered best practices for removing and storing fasteners, so they can be easily re-installed once the repair is complete.

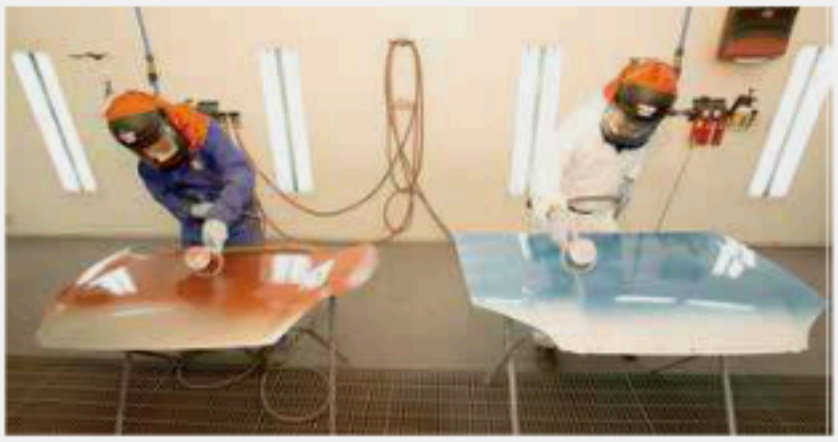
The disassembly typically takes two hours and once it is complete, the repair planner writes a meticulous plan, detailing all of the repairs required and all of the parts and materials that will be needed to complete the job. Having the vehicle completely disassembled and all of the parts checked before the parts order is made is key to the process. Then, when all the parts arrive, the job can start, without any need to stop until it is completed, which improves efficiency.

"To reduce costs, we are trying to reduce the 11 to 12 day cycle time to 5 to 7 days. We want touch time to go from two hours per day to four hours per day. Using this method is one way to get the vehicle worked on more consistently throughout the day," said Palechuk. "When we have to stop the repair process to get approval for additional repair time or to order parts, it stops the process, and the vehicle sits, increasing cycle time and decreasing touch time. Proactively managing the repair is key to successfully getting cars through the door quickly."

Series of training sessions

The workshop was the first of a 12-part series. Dave Swenson, Carlson's General Manager, says additonal courses will be offered if there is demand.

The Edmonton facility is one of the company's three training centres in Western Canada offering welding courses, paint and body; as well as management training.



Edmonton's Color Compass training centre hosts up to three classes a week, ranging from technical autobody courses to classroom workshops.

John Niechwiadowicz of Performance Consulting leads training in Advanced Production Management at the Color Compass training facility in Edmonton.

PHOTOS: DAVE S. CLARK