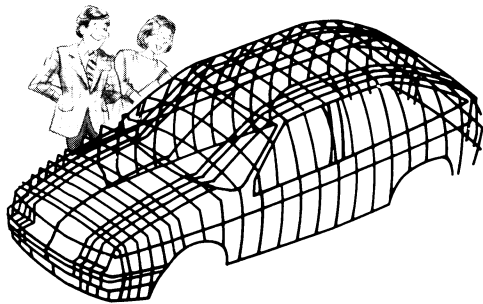


THE UNIBODY REVOLUTION



If you drive a late model car, chances are you're driving a unibody. Car makers adopted lightweight unibody construction after the rise in gas prices during the '70s. While today's cars are lighter, and more fuel efficient, they are also more difficult to repair.

Unibody cars are made of high-strength steel, welded into a single unit. Therefore, repairing collision damage requires specialized skills, combined with the proper equipment, to ensure no loss in handling performance, durability or looks. With a unibody, it's also more difficult to judge the extent of the damage. What looks good on the surface can in fact be damaged under the skin, where only a trained eye can detect it. An improperly repaired car can even *cause* major problems such as suspension and handling problems, increased tire wear and reduced durability of key structural components.

How can you be sure that your car will be returned to its pre-accident condition? With some basic information and knowledge of what to look for, you should be able to find a quality repair facility.

This brochure has been provided in the interest of consumer education by



the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair. I-CAR is a not-for-profit educational organization of auto manufacturers, collision repair shops, insurance companies, tool, equipment and supply manufacturers, educational institutions and allied associations dedicated to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of auto collision repairs. For more information, or additional copies contact Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair, 3701 Algonquin Rd., Suite 400, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008-3118, Phone (847) 590-1191, Fax (847) 590-1215.

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO COLLISION REPAIR



HOW TO FIND QUALITY REPAIRS

TRAINING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Changes in the automobile have been so great that it's critical for the repair technicians working on your car to have current unibody training. This training is equally important for your insurance appraiser.

Look for decals, patches or certificates indicating advanced unibody training by organizations such as I-CAR or technician certification by ASE (National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence). Look for signs of repair shop trade association membership, which can indicate that the shop is keeping up to date with the latest repair procedures.

Training is also important in something as "simple" as the repair estimate. How accurately the damage is analyzed can affect the quality of your repair. Be sure to ask for a written damage report, which becomes the "blueprint" for repairing your car. Ask the estimator to explain, in detail, how your car will be repaired. He or she should perform a complete "examination," including checking underneath the car, and looking for hidden damage.

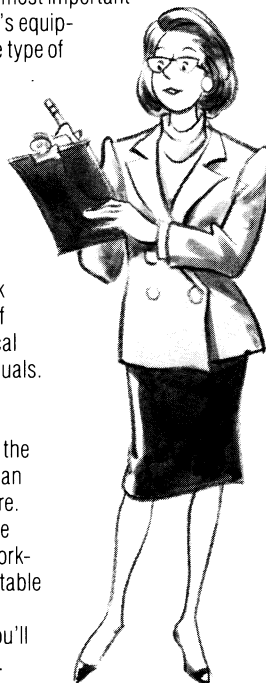


TAKING A SHOP TOUR

Asking the right questions and taking a shop tour can help you decide where to have your car repaired.

Next to training, the most important thing to look for is the shop's equipment. You should see some type of unibody measuring device, plus a pulling system to ease the metal back into shape. For the new high-strength steels, the shop must have a MIG (metal inert gas) welder, and someone trained to use it. Ask if they are able to check wheel alignment. Find out if they have the latest technical information and repair manuals.

Cleanliness is an important factor in a body shop. It can say a lot about the technicians' attitudes. So can friendliness and atmosphere. Many shops also offer some form of warranty on their workmanship. If you feel comfortable while visiting a shop, the chances are greater that you'll be satisfied with their work.



THE AFTER-REPAIR INSPECTION

Before you take your newly-repaired car home, look it over carefully. Check all the electronic accessories. Pay attention to details such as making sure the doors, hood and trunk lid open and close smoothly. In the sunlight, examine freshly-painted areas for a good color match. When driving your car home, listen for any unusual noises and test the handling. The shop should be able to provide you with a complete breakdown of the work that was completed and what parts were replaced.

If you're not satisfied, report it to the shop immediately. If you feel they're not cooperating fully, remember that you're not in this by yourself. Your insurance company and the various collision shop trade associations are in business for your protection.

