About Auto Body & Collision Repair Technician Training

Earn Your Auto Body Collision Repair Certificate in just eight months!

People get into accidents every day and that will never change. And because of that, there will always be a need for people to repair the damage. Choose to attend an auto body collision repair training program and you can equip yourself with the skills and knowledge needed to restore vehicles to their former glory whether they have suffered a minor fender bender or a substantial crash.

An education in this field will prepare students to utilize current technologies and materials used in this field and understand the construction of today's vehicles. With more and more body panels being made of plastic, students need to learn how to order and replace panels and how to affix them to the vehicle using fasteners and other methods. Students also learn how to repair frame damage with frame straightening machines, weld body and frame pieces, repair or replace trim pieces, and much more.

CAJ Career and Education Center can offer you a chance to become a part of an essential trade, and work with your hands doing something that you can be proud of! Develop the skills and gain the experience needed to take on takes such as repairing damage from collision, restoring vintage car, customizing the look of a vehicle, and more. Choose great auto body and collision program and begin your journey to a fabulous new career in the automotive industry! Your future could be just a click away. Visit our website at **www.caj.edu**.

The automotive industry seeks motivated, qualified auto body technicians. In automotive training CAJ Career & Education Center's placement rate for successful auto body repair students is excellent, due to our WASC accredited (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) training program.

CAJ auto body repair school program offers state-of-the-art training in the methods employed by the automotive industry today. This is hands-on program for individuals wishing to prepare for a career in auto body/collision repair.

- Emphasis is placed on understanding and working with new and traditional materials used in automobile construction.
- Special attention is given to understanding unibody construction and repair.
- A critical area of concern is returning a twisted or bent car body to its original form. Straightening a car body is a specialized skill. Without it, an expensive automobile can be rendered worthless. CAJ offers this skill to its students.
- New materials are constantly being introduced by the auto industry. All aspects of substrate preparation, including various types of welding, are covered in the program.
- The final appearance of a repair can succeed or fail by the quality of color matching and finishing of the paint. Clear coats are an important part of the finishing process.

Job finding activities are an important part of this program.

Automotive body repairs, also called collision repair technicians or auto body mechanics, are highly sought after skilled crafts people who repair parts of vehicles that are damaged by collisions or accidents, rust, or other causes. Most vehicles that have sustained damage from a collision can be repaired and refinished to look and drive like new. An automotive body repairer removes dents, straightens or aligns bent frames or bodies, and replaces parts that cannot be repaired. Collision repair technicians repair all types of vehicles including cars, SUVs, and small trucks. Some choose to specialize in repairing large commercial trucks, school or commuter busses, or tractor-trailers. These vehicles require different training and skills.

Repairing each damaged vehicle presents unique challenges and offers the automotive body repairer variety in their workday as all vehicles sustain different damage. Repairers must be able to determine the appropriate repair procedures and parts needed using the knowledge and training they have received. They must first determine what materials the vehicle is made of, the construction of the vehicle, and the extent of the damage.

Auto Body Technicians/Mechanics Job Duties and Functions

If the vehicle has been heavily damaged in a collision an automotive body repairer might start the repairs by realigning the vehicle's frame. To realign the vehicles frame a repairer chains or attaches the frame and other damaged sections to

alignment machines. These machines use hydraulic pressure to realign damaged areas of the vehicle and return it to its original operating state. Some newer cars are manufactured with "Unibody" design. This method of manufacturing describes cars that are built without frames and they must be repaired to exacting factory specifications for the vehicle to operate correctly after the repairs are complete. For unibody constructed vehicles, repairs use manufacturers benchmark standards and policies to measure the extent to which each section is out of alignment and then use hydraulic machinery to return the damaged vehicle to its original shape.

After the frame is aligned repairers will begin to repair or replace damaged body parts. They remove dents by hammering them out with metalworking tools such as a pneumatic metal-cutting gun. They then smooth out the sections that have been hammered by filling, grinding, or sanding until the finish is smooth. To fill dents that cannot be worked out of the metal collision repair technicians use plastic or solder materials. They file or grind these filler materials to their original shape and then clean the area with a tool that is similar to a sand boaster. Depending on the severity of the damage some sections of the vehicle may sustained extensive damage and cannot be repaired. Any parts that cannot be repaired would be removed with a cutting torch and replacement parts sized and fitted and welded into the appropriate area.

Plastic body parts are increasingly used on new vehicles and these parts would be fixed or replaced during the repair process. Damaged panels are removed and the collision repair technician identifies the type and properties of the plastic used. There are a wide variety of plastics in use today in new vehicles. For most types of plastic material used in a vehicle, repairs will apply heat from a hot-air welding gun to soften it and then mold the affected sections back into shape using their hands. Sometimes automotive body repairs choose to immerse the affected sections or panels in hot water to soften them prior to molding the areas back into shape manually. Some plastic parts cannot be repaired due to the damage they incurred and those parts will be replaced.

Some body repairs choose to focus their careers on specialties such as fixing fiberglass car bodies or installing and replacing glass in automobiles and other vehicles. Vehicle glass installers are responsible for removing broken or cracked windshields and other window glass. To replace glass the repairer applies a moisture-proofing compound around the perimeter of the glass and then places the glass in the vehicle. To secure and weatherproof the glass to prevent leaks or drafts rubber strips will be installed around the sides of the windshield or windows replaced.

Internal areas of the vehicle may have sustained damage due to a collision. Parts that may need repairs or replacement materials might be the upholstery, seating, dashboards, or inside door panels. In addition, depending on the type and severity of the collision computer and electronic systems might have been impacted and will need to be repaired. Only after all external and internal damage has been repaired would the affected areas of the vehicle be repainted to match the color of the other areas of the car.

To successfully repair a damaged vehicle an automotive body repairer will usually follow these steps:

- Perform visual inspection of the damages to the vehicle including the outside and undercarriage of the vehicle
- Test drive the vehicle to accurately determine damage to mechanical, electrical, or computerized components
- Use computerized testing devices to check operating systems of the vehicle
- Review the manufacturers technical manuals for updated information on parts to be used and procedures/standards to be followed when making repairs
- Make accurate estimate of time required to repair vehicle
- Compile list of parts needed and cost of replacement/new parts
- Act as liaison with clients insurance company or client to discuss cost adjustments and additional materials and charges as repairs proceed
- Perform needed repairs including:
- Alignment, dent removal, replacement of damaged plastic parts and materials, replacement of broken glass, fiberglass body parts, upholstery and other damaged areas inside the car, electrical and computer systems affected by the damage according to manufactures specifications and established industry standards

Auto Body Technicians/Mechanics Job Characteristics and Work Environment

Repairs usually work by themselves on the repairs they are assigned with minimal direction from a supervisor. To increase production and improve efficiencies at the shop sometimes assistants or apprentices are assigned to assist experienced repairers. As many larger repair shops use an assembly-line approach repairers would work on one aspect of

the repair and their colleagues would work on other portions depending on their specialty. For example, one worker might realign the frame while another would repair metal portions of the car including doors and fenders. Another person would be responsible for plastic and fiberglass parts, another for windshield and other glass, and another for the damage inside the car such a seating, dashboards, etc. Once all repairs are complete the car would be turned over to the automotive painters for painting and refinishing.

Most automotive body repairers work indoors in shops that are often noisy due to the hand tools and power tools and machinery used for repairs. Repairers have a very physically demanding job as they are often standing for extended periods of time or working in cramped spaces in uncomfortable positions. The tools and machinery used are often quite heavy and need to be lifted by hand. Although most shops are well ventilated repairers are exposed to a variety of toxic chemicals, gasoline, solvents, dust and paint fumes that could be hazardous to their health. They must take great care to avoid injuries including cuts from sharp metal objects and power tools and burns from heated metal and heat producing tools. Serious injuries and accidents are rare as most shops practice industry safety standards and keep their shop clean and organized.

Most automotive body repairers work a standard eight hour day, five days a week. Sometimes additional hours are needed on nights and weekends to meet customer demands and depending on the backlog of repair work to be completed. Repairers who own their own their own shop will put in additional hours developing their customer base, meeting with clients, working with insurance companies and parts distributors, managing staff, and the general administrative tasks such as bill payment and payroll required of all business owners.

To be successful in their profession, automotive body repairers should process most of the following skills and attributes:

- Attention to detail
- Ability to lift heavy parts and equipment, work in confined spaces in awkward positions
- Aptitude for following instructions and diagrams in manufacturers manuals
- Interest and passion for learning new technologies to meet rapidly changing car designs and manufacture
- Concern for personal safety and that of their co-workers
- Ability to work independently
- Tolerance for dust, odors, and chemicals
- Exceptional time management skills to insure repairs are completed according to estimate
- Flexibility of work schedule to accommodate workload and customer needs – including evening and weekends
- A repairer who owns their own shop would also need effective communication and superior customer services skills as well as the expertise to accurately estimate the work hours and parts needed for each repair project

Auto Body Schools and Collision Repair Training

A high school diploma or GED is usually the minimum education required to become a collision repair technician. However more specialized auto body training is need to learn the techniques needed for the newer more sophisticated vehicles that often have computerized operating systems. Many postsecondary vocational schools and local community colleges offer courses in electronics, physics, chemistry, and computers, which provide a great background for anyone interested in a career as an automotive body repairer. These training programs would also combine classroom instruction and hands-on practice on damaged vehicles. Vocational, trade, and technical school programs typically offer certificate programs and will award certificates to graduates after 6 months to a year of successful study of collision repair. Some regional community colleges offer 2-year degree programs in collision repair. Many vocational high schools offer collision repair training programs that provide solid training in automotive body repair. Students get a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on training working on damaged vehicles.

The National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) is the organization that evaluates collision repair technician training programs. They compare the content of a training program against training and testing standards developed in conjunction with the automotive industry and recommend which programs qualify for certification.

Automotive repair technology is becoming more sophisticated each year, and most employers prefer to hire applicants who have successfully completed a formal auto body repair training program or refinishing at a vocational school or community college. In many urban areas or in repair shops that are dealing with certain models of vehicles national certifications expected and required if a candidate wants to further their career past entry-level work. Most auto body shop mechanics are ASE certified. The national Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) provides a standardized method of testing. Although this certification is not mandatory it is the industry credential most sought after by shops hiring new repair technicians. Collision Repair Technicians have a choice of up to four ASE Master Collision Repair and Refinish Exams. Repairers who pass at least one exam and complete 2 years of practical work experience at a

repair shop earn ASE certification. Successfully completing a postsecondary program in automotive body repair may be substituted for 1 year of work experience. If a collision repair technician passes all four exams they ear the ASE Master Collision Repair and Refinish Technician designation. The materials and parts used to manufacture and vehicle are changing rapidly and becoming more complex and on-going training is needed for a repair technician to remain up-to-date on new procedures. Many repair shops provide advanced training and access to updated technical manuals and software to their repair technicians. To retain their ASE certification automotive body repairers must retake the collision repair and refinish examinations at least once every 5 years. Many vehicle and paint manufacturers provide specialized training on their products and conduct certification programs that can help a repairer advance in their career.

Collision repair technicians who are new to their profession will begin their career by assisting experienced body repairers in a variety of tasks. They will get on-the-job experience removing damaged body parts and welding and installing repaired parts. As a collision repair technician's skills improve, they would then take on more challenging tasks including alignments and replacement of damaged parts that cannot be repaired. It takes approximately 3 to 4 years of hands-on training in a repair shop to become skilled in all facets of vehicle body repair. Standards and training differ for glass installers but basic skills can be acquired in as little as 6 months. Becoming fully qualified, however, can take several years.

Auto Body Technician/Mechanic Jobs

The job market for automotive body repairers is projected to be excellent due to the increasing number of vehicles currently operating, the complexity of newer vehicles, and the growing number of retirements expected in the future. As the number of motor vehicles in use increases, the potential for more vehicles being damaged in accidents increases. Newer vehicles are manufactured of lighter materials than older cars and sustain greater damage in a collision than older, heavier models, so more repairs are needed. As vehicles are made with more complex computer and electronic operating systems less are being repaired after a collision due to the high cost of replacing these parts. These cars are often "totaled" by the insurance company and not repaired and this will temper the growth of employment for new collision repair technicians. Because most drivers are dependent on their vehicles to get to work, school, run errands, visit family, etc. automotive body repairers are less sensitive to economic downturns that might effect employment in other professions. Extensive damage must be repaired for the vehicle to run safely and to pass the inspection process required by most states so drivers are not able to put off these repairs based on economic conditions.

The majority of collision repair technicians are employed by independently owned repair shops and automotive dealers. They are paid on an incentive basis meaning they are paid a set amount for assigned tasks and how long it takes to complete these tasks. Repair shops often guarantee workers a minimum weekly salary and additional pay can be earned through additional work. Benefits often vary widely depending on the size of the shop and whether it is independently owned or part of a dealership. Paid vacation and sick time, health insurance, and 401Ks are becoming increasingly common benefits in the collision repair industry.

Resources for Automotive Body Technicians/Mechanics

- National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)
- National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)
- Automotive Careers Today
- NATEF Certified Schools by State
- Automotive Youth Educational Systems
- Automotive Service Association
- National Automobile Dealers Association

Related Careers

- All Technician/Mechanic
- Aircraft Mechanics
- Automotive Body Repairs
- Automotive Technicians/Mechanic
- Avionics Technicians/Mechanics
- Bus and Truck Technicians/Mechanic
- Farm Equipment Technicians/Mechanic
- Industrial Machinery Technician/Mechanic
- Mobile Heavy Equipment Technician/Mechanic
- Motorboat Technician/Mechanic

- Motorcycle Technician/Mechanic
- Recreational Vehicle Service Technicians
- Small Engine Mechanics

Cars are a vital part of most people's everyday lives. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, there are more than 243,023,485 registered passenger vehicles in American. Unfortunately, so many drivers on the road means more than 6 million car accident per year.

These accidents have prompted the automotive and diesel industry to grow tremendously in the past decades. Not only are people bringing in their cars to be repaired and serviced more often, but people are taking better care of their vehicles than ever before. These people trust trained technicians and automotive service technicians to provide them with the best auto care available at a good price.

- Automotive Technician
- Diesel Mechanic
- Automotive Service Technician
- Truck Mechanic

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, career opportunities for graduates of accredited automotive training programs and diesel mechanic training programs are expected to be very good.

Fortunately, there are quality automotive mechanic schools and diesel mechanic schools in all areas of the country. Earn a diploma from CAJ Career & Education Center and you can be on your way to a flexible, exciting career in just 8 months

Career Statistics

Salary Range:

$10.50 to 25.50 hourly wage

Education Level (minimum):

Vocational training in high school or postsecondary school

Growth Outlook (2002-2012):

10-20%