Standard Practice

Creating standard parts descriptions benefits the entire industry.

— *Steve Fletcher*

As the auto recycling industry becomes more digitized, creating standard descriptions for aftermarket parts is something that auto recyclers see as tremendously important. The more insurers, repairers and other facets of collision repair use these standards, the more effective our communication can be.

Auto recyclers have an unusual product. As a seller, there's no catalogue or centralized warehouse where you can just order and get more stock. But over time, the Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) has created a series of standards, codes and protocols to help quantify our product so we can best interact with other industries to set up vast trading networks.

We've always been an industry that defined and used terminology differently—our language grew out of one recycler talking to another. When we started to move to digital inventories we would use this information to run the business. Within an individual company, there really wasn't the need to have a lot of standards for describing items.

Adapting to the Digital Age

As recyclers began trading more with the industry, you could still pick up the phone and say, "I've got an engine for this vehicle. What can you tell me about it?" and they would be able to give you any necessary details because there was still a dialogue happening between people.

Eventually, this approach became unproductive because information was interpreted differently by different sources. As recyclers dealt more with repairers and insurers digitally, we needed to be even more efficient in getting information into their hands. With any vehicle part, the end user needs to understand exactly what they're getting. As businesses use fewer person-to-person interactions and more computer-to-computer (or computer-to-person) communication, the more we have to standardize our language.

Initially these standards were developed within the auto recycling industry. For example, if someone is selling a door assembly, there's a question of whether that includes components like the mirror or molding as well as any extras. One of the first standards developed was exactly what was included in an assembly.

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Industry Wide

The ARA established a variety of committees to work on different components of standards, such as a damage-grading standard to convey what kind of damage is on a particular part, where the damage is and how extensive it is. For example, a 2D3 is two units of dent damage in the number three position on the part. ARA also developed graphics that everyone can use (available on the ARA website), to better standardize how we describe damage across industries, whether it's among recyclers, insurers, repairers or others.

This effort only really becomes powerful when it gets pushed down to the dismantlers and salespeople who are utilizing the information. Some repairers are utilizing it, but it has been an ongoing industry effort from recyclers, from I-CAR, from the Collision Industry Electronic Commerce Association (CEICA) and from the repair industry to increasingly adopt these standards. 🐚

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