Automotive Collision Technology

Herndon Career Center | Video Transcript

This class is based on the basics of collision repair. You'll learn metal finishing, auto refinishing, welding, and a little bit of estimating. Those are three of the most important skills in body shops, and they are the easiest ways to help students become entry-level technicians.

The goal is to take a car from the very beginning and work it all the way through until it is finished, complete, and ready to move on to the next level. Here, we do everything from full restorations to late-model vehicles to a little bit of custom work. For example, you'll learn how to shape door handles and install quarter panels.

We'll also touch on candy paint, and you'll learn how to blend. One reason to choose this program is that it is actually 90% shop time and 10% classroom time. Students complete their certifications at home, which gives us more time to focus on hands-on skills so they are ready to go to work when they leave here.

While you're here, you'll go through the I-CAR certification process, which is what the industry wants. When you leave, you'll have ProLevel 1 certification, preparing you for entry-level positions. You'll also earn OSHA 10 and automotive air conditioning certifications. Juniors and seniors from the surrounding area take this class, and when they finish, they should be ready to find a job as an entry-level technician in the collision repair industry.

For first-year students, I bring in body panels and put dents in them. Students learn to metal-finish the panels before using body filler. The dent is very small—you can barely see it. They apply a quick skim of filler, block it, prime it, and get it ready to paint.

I grew up in the auto collision industry. My father had a body shop for about 20 years. When I was a junior at Raytown High School, I was fortunate enough to take this program. I was here for two years, and after I left, I worked in the body shop industry for about six or seven years. Then I decided to open my own shop, which I still currently have.

As long as there are cars on the road, there will be accidents, and there is plenty of room for new technicians to enter the industry. The pay is great. You can start off around $50,000 to $60,000 a year. Once you have a few years of experience, you can make up to about $120,000 or $130,000.

It's very rewarding to watch students go from not knowing what tools are or never having picked up a hammer in their lives to being able to take a car apart, put it back together, and paint it. It's pretty cool.