

An Open Letter to the Editor Regarding CCC's Response to CIC Database Committee Release on Bumper Prompt

The June 16, 2009 release by the CIC Database Committee relating to the bumper refinish prompt in CCC Pathways® collision estimating version 4.5 contained numerous factual errors and certain misrepresentations of CCC's position. We believe that it is important to address those items and reiterate CCC's position with respect to the bumper prompt, which we do below.

CCC Pathways® Collision Estimating Version 4.5

It is important to first understand how the bumper prompt functions in CCC Pathways version 4.5. In this release, the bumper refinish prompt is not present unless the user affirmatively enables it. In other words, the user must choose to activate the feature for it to appear when writing an estimating. Furthermore, if the user chooses to enable the prompt, the user selects the answer to the prompt that appears as the default answer; the answer then may be changed in any given estimate as needed to match the process being employed for the repair.

Paint Manufacturer Recommended Procedures

The Release states in several places that the prompt is not consistent with paint manufacturer recommended procedures. For example, the Release states:

"paint manufacturer data no longer appears to be the governing factor" and

"the obligation to closely mirror OEM procedures non longer applies"

The Release, however, then goes on to reference a paint manufacturer system that very clearly states in its published documentation that it is appropriate to refinish the bumper in one continuous process with rigid parts. Specifically, the Release states the following:

"the exact same clearcoat is applicable to both rigid and flexible parts, and no special clear coat additives (flex) are required when refinishing flexible parts."

While this paint manufacturer recommends hardener in the basecoat for this product, it should be noted that when using low VOC waterborne products from this same manufacturer, the basecoats do not require the addition of hardener. Therefore, using these systems, it is possible to refinish the flexible and rigid parts in a continuous process, and in the case of waterborne systems, with no related material implications.

The Release also fails to point out that several of the other manufacturers do allow for a “one gun” solution for both basecoat and clear coat, which would warrant usage of the bumper prompt. While these procedures may require additional materials and/or longer drying times, their systems do allow for a “one gun” method. This method is also supported by I-CAR, which is an international, not-for-profit training organization dedicated to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of auto collision repair. The section in the I-CAR Advantage on Refinishing Plastic Parts, under the heading “Should I spray flexible parts and non-flexible parts separately?” states:

*Single-stage and clearcoats could be applied with the “two-gun method,” one with flex additive and the other without. Small, combined repairs could be completed all with flexible finish.... **Having flex additive in the material on non-plastic parts will do no harm.** As already mentioned, a coating with flex additive will have better chip and scuff resistance.”*

– I-CAR Advantage on Refinishing Plastic Parts (emphasis supplied)

Additionally, the Motor® Guide to Estimating is clear on this issue:

When a flex agent, or a separate paint mix procedure is not required, and when the flexible component is refinished during the same procedure with major or minor components, then flexible components should be considered the same designation as major or minor components for the purpose of calculating refinish overlap deductions, and/or multi-stage refinishing additions.

In summary, the decision on how the vehicle will be refinished will vary based on the paint system being used, the size of the job, and other factors. The prompt facilitates creation of an accurate estimate when using paint systems that allow a “one gun” method and the “one gun” method is utilized in the refinishing portion of the repair. As shown above:

1. Motor states that when using a single paint mix for flexible and rigid parts, overlap deductions involving the bumper are appropriate;
2. Paint systems from major paint manufacturers allow for a single mix to be used on flexible and rigid parts for both clearcoat and basecoat; and
3. Major paint manufacturers and I-CAR acknowledge that a “one gun” application is acceptable in certain situations.

In light of the foregoing, CCC Pathways collision estimating needs to have an option to account for this process.

CCC Position Interpretation

The Committee has taken the unprecedented step of publishing what it considers CCC’s position to be. It writes:

“CCC appears unwilling at this point to . . . take any further steps to ensure that the deviation caused by use of the prompt is easily distinguished on an estimate . . .”



This statement is simply not true, and we encourage anyone that has a question about CCC's position to ask us. While we believe that the estimate currently shows the presence of the overlap deduction, we are currently working on several different methods that could enhance visibility into how the bumper prompt was answered by the estimator. These suggestions from our customers include adding a footnote that would document that the estimator indicated the bumper would be refinished in a continuous operation or additional wording to the estimate line for bumper refinish indicating whether a continuous process was selected by the estimator.

Advisory Panel

CCC has announced plans to convene an industry advisory panel comprised of representatives from various industry segments to evaluate potential product changes. The panel will be conducting its first meeting in the very near future, and the issues around the bumper prompt, including the above-referenced enhanced disclosure on the estimate print-out, will be among the first agenda items.

Documentation

The Committee also states that:

"[I]t is a reasonable expectation that CCC . . . safeguard that possibility through . . . clear and concise documentation and positions that provide transparency to the proper use of the system as it was intended."

CCC agrees, and we believe that such documentation has been supplied. Because some parties have requested additional documentation, we have produced an Addendum to the CCC Pathways 4.5 release notes that more fully explains how to answer the bumper prompt given the paint system and the actual refinishing procedures being used on the repair job.

Summary

CCC remains strongly committed to the accuracy of the estimates. We continually seek input from the industry, and especially from our customers. We will continue to work with advisory panels, associations, industry committees, and other groups that promote professional dialogue and are committed to industry improvement.

Respectfully,

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