

Rick's Auto Body Committed to Axalta's Top Notch Products



by **Autobody News Staff**

The collision repair industry holds a plethora of challenges for body shop owners who intend to deliver high-quality repairs. With OEM certifications rapidly becoming more important and technical, shops like *Rick's Auto Body* in Missoula, MT, rely on paint suppliers to remain steadfast and provide value beyond the products they sell. Rick's Auto Body sprays with Cromax® CHROMAPREMIER®, and owner **Paul Flores** shares, "We have used Axalta products since the 1990s. They were leading the industry and we wanted to do the same in our market."

"Axalta's products are top notch, but the business development aspect, especially the business councils, has brought tremendous value to our organization," Flores added. "Our local rep, **Gene Fenske**, as well as every Axalta client under his service, has been great to work with. Whenever we had complications with a product, Axalta has helped us navigate the situation as quickly as possible."

Rick's Auto Body was founded in 1976 by **Rick Booth** as a part-time business doing total-loss rebuilds, custom painting and restoration work, before he expanded his hours to full-time status in 1979. Over the decades, Booth focused on growing his brand and reputation, until beginning the process of selling the shop to Flores in 2013. He officially retired in 2019 after completing the transaction of selling the entire business to Flores.

The shop is an 18,000-square foot facility employing 34 collision repair professionals who repair an average of 200 vehicles each month. In addition, Rick's Auto Body holds nine DRP contracts and is certified in FCA, Ford, Ford Aluminum, Nissan, Hyundai, Honda ProFirst and Subaru. According to Flores, "I believe our production model sets us apart from other shops. We have dedicated disassembly/blueprint teams, body teams and paint teams. This increases our production capacity and provides greater benefits to our customers in reduced wait times to schedule for repairs and to de-



Rick's Auto Body has been using Axalta products since the 1990s and can't imagine wanting to switch brands.

crease repair cycle times."

"Our focus on OEM certifications and providing our customers with OEM certified repairs is important. This involves a heavy commitment to ongoing training, equipping and tooling in every area of the business. Our team is also highly dedicated to improving upon our communication skills—both internally and with our customers and business associates," Flores said. "OEM certifications are huge. First notice of loss has been captured by insurers; however, advanced telematics will transfer first notice of loss to the OEMs. This has the potential to decrease the value of direct repair programs and put emphasis on OEM certification, or at least bring equal value to the two."

Looking to the future, Flores adds, "I see the potential of the all-makes, all-models type of shop going away. Specialization in the form of OEM certification will be the primary focus. The cost of correctly repairing multiple brands may limit shops to only selecting certifications with the largest OEMs represented in their market place. The threat of liability for repairing a vehicle that you are not approved to repair may also lead to specialization with specific OEMs."

Flores notes, "The landscape's changing rapidly, and the information necessary for all parties to make the right decision is moving much slower. Access to the necessary information is a road block due to insurers' unwillingness to

acknowledge the need for the subscription fee. To accurately repair a vehicle, you must access the repair information from the OEM sites, as they are the only ones who have the most up-to-date information. Understanding OEM repair procedures on every repair is also a culture change that requires communication, education, time, patience and a consistent commitment to our technical development."

Rick's Auto Body is also committed to lessening its impact on the environment through best practice processes and procedures, in addition to using fully integrated UV primers to reduce the amount of coverage necessary to achieve a better quality product. Flores recalls, "We tested new primer products for Axalta in the mid-2000s and then integrated the products into our daily production. Axalta was outstanding in helping us field test, and they continued to provide excellent support if we had any questions when we rolled out for full production. Implementing new Axalta products has traditionally been a seamless process."

The technicians working at Rick's Auto Body love Cromax® CHROMAPREMIER® because it's so easy to spray and produces a flawless finish, and their experiences with other Axalta products have also been very favorable. Flores points out, "We've been partners too long now to remember anything but Axalta, but with all the benefits they offer, why would we want to?"

Rick's Auto Body Inc.

Location: Missoula, MT

(406) 549-5400

www.ricksautobodymissoula.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 34

In Business Since: 1979

Number of Locations: One

DRP Programs: Nine

Combined Production Space:

18,000 square feet



Axalta's flawless finishes allows *Rick's Auto Body* to produce superior repairs that keep customers coming back.



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Axalta Coating Systems

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