

## Is this condition accident related?

*We have all heard the stories of “everything worked fine before the accident”*

These claims can be difficult to assign the responsibility of the repairs to whether the condition **is** accident related, shop induced (caused by the repair process), a manufacture defect, or a pre-existing condition before the damage.

Performing a **complete vehicle scan before repairs begin** will answer these questions **when** the vehicle computer system retains “freeze frame” or “failure records” within its memory. These cases are conditional depending if the area of concern is a computer controlled/monitored system or if a vehicle battery has been destroyed from the damage or disconnected. Sometimes the data found here is very specific (date/time/mileage/key cycles) and sometimes it is not there at all. However even without obvious time stamp data availability the areas of inspection and probable causes will be reduced and can be determined by **knowing** the defect/condition and associate trouble codes set. An example of this is a vehicle with a check engine light and a front end collision, the vehicles ambient air temp and coolant temp sensors are destroyed and obvious, vehicle scan reports codes for these and in addition has a code for insufficient EGR flow, no damage to the EGR is evident. How do we know whether to include EGR diagnosis to repair estimate or if this problem even exists without having performed a vehicle scan? If you don’t know this problem exists the vehicle owner will most likely return with a check engine light complaint.

It is always better to know everything you are up against before repairs begin than to have the untimely surprise of additional problems on delivery day or the unpleasant task of re-work or supplement claims when a customer returns or calls with complaints.

I also recommend a process to perform **Manufacturer Bulletin** and **Recall** searches for certain vehicle conditions as well. Information found doing this can be valuable and shift responsibility of repairs to the Vehicle Manufacture warranty or vehicle owner if warranty has expired. Just make sure to have all collision related set DTCs cleared before sending a vehicle out for warranty repairs to reduce the likely hood of the defect being blamed on the previous collision damage.

Sources for this information can be found in your shops service information subscriptions and at

- <http://sandyblogs.com/techlink/>
- [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)
- <http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/NHTSA+to+Provide+Free+VIN+Searches+to+Help+Consumers+Check+Cars,+Light+Trucks+and+Motorcycles+for+Uncompleted+Recalls>
- <https://recalls.gm.com/?evar18=GMcom#/>
- <http://owners.honda.com/service-maintenance/recalls>
- <http://www.toyota.com/owners/web/pages/resources/recalls>
- <http://owner.ford.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Owner/Page/RecallsPage>
- <http://www.vw.com/web/vw/recall/index.html>

When a vehicle owner states certain conditions began at the time of damage, or began after repairs, it then becomes the shops responsibility to investigate the condition and advise the insurer, customer and technicians performing repairs and inspections. Some insurers will require the customer approval to cover additional diagnostic costs until the root cause is determined, if proven to be collision related the insurer will cover the diagnostic and repair cost, if found not to be related, the customer or manufactures warranty is responsible for the diagnostic cost and has the option to approve the repair. This can be a time consuming and profit destroying process.

Let us know when we can help,

*Chuck Olsen*

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