

# The Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Program, Part 1

## Accurate repairs, reduced cycle time, and effortless marketing

**Editor's note: This is the first of a three-part article about the Mercedes-Benz collision repair certification program. All content in this article was developed through conversations with three Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Program instructors: Kevin King, Technical Collision Instructor & Welding Inspector and Clint Allen, Collision and Technical Trainer, both teaching in the Mercedes-Benz Learning & Performance Center in Grapevine, Texas; and Bob Laurino, Collision and Technical Trainer in the Learning & Performance Center in Robbinsville, New Jersey. We thank them for their kind efforts and time.**



Keeping this 2020 AMG GT beautiful is a labor of love best performed by a Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Center.

Participation in the Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Program tells potential customers that your repair facility lives up to the brand's promise of offering "the best or nothing." Meeting the program performance standards results in higher productivity, fewer comebacks, and greater profitability. And providing access to OEM repair information and training not only makes it all possible, but also shows your technicians and staff that you value their contributions and are investing in their success.

Today, there are about 350 facilities in the U.S. and Canada certified to perform collision repair on Mercedes-Benz vehicles, and about three-quarters of them are independent body shops. To ensure that their vehicle owners can easily find quality collision repair providers, Mercedes-Benz wants more independents to join the certification program. Is your shop up for the challenge?

### **Benefits to the Shop** **Competitive advantage**

Despite their goal of increasing the number of certified collision centers, Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) isn't interested in having a shop on every corner. This means that, if approved,

your shop could be the only one in a given market, although large markets might have a few. An important factor in shop approval is the number of vehicles in operation in the area, to help ensure you won't see a Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Center every other mile on your street.

Because of the safety implications of an improper structural aluminum repair, certain aluminum structural repair parts are only available to Elite-level Certified Collision Centers. Even an Authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer can't get these parts unless they are Elite certified. So customers need your shop not only for its expertise but its access to the repair parts required.

The biggest competitive advantage may be the peace of mind the Mercedes-Benz certification gives potential customers. "As far as the prospect driving by knows, a body shop is a body shop," said Clint Allen, Collision and Technical Trainer in the Mercedes-Benz Learning & Performance Center (LPC) in Grapevine, Texas. "One may have made a commitment to have the right tools, equipment and properly trained staff. Mercedes-Benz

helps promote the certified body shop advantages of factory-trained technicians, following manufacturer-approved repair procedures, and using the latest tools, equipment and OEM materials.”

“Mercedes-Benz certification offers a significant amount of prestige to your collision repair facility,” said Kevin King, Technical Collision Instructor and Welding Inspector at the Mercedes-Benz LPC in Grapevine, Texas. “Regardless of what brand of vehicle they drive, when a prospect brings their vehicle to your body shop and notices several premium Mercedes-Benz vehicles that have been repaired, it boosts their comfort level with the decision to come to you.”

### **Shop locator assistance**

Mercedes-Benz actively markets its certified collision centers through various channels. One such support channel is referrals from your sponsoring Mercedes-Benz dealer: Customers needing repairs, small and large, are sent your way. The Mercedes-Benz Customer Assistance Center (CAC) is another major source of referrals: Eligible Roadside Assistance program customers can

get towed to the nearest Mercedes-Benz dealership or certified collision center. “The CAC staff functions as an immediate shop locator assistant by offering, over the phone, referrals to a qualified nearby Mercedes-Benz certified body shop,” said Allen. “If the customer has the ability to visit [Mbcollisioncenters.com](http://Mbcollisioncenters.com), the website shows your shop name and location on a Google Maps screen showing near-by certified facilities.”

Customers can request assistance to address minor damage by calling the CAC, or using Mercedes me, a telematics app on their smartphone (subscription required). If the collision is severe enough to deploy an airbag, the SOS feature in the vehicle can summon emergency assistance, according to Allen. If the customer chooses, the Mercedes-Benz agent can also suggest a nearby certified collision center and arrange for towing if necessary.

### **Reduced cycle time**

“Good training teaches technicians to find the correct repair documents quickly, interpret and effectively use that information in blueprinting, perform repairs efficiently, and

avoid errors that typically trip the less skilled technician,” said Bob Laurino, Collision & Technical Trainer at the LPC in Robbinsville, NJ. “The feedback I receive during visits to certified facilities is that after their technicians complete Mercedes-Benz factory training, they experience higher vehicle throughput and increased profitability.”

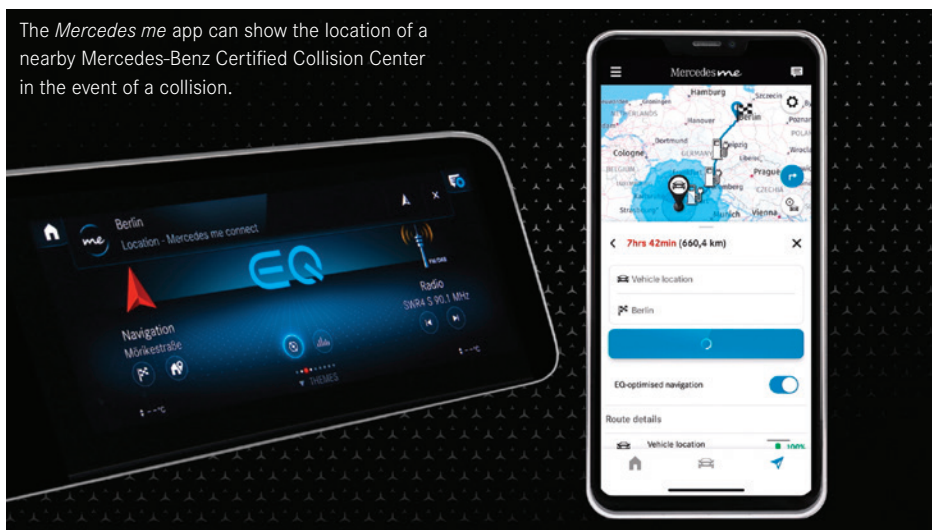
“Shop owners tell us that the number one thing they gain from having their technicians factory-trained on proper repair techniques is dramatically reduced cycle times for collision repairs on Mercedes-Benz vehicles,” echoed King. “Their technicians generate a lot of sales revenue, and vehicle-specific, state-of-the-art training makes them even more productive.”

### **Instructor-led, hands-on training**

You won’t, thank goodness, assign an inexperienced technician to perform a frame rail repair. “We teach that technician what it takes and have him or her actually perform the repair,” said Allen. “Now that technician has experience and the shop didn’t risk repair comebacks or a potential safety issue. It’s a big benefit to the technician, the shop, the customer, and to Mercedes-Benz.”

Class sizes are limited, allowing instructors to fine-tune their teaching to the needs of each student. For the structural aluminum welding classes, the arriving technicians have varying welding knowledge and skill. Although the curriculum is challenging,

The Mercedes me app can show the location of a nearby Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Center in the event of a collision.



the instructors work to ensure that before heading home each class participant can produce strong welds in a variety of metals and joint designs. “Our students retain and improve their welding skills thanks to the repetition of classwork and weld testing built into the three certification stages,” said King. “The failure rate at the two-year recertification stage is currently zero.”

### ***State-of-the-art equipment training***

Another big benefit of hands-on training is exposure to tools and equipment that the technicians may have never used. “Mercedes-Benz has a number of approved welders on our approved list – we have three of them in our training facility,” said Laurino. “The technicians may already own one, and will often ask to use one of the others during our training exercises. I let them use the one they want. I show them its features and capabilities, and answer as many questions as I can. They love having a chance to play with a tool they don’t have at their shop.”

### ***OEM repair information***

Certified shops get access to the Mercedes-Benz online WIS. There, technicians can find all of the information needed to perform factory-approved repairs on Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Searches are VIN-based, which allows WIS to serve up repair procedures and guidance specific to the vehicle model, year, and system or component being repaired. The database is updated in real time as vehicle materials, technology, and repair procedures change, making WIS your most up-to-date, accurate source possible for Mercedes-Benz repair information.



The Mercedes-Benz front crash module bolts onto the upper and lower frame rails (longitudinal members) on this 2010 GL 450. Mercedes-Benz Base certification training teaches the proper procedures for sectioning or replacing the structural components.

Certified shops also enjoy access to the Mercedes-Benz video training system. Step-by-step video demonstrations often help to clarify written instructions. Videos cover procedures such as removing and replacing a windshield, taking off a door panel, and many other topics. “Taking a couple of minutes to see the job actually being done helps technicians approach the job confidently, and results in fewer ‘gotchas’ and higher productivity,” said Allen.

### ***Auto-generated parts job list***

Certified shops have access to the XENTRY Parts Information catalog and the very popular Mercedes-Benz Parts Job Program. Input the VIN and the planned repair, and the Parts Job Program generates an accurate, complete list of all parts needed, including quantities. No more work delays due to waiting for supplement approvals.

### **Certification Tiers**

There are three certification tiers: Base, which includes repairs to nearly all Mercedes-Benz vehicles;

Elite, which adds models with structural aluminum components; and Commercial, which adds the Sprinter and Metris commercial van models to the mix. We’ll get into the details of these tiers in the next issue of StarTuned.

### **Get Certified!**

To learn more about the program, or to apply to become a Mercedes-Benz Certified Collision Center, go to [mbcollisioncenters.com](http://mbcollisioncenters.com) and scroll down to the link “Become a Certified Collision Center.” Once there you will find links to answers about a variety of questions, including a list of required tools and equipment, a document containing the standards by which repair facilities, technicians, and staff are evaluated, a brochure that provides an overview of the entire program, and a program application form.

Are you in? Being one of the elite (pun intended) few will benefit your shop, your customers, and Mercedes-Benz. Win-Win! |