

# STARTUNED<sup>®</sup>

INFORMATION FOR THE INDEPENDENT MERCEDES-BENZ SERVICE PROFESSIONAL

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## Mercedes-Benz StarParts

The perfect combination of quality and price

Mercedes-Benz





Cover image: StarParts from Mercedes-Benz bring benefits to both your shop and your customers. Ask your dealer about them.



All the parts needed for a front brake job on a 2006 ML350, including the single-use fasteners and of course, the value-priced StarParts.

Mercedes-Benz StarParts are genuine Mercedes-Benz maintenance parts designed for vehicles five years old and older. Developed as a lower-cost line of Mercedes-Benz parts, you are still offering your customers the superior quality, fit and performance you've come to expect from Mercedes-Benz, at a price that means no compromise is necessary. And that includes the famous parts warranty, which covers parts and labor.

When we explain the benefits of using StarParts to our shop's customers, they almost invariably ask us "But what am I giving up?" The answer is nothing—at least nothing important. As an example, let's take a close look at front brake pads and disks for a 2006, which we recently replaced for a customer.



Comparing the StarParts brake pad (bottom) to the standard part, the only visible difference is the text printed on the backing. From the friction material side, we couldn't tell them apart.

Comparing the pad set and disks, there were no real visual differences. Sure, the box labels showed the "90" suffix and the brake pads were marked "StarParts," but otherwise, we



really couldn't see anything different: Same pad and disk thickness, same size, same anti-corrosion coating and anti-squeal pad, and so on. The box for the StarParts brake pad set was plain brown instead of printed, but that's about it.

Comparing the cost for these parts was a real eye-opener. Using suggested list price from our dealer, the standard parts would have run the customer almost \$350, while the StarParts came in at under \$200. Of course, the price you'll pay is between you and the dealer, and the price you charge your customer is up to you, but the words "significant savings" are not out of line here.

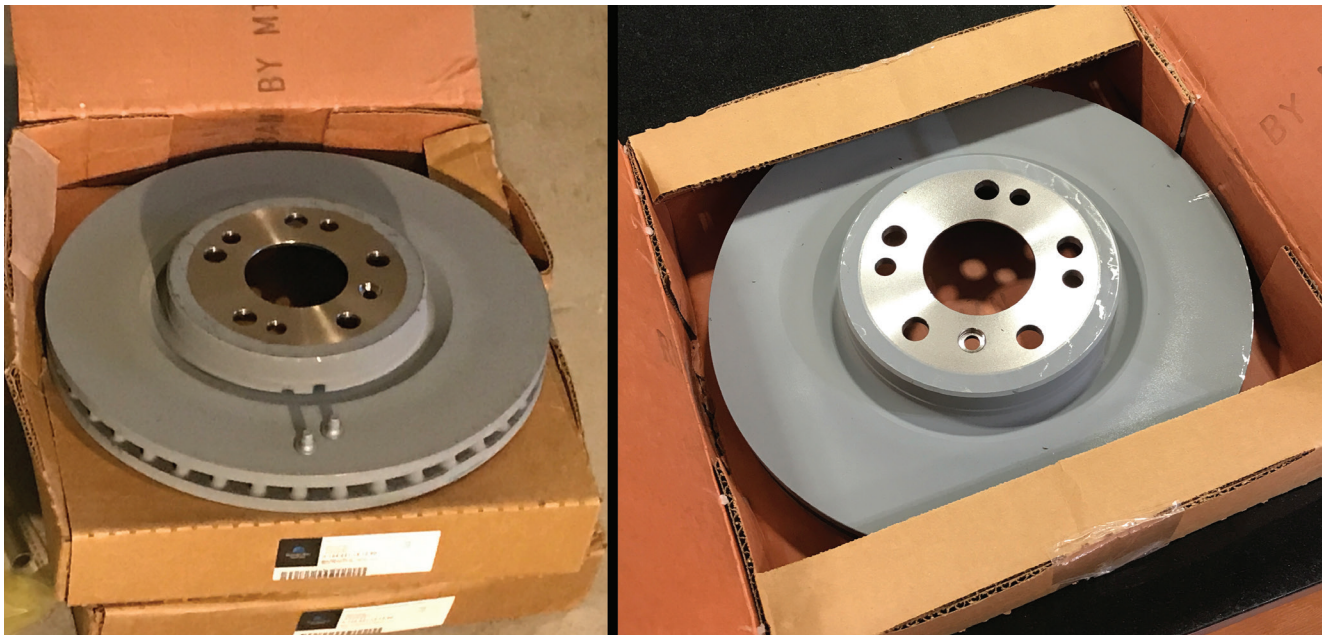
So why are StarParts so affordable? According to Mercedes-Benz USA, there are several factors influencing this: StarParts are standardized across many standard part applications, leading to much higher volume worldwide, thus allowing for more aggressive supplier discounts. We imagine there's a better discount on 5 million pieces compared to 50,000. Additionally, some of the processes used to manufacture the parts are optimized from a cost perspective, such as sprayed coatings instead of dipped. It may only mean a couple of pennies per unit, but these add up. Less important things like fancy printed boxes are mostly eliminated, and some coating and filler materials are changed. For brake disks, different alloys may be used or additional hardware eliminated. Each of these is only a few cents, but add them up and it's a clear and

definite advantage. And, we suspect, the profit margin for Mercedes-Benz is a bit lower to support their loyal customers: After all, loyal customers who love the durability and safety of their cars tend to buy a new one, eventually.

Each of the other types of StarParts, including oil filters, wiper blades, air filters (both engine and cabin) and spark plugs, has their own cost optimizations, leading to significant savings. For example, many of the packages for StarParts are different, reducing costs by using less printing on the cartons or mostly eliminating genuine-parts holograms. Wiper blades don't include the black-to-yellow wear indicator found on standard parts. Spark plugs use less of precious metals, not just in the electrodes but using steel instead of brass for contacts, as well as alternative ceramic materials. Cabin filters are not non-allergenic certified and use reduced filter density. And so on.

The bottom line is that Mercedes-Benz StarParts offer highly-competitive pricing on common maintenance parts for older vehicles, with compromises in places that really don't affect their performance, quality or usability. Next time you speak with your dealer, ask about StarParts: Both you and your customers will be glad you did. |

*StarTuned* thanks the parts team at RBM of Atlanta for their gracious assistance with the standard parts photos.



The brake disks were also identical, including the 'anti-corrosion' text printed inside the box. The StarParts version is on the left, standard on the right.

