

Avoiding the pain of an accident

Robert Barry talks to some stakeholders in the accident management and collision repair industry about the many reasons fleet operators should use a third party to oversee their vehicle repairs.

MANAGING an accident even when the vehicle has only been subject to minor paint and panel damage is still one of the most time consuming and often frustrating processes for a business to go through. It diverts people's attention away from their core functions, reduces the business productivity and adds more cost to the business.

Furthermore, most people in business are not mechanics or panel beating experts, so how are they to know or tell if the repair to a fleet vehicle has been completed to a factory standard and if all the structural and safety integrity of the vehicle has been compromised by a sub-standard repair?

This is where using a third party professional service such as Crash Management can alleviate a fleet operator of the stress of dealing with a motor vehicle accident and ensure that the repair is carried out to Manufacturer standard.

Recently one of our own fleet vehicles at Adrenalin suffered what appeared to be minor bumper damage in a parking incident, but as a result the whole rear bumper was removed and replaced under the auspices of Crash Management.

The process is very simple, after the incident our publisher Cathy Parker rang Crash Management and informed them of the damage, and then filled in a claim form from the company's insurance broker. Crash Management recommended a local repairer where the vehicle was taken for appraisal.

On completion of that appraisal, Crash Management returned with a quote for repair that had been approved by the insurance broker, but a minor delay was created because the entire bumper assembly had to be

sourced from overseas.

Once the part arrived in New Zealand the vehicle was then off the road for 24 hours and a courtesy car was provided by the approved repairer while the new bumper was fitted, which also involved working around a fitted tow bar and wiring.

Cathy Parker says all she had to do was pay the insurance excess directly to the collision repairer on collection of the vehicle which is normal procedure. Parker claims she never once worried about the quality of the repair because she was comfortable that Crash Management had chosen a collision repairer who met their exacting standards and would be provided with technical support if necessary.

"It's a great one-stop-shop service for people with limited knowledge about panel repairs or are just time-poor and just need to get the job done with some comfort and certainty around the quality of workmanship that they are going to get," she says.

"It's important that the vehicles appearance is returned back to factory standard, but also that the rust-proofing and paint protection has been re-established and that all safety structures have been correctly removed and replaced, ensuring the the vehicles safety integrity has been restored and is not compromised."

Cathy Parker says that in a previous career when she ran a leasing company operation, it set up a group of approved panel beaters in a similar fashion to those currently approved by Crash Management to manage all repair work, because many lease cars were being returned with sub standard repairs.

"These ranged from serious

structural issues, poor panel fit, mismatched colour, paint not adhering to plastic bumpers and paint quite literally peeling off vehicles due to poor preparation prior to being re-sprayed," says Parker.

We took an active role in educating those panel beaters about the standards of repair we required for our lease vehicles back then, because at the end of the day it affected the residual value of the vehicle and the ability to sell the vehicle on at the end of the term. This is a factor many fleet customers still overlook even now."


Crash Management CEO Karen Knight says that professional

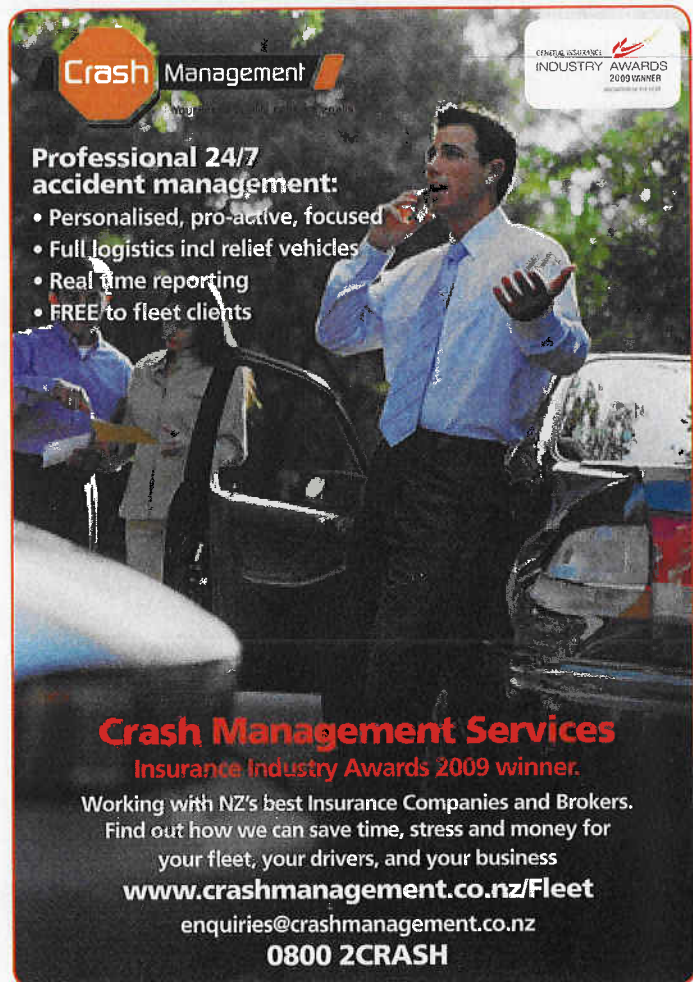
accident management is still a new concept to New Zealand fleets and it's been a slow road to growth for the company to change the mindset of the entrenched status quo.

"Whoever said Kiwis are early adopters are very optimistic, this might be true of consumer electronics but not the use of third party crash management services" says Karen.

"Challenging Fleet Managers and CFOs to think about new solutions to old problems has been interesting, but clients who use our service do appreciate the value we add, and the thirty insurance brokers who refer business to us also appreciate the expert advice and personalised service we offer their clients."

Crash Management has a New Zealand wide network of

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more than 50 Collision Repair Association (CRA) certified structural repair centres which it says guarantees expedience, quality and convenience.

The Crash Management Network provides:

- Computer-based collision repair estimating which is accurate, definitive, and transparent.
- Technologically advanced repair equipment, ensuring accuracy and correct repair methodology of all steel types including structural components.
- Advanced chassis straightening equipment, ensuring alignment and steering is reinstated to manufacturer's specifications.
- Computerised link to paint manufacturer and colour formulas, ensuring precise matching.
- State-of-the-art baking ovens, ensuring temperature, environmental and safety controls. Noise, dust, fumes and toxic waste are contained and eliminated, or reduced to regulatory standards.
- Quality control checks at each milestone point within the repair process and comprehensive quality inspection on completion ensuring a defect-free delivery.
- Independent motor vehicle accident management provides an unconditional guarantee, ensuring total peace-of-mind in the unlikely event of delayed fault detection, including any aspect of paint finish, component fitment and/or operation, alignment, and the ever elusive 'rattle' or 'squeak'.

Why you should use a CRA repairer

The Collision Repair Association (formerly known as the NZ Motor Body Builders Association) is a collective body of collision repairers, panel beaters, spray painters and allied businesses which are audited regularly to ensure high standards of workmanship are maintained.

The Association enforces a points-based training programme: if you don't earn the minimum points, you lose your status. The CRA conducts site inspections, provides a training road-show which tours the country, has an annual conference and also provides members with regular bulletins containing industry information, including updated technology.

The Association – and its members – aim to provide quality and safety assurance to customers by assuring its members' work meets its own high standards. It does this by first screening prospective members to make sure panel beaters have the correct equipment to realign a vehicle to manufacturers' specifications. These specifications have little or no tolerance and are essential for the car's safety features to function properly again if involved in another collision.

Auto refinishers also need to reinstate the manufacturer's original finish to the vehicle and this requires heated paint booths and the correct dust and paint extraction systems. The inspection also takes into account workplace standards, and how clean and tidy the workshop is. You can identify association members by the CRA logo which is displayed on members' premises.