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How My Shop Benefits from Emissions Testing

By Bob Haines, Owner of Bob's Garage in Waukegan, Illinois

Rather than write a technical article for *Air Repair*, I thought it would be interesting and perhaps more beneficial to shop owners to tell you about how I improved my Repair Effectiveness Index (REI) and increased my business.

At the end of September 2005, we were in the top five for overall REI scores coupled with total repairs, but we struggled in the beginning. The most important thing we did was to attend every meeting and class offered by the Illinois EPA's Outreach Program. They provided some great insight on how I could expand my business into this relatively untapped market if I could fix emissions failures. I was skeptical at first, but after attending these FREE seminars I realized the seminar sponsors wanted to get these vehicles fixed as much as I did. I found out that not only did their techniques work, but that they would advertise for FREE that I could fix emissions failures. I made my technicians attend classes along with me, and I explained to them that the more they knew, the more they could fix. In the early days following the beginning of the enhanced testing program, most tests performed were IM240 tests along with the occasional idle test. We cut our teeth on some miserable repairs that came in the form of RX-7s, Mustangs, and the Oldsmobile Y-engine. It was hard to sell people with an Oldsmobile Y-engine everything they needed. Let's face it; some of these old cars aren't worth the cost to make the necessary emissions repairs. When OBDII testing started in 2004, we had to kind of start over. It was a whole new learning curve, but Outreach was ready to provide more FREE classes, and of course, we all went.

The most important tool is knowledge. Emissions repairs have become at least 25 percent of our shop income. Our customer base and production have expanded dramatically. Much of our business comes from other shops, whether the customer tells us or not. Some customers have been to several shops and have actually failed worse, and we found out that in some cases only a simple repair was needed.

When I first saw the Repair Facility Performance Report, I knew that the best shops would get the most attention from potential customers. I knew that I wanted to be in the book. We finally strung enough successful repairs together to be included in the book. The next thing I knew I started getting calls from people whose vehicle failed the test. I let the state advertise for me. The public will use the book to find you. I think motorists are looking for a repair shop that can fix their vehicle quickly and with the least amount of expense to them. So, I have found that my success is from having the correct equipment and taking advantage of the Outreach program that provides FREE training and advertising. Everyone benefits, which results in clean air for all of us.

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New EPA Manager

The Illinois EPA recently announced the appointment of Christopher P. Demeroukas (center) as Manager of the Division of Mobile Source Programs, which includes the vehicle emissions test program. The position had been vacant since the retirement of Richard Forbes.

Chris brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position. He has been with the Illinois EPA for almost 12 years. For eight of those years, he was an attorney assigned to the vehicle emissions test program. Chris also has an extensive background in procurement and contract law, and was involved in the process of negotiating and amending the current vehicle emissions test contract.

The photo above was taken during a recent visit to Envirotest Illinois by Demeroukas, Steve Thorpe (left), Mobile Source Programs Compliance Assurance Manager, and Jim Matheny (right), Technical Services Manager.