

# Air Bag Debate

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*New or used, OEM air bags are your best bet*

Air bags have been proven to be one of the most beneficial safety devices in our automobiles today. It is for this reason that all stakeholders involved need to embrace them. Through all of the misconceptions concerning air bags one point needs to be made loud and clear. And that is that there is currently no evidence of safety concerns with recycled OEM air bags and therefore there should be no fear in using them.

## **OEM is OEM**

After all, recycled OEM air bags are original equipment. They are simply donated from one salvage vehicle to the next, like any other used part. In a report by the CCMTA Guidelines for the use of Recycled Original Equipment Air Bags, May 7, 2004 it was noted that when tested, undamaged OEM recycled air bag modules performed similarly to new replacement OEM air bag modules. With the growing number of vehicles on the market and the ever-increasing number of air bags in them it is necessary to come up with a plan for the air bags re-use.

## **Proper techniques**

To relieve some of the concerns of recycled OEM air bags it is necessary to develop a set of standards for the industry to follow. B.C. for example has been very proactive in the air bag debate and therefore they have developed a 2-hour certification course for those that handle recycled OEM air bags. Accredited recyclers who handle air bags will receive training on the proper techniques in removing, storing and installing recycled OEM air bags. Programs of this nature have proven to ease the fears of many potential buyers of recycled OEM air bags. Steve Fletcher, Automotive Recyclers of Canada's Managing Director, notes "Some insurers seem a little more open to recycled OEM air bags."

## **Regulation**

This may be in part because records have shown that when it came to deploying all of the excess air bags in B.C. as part of the Recycled OEM Air Bag Program, they have never had one unit not deploy. Programs that help regulate the air bag issue will verify such things as:

1. That the air bag is indeed OEM and not a rebuilt (Ontario has banned rebuilt air bags).
2. That the OEM air bag has not been tampered with.
3. That the OEM air bag has not suffered water damage.
4. That the air bag is the exact OEM part and not a similar fit or non-exact interchange. The effort to explore all of these issues and to get the facts on the table is important for a few other reasons as well. Recycled OEM air bags save insurance companies lots of money and they will save some vehicles from being salvaged.

## **Conserve resources**

Collision repair facilities have been using and benefiting from them and they are always deploying as they were designed. Steve Fletcher notes, "We have never heard of an issue." Even more important, the re-use of air bags helps ease the growing environmental problem that air bags cause. Air bags are filled with the propellant, Sodium Azide, which is highly toxic. So deploying these devices unnecessarily and/or leaving them in salvage vehicles simply makes no sense.

## **A step up**

The re-using of any product helps conserve natural resources and the energy and effort to make the product again. This is a step up from recycling! Automotive recyclers are spending the necessary time and money to learn and address the issues pertaining to all parts and their salability. Our livelihood is centered on our core business of the recycled OEM part. In the case of air bags, we must promote and sell them because they work. Any reluctance to use them is unjustified. CR