

The [automobile body repair business](#) is changing quickly. This industry has seen rather slow and evolved changes over the past 30 years or so but recently the pace of change has accelerated. These changes are shrinking your marketplace of clients as well as constricting how you perform your work. Staying ahead of these changes should give you a strong edge over your competition and help to insure that you remain in business for years to come.

One of the biggest systemic changes to affect body repair shop owners is the shrinking customer base. For instance, the high expense of replacing air bags in wrecked cars, combined with the greater availability of less expensive vehicles means that many wrecked cars are now considered a total loss by the insurance companies and as such are not repaired.

In addition, there are changes taking place in the auto body repair industry that drive the way that you operate. There are both environmental and safety issues that will force body shop owners to invest in new equipment and spray booths. Each step forward requires that you carefully evaluate the costs of improvements against future income.

Recent changes to the International Fire Code and the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) codes that the vast majority of states and local jurisdictions use now mandate that spray paint booths and mixing rooms have automatic fire suppression systems. This has been a substantial change, resulting in greater protection of spray painting operations, but it increases the cost of the spray booth system. Existing manufactured booths can often be retrofitted with automatic suppression systems, but even that expense can be high. These systems fall squarely in the realm of life safety of those who must work in and around the spray painting operations, where explosive fires are rare but very severe.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has made a new rule, National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) (Subpart HHHHHH), that mandates by January 10, 2011, those that engage in spray applications to motor vehicles must comply. These standards also mandate a spray booth that contains and filters the emissions from spray operations, as well as spray guns that comply and training to the operators of the equipment. The point of this regulation is to protect the environment, but it does mandate the use of an approved spray paint booth. A summary of these regulations may be found on the Internet at http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/area/paint_stripb.pdf

and

<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/area/autobodybs.doc>

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All of these choices will also drive your insurance costs. If you take the time to keep your spray booth up to date and protect both your environment and your employees, then you will be able to qualify for [body shop insurance programs](#) that will offer you the best rates and wider protection. Over time, these changes will begin to pay for themselves in reduced insurance costs.

At [Clinard Insurance Group, in Winston Salem, NC](#) , we want all of our clients to be informed insurance consumers. We specialize in helping automotive repair and body shops all across North Carolina and South Carolina with their insurance needs. If you need help with your [garage insurance](#)

, your

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or any other insurance needs for your auto repair or body shop, please call us, toll free at 877-687-7557 or visit us on the web at

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