



# Artistic Auto Body:

## set for an expanding electric vehicle population with stand-alone EV facility

FOLLOWING LAST MONTH'S COLLISION INDUSTRY CONFERENCE DISCUSSION ON "THE FLOOD OF EVS", JOHN VISITS A BODY SHOP THAT'S TAKING STEPS TO GET AHEAD OF THE GAME.

Count Artistic Autobody as among the shops geared up and ready for the coming wave of electric vehicles (EVs). "That's what we're trying to do: anticipate where things are going, and try to get there before we have to," said shop owner Terry Mostul, standing outside the stand-alone EV centre he's established next to his company's original body shop in Portland, Oregon. "I like to be proactive rather than reactive."

He acknowledges that some of his colleagues have questioned whether his investment in an EV-only centre almost two years ago wasn't premature, at best. But the growth of EVs in Mostul's market on the west coast of the United States coupled with the almost weekly automaker announcements in recent months of new electric-powered models are an indication he made the right move. "I can already see that specialising makes sense not only from what we're

doing today, but certainly as you look to the future," he said.

Artistic Autobody's two shop locations had ample experience with EVs prior to segmenting those vehicles to a stand-alone centre. The company holds a dozen EV automakers' certifications, including OEMs such as Audi, Jaguar, Nissan and Tesla. It's that experience trying to incorporate EV repairs into the company's other production that prompted Mostul to think about segmenting it out.

"There's a long list of things we learned that motivated this," Mostul said. "One of those things is a focus on parts. Here we have space and loading docks to receive all our parts for this location, even the EV parts that arrive by semi-trailer. We have a couple of golf carts with beds on the back where we can deliver parts from here right to the technician, just in time. And when you take an EV apart, you often have to remove much of the

interior to disconnect certain things. So there are lots of interior parts that have to be taken out of the car and stored. Previously, all those parts were put on carts, and that's just not a safe place to put seats and trim, or the glass you may need to remove just to get door handles out."

The Artistic EV centre includes a large storage area of stacked and labelled bins where such parts can be safely stored and kept clean. Damaged parts to be replaced are stored on carts near the parts delivery area – all the Tigard location parts are now delivered to the EV centre, reducing truck and part congestion at its two other buildings – to be mirror-matched as new parts are delivered.

The space the EV centre offers also enables Artistic to expedite repairs by stocking some of the most common EV vehicle fasteners and other parts – even some bumpers, rebars and fenders – that may not be immediately



Blueprinter Sophia Goodrich prepares an estimate.



Technician Kyle Liddane performs a structural repair on a Tesla Model 3.



The five charger-equipped stalls for blueprinting.

# 5 Minutes with ...

available locally for some models. Parts delays, though far less of an issue than they were in the past, were another consideration Mostul had in mind when adding the EV centre.

"I just don't like having an electric vehicle sitting outside in the wet and the cold, even if covered in plastic," said Mostul. "It's bad for the battery. So, having inside storage here in the EV centre has been wonderful for keeping them much, much safer. And the customers also love knowing the vehicles are stored inside."

Mostul said EV repair production also has a slightly different "tempo" than work on other vehicles. There's more involved in disassembly for blueprinting, more diagnostic work upfront, for example. For everyone involved in working on the vehicles – estimators, technicians, parts staff and even detailers – there's a learning curve that only steepens if they're working on EVs only occasionally amongst a regular flow of other vehicles, he said. The EV centre allows those employees to specialise in those vehicles.

"We started with a blueprinter, taking them out of the other building and saying, 'You're just going to focus on these vehicles,'" Mostul said. "And the minute we did that – boom, things really started getting traction."

The EV centre includes five stalls for blueprinting, allowing for a mid-tech to be disassembling one vehicle as an estimator prepares the paperwork for another. Parts and OEM procedure research can be being completed on the other vehicles before they are moved to storage or into production. All the cars can be fully charged via charging stations in that area, as well as connected to the automaker via a standalone Wi-Fi network that is separate from that used to run the business or provide connectivity for customers.

"We want to leave them there in that area until we are done with all those preliminary processes," Mostul said. "Having it separate allows us not to jeopardise accuracy by trying to maintain the same flow we use elsewhere in production."

Scheduling of EVs is also done

differently. "Every incoming drivable job gets put on a list, and instead of scheduling by date, we'll notify them when we have all the parts, and then bring them in for repairs," Mostul said. "That may mean an EV listed later may jump ahead of one brought in earlier. But we keep in contact with our customers throughout the process."

While actual repair and paint work are currently done in the shop's other buildings, that will change as the company plans to build the capability to do it within the EV centre. While some of the company's other mechanical work is done in its other buildings, its lead mechanic, and its scanning and calibration work, are in the EV centre.

"We want to do as much as we can in-house, both so we can control it to make sure it's done right, and also for cycle time, so we don't have to take something to a dealership, which has extra days and costs associated with it," said Mostul.

The EV centre's charging stations are programmable, allowing charging to generally take place overnight when energy rates are lower. All vehicles are fully charged the night before they are to be delivered. "Because of how we've positioned ourselves, it's not unusual to have someone come from 400 kilometres away have their car fixed here, so it's important we return the EV to them fully charged and triple-checked to make sure everything is like new."

Mostul said he sees his company's EV centre as a logical step in the changing nature of the collision industry's work. "Being a body man is now so much more than it used to be," he said. "A bigger and bigger portion of the bill is related to the work you do with a computer at the diagnostic rate. You really need the right facility with people who are good at that. That's what we've tried to build here."



John is a freelance writer based in the United States who has been writing about the automotive industry since 1988, he is also the editor of the weekly Crash Network [www.CrashNetwork.com](http://www.CrashNetwork.com)



**Scott Croaker,**  
Fix Auto

**When did you join the industry?**  
I've been in the automotive industry for over 30 years, but have been involved in the accident repair industry more heavily in the last 6 years.

**What was your first job in the industry?**  
Apprentice technician, but quickly moved into the heated and airconditioned front office soon after completing my apprenticeship.

**What do you do now?**  
Head of Operations for Fix Network Australia, which covers both the Fix Auto and Novus Auto Glass brands.

**What do you like about the industry?**  
The integrity and authenticity of body shop owners who have a genuine passion for the industry.

**What don't you like about the industry?**  
The impact of consolidation, the pressure on repair costs, increased complexity of repairs and increasing labour and parts costs are all conspiring to create difficult environment for many small businesses.

**What music do you like?**  
Not the music my kids listens to.

**Your Favourite Artist?**  
Really depends on the mood I'm in.

**Your favourite food?** Thai or Japanese

**Your favourite drink?** Water.

**Your hobbies?**  
I currently enjoy the mountain biking, dog walking, mowing the lawn and most domestic hobbies.

**Who in the world would you most like to meet?** David Attenborough.

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