



NEWS

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Contact: Jack Gillis
(202) 737-2212

GM STUDY CONFIRMS CAPA'S VALUE TO COLLISION REPAIRERS

GM'S USE OF WRONG PART MISLEADS INDUSTRY AND CONSUMERS ABOUT COMPETITIVE PART QUALITY

Washington, DC: A recent General Motors press release announced results of a GM test that supposedly compared GM brand bumper components to corresponding non-GM bumper components. The test claims to have identified a failure of the aftermarket bumper reinforcement, a part type that CAPA doesn't currently certify.

Upon closer scrutiny, however, it appears that there is a serious flaw in the study and its conclusion -- GM used the wrong aftermarket energy absorber for the test. When GM tested the 2001 Chevrolet Cavalier, it chose to use an aftermarket energy absorber for a 1995-99 Chevrolet Cavalier. Clearly, a part designed to fit a different model year series could not be expected to perform well. "GM apparently chose the wrong part for a comparative test, and then may have compounded that error by spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to promote an inaccurate and irrelevant comparison. "It makes you wonder if GM's adamant opposition to a free and competitive marketplace for crash parts may have been in play here," said Jack Gillis Executive Director. "The published results of the test might lead the casual observer to think that car company control over aftermarket crash parts is a good thing, but that conclusion is as faulty as the tests results on which it relies. The bottom line is that any restriction on the free market for parts, whether that is in the form of a monopoly or even some less extreme arrangement, not only increases car repair costs for consumers but keeps collision repairers from being able to repair cars."

What GM's study does validate is the need for an independent, non-profit, third party, ANSI approved standards developer like CAPA. In spite of its flawed test, GM claims that aftermarket bumper reinforcements are inconsistent. As with other replacement parts, the market needs a mechanism to identify which ones do, in fact, perform well.

The GM report also includes a GM evaluation of a previously CAPA certified bumper cover. GM chose to include in its test a part that had been removed by the CAPA program in December 2003.

Leaving aside GM's motivation for choosing such a part, it is quite clear that the problem was caused not by the performance of the bumper cover, but by GM's use of the wrong absorber behind the bumper cover. In fact, there is no evidence that a GM brand bumper cover would have performed any differently when used with the wrong absorber.

In its study, GM chose to use the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's 5 mph bumper test. General Motors was one of the car companies that successfully fought to lower the 5 mph test that the U.S. Department of Transportation once required all vehicles to pass to a 2.5 mph test, which is about the speed at which we usually walk. Of course, in successfully lobbying for the change in that requirement, GM helped to immediately expand the need for its repair parts. Who pays the price for this GM effort? Consumers who now must drive with less resilient bumpers. They now experience huge repair bills after backing into parking lot poles or tapping a vehicle in front of them. It seems fairly obvious that more resilient bumpers (i.e. those that could pass the now-abandoned 5 mph impact test) would result in far fewer repairs.

It is important to note that the GM study relied on testing protocol used by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Clearly, GM's choice of the IIHS testing protocol indicates the high degree of respect, industry-wide, for IIHS testing and practices. We trust that GM will now accept the IIHS tests that showed that cosmetic replacement parts such as fenders and bumper covers have no significant impact on the safety of an automobile.

Certified Automotive Parts Association, founded in 1987, is the nation's only independent, non-profit, third party crash parts quality certification organization. CAPA certification identifies, for both consumers and the industry, those parts that meet our high quality standards for fit, form, finish, material content and corrosion resistance. For more information see www.CAPAcertified.org.