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## **Tech talk: Not all collision repair is the same**

*We're publishing a "Tech talk" series to share more about the people and technology behind our cars – who and what make an Audi an Audi. We hope you enjoy the series! To see all "Tech talk" articles, click [here](#).*

**In the not-so-distant, not socially distant past, Mark Allen picked up a corner of a bare Audi R8 space frame with one hand in front of a group of 40 insurance claims adjusters from all over the U.S.**

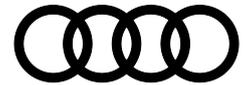
“This is T6 aerospace-grade aluminum, which is actually stronger than military-grade aluminum,” he said.

On this day at the nondescript Audi Training Center in Ashburn, Virginia, Allen showed the claims adjusters how Audi repairs vehicles differently—and why. To much of the automotive industry, Allen and his four-person team are a silent force of advocacy and action, training and the pursuit of perfection. They are staunch advocates for quality and safety.

“When I present to insurance companies they often ask why don’t manufacturers all fix their cars the same way and why do we require specialized equipment,” Allen said. “I answer a question with a question: I ask if they have ever done the drop the egg from the top of the school experiment. Many raise their hands. I ask if everyone answered the challenge by building their protection cells the same way. They all look at me quizzically and then exclaim “No!” as if there was something wrong. My point to them is that auto manufacturers meet the challenge of creating stunning, quality, fuel-efficient, fun-to-drive vehicles by their own corporate style and design philosophies.

“The end result is success to their customers, but they all answer very differently. Audi is a balance of style, efficiency, performance, capability, luxury and technology that many aspire to but don’t combine in the same perfect proportions.”

Allen leads Audi’s collision repair initiatives and has been exposed to the Audi brand for nearly 50 years in various capacities, first seeing it when his father began testing Wankel rotary-powered NSU Ro80 sedans at the Curtiss-Wright company in the early 1970s. That’s when the aerospace firm earned the U.S. patent rights to the



technology. As Audi enthusiasts appreciate, NSU fully merged into Audi in 1985 and gave its “Vorsprung durch Technik” (“lead through technology”) tagline to the brand along the way.

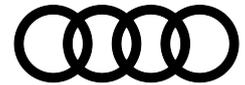
Allen took his passion for the brand to work with him and the Audi Authorized Collision Repair team. Their work often flies under the radar but is most certainly felt throughout the company. The team gets involved in vehicles as initial design and engineering and continues developing repair processes deep into the model cycles of various vehicles, including pre- and post-crash testing. It works with dealer development, more than 200 certified repair centers in the U.S. and Canada, developing special tools and training, academy training for up to 500 body repair specialists a year, insurer relations, customer relations, parts pricing, support of all Audi Sport Customer Racing servicing and repair initiatives in the U.S. and works with government relations.

“During repair method development, all of the important areas of what the program is about are involved. The initial method of the repair is recorded, the equipment used, the materials like adhesives and seams sealers, corrosion protection and fasteners are all recorded when the vehicle is repaired,” Allen said. “The repair is validated by re-crashing the car in simulators and in physicality to ensure it performs the way the structure is designed to behave. We provide a network that is capable of completing these repairs and providing a tested outcome every time a vehicle is repaired.”

During office tours, Allen often points to a green-painted side door aperture brace welded into the door of an Audi Q5, noting a process developed following government collision safety testing ensures a similar level of quality and integrity to what the door aperture had before an impact. For that project, a team in Germany looked at data from U.S. testing to ensure a global quality standard.

There are also some processes developed by our trainers in Ashburn. Take, for instance, collision repair and replacement of the carbon fiber B-pillar on the Audi R8. That repair process also benefits Audi Sport racecars campaigned around the world.

Regarding repair facilities that aren’t in the Audi Certified program, Allen says, “What the average shop that is not a part of the program does is a very big unknown. An untrained technician’s opinion on how to complete repairs on advanced materials and vehicle systems are the ultimate gamble. We provide a repeatable outcome.”



A longtime board member of I-CAR (Inter-Industry Conference on Automotive Collision and Repair), the standards organization for car repair in North America, Audi is able to share its insights with mixed materials construction—steel, aluminum, carbon fiber, polymers and various adhesives—with other members.

Some automakers launching certified repair programs or newly working with aluminum and exotic materials have consulted and continue to consult with Audi on best practices. Audi began selling aluminum-intensive vehicles in the U.S. with the 1997 A8 sedan and continues today with the A8, TT sports car and R8 supercar, among others.

More than half of Audi's approximately 200 certified repair facilities are capable of repairing aluminum-intensive vehicles, with more than 400 technicians trained to DIN ISO 9606-2 welding certification standards. Ninety-seven percent of Audi's facilities meet I-CAR Gold Class standards, the organization's highest rating.

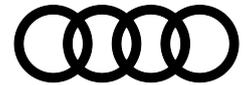
For its repair certification, Audi requires an investment in a number of specialized tools, regular facilities audits and training that can take up to two weeks in Ashburn. It is far more rigorous than your average vocational training, including difficult riveting techniques and aluminum welding.

“Think more along the specialization of what it takes to repair an airliner or our Audi racecars.”

The goal isn't difficulty for the sake of it. Rather, the training is designed to help ensure customers' peace of mind.

“Once, we had a customer contact us about the program and why she should take her car to one of our shops,” Allen said. “She mentioned the name of the repair shop. I knew the technicians that were going to be responsible to complete the repairs on her car.

“She seemed taken aback that I would know these gentlemen since she was in a different part of the country. I explained that they attend training here in Ashburn, and as the program manager, I frequently stop in and share time with the various classes. We will have a meal together; I observe them working. What we build in our training facilities is not just the provenience of information; we build a culture of learning and relationships. After all of that, the customer was put at ease and was confident in the repairer and also felt embraced by the brand because we are so involved to take care of her.”



– End –

**ABOUT AUDI OF AMERICA**

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