



SMOG CHECK ADVISORY

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June 1999

Director Makes Interim BAR Appointments

Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Director Kathleen Hamilton recently named Patrick Dorais Acting Chief of the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR), Richard Mundy Acting Deputy Chief, and Chris Edwards Acting Chief of Staff of the Smog Check Program.

Former BAR Chief Marty Keller and former Smog Check Chief of Staff Leon Vann, Jr. resigned their positions, effective April 30.

Prior to their interim appointments, Dorais served as BAR's Deputy Chief, Mundy served as BAR's Deputy Chief of Enforcement, and Edwards served as manager of Smog Check Operations for three years.

"Each of these individuals will serve until a replacement for the BAR chief is found," Hamilton said. "I believe they will give the program the continuity that is so critical at this time and the credibility that is essential to its continued success." ❖

Shop Owners Facing Maintenance Decisions as BAR-97 Warranties Expire

As the one-year warranties on the BAR-97 Test Analyzer Systems (TAS) begin to expire, shop owners will be faced with deciding whether to purchase a service contract from their manufacturer or risk going with no coverage and paying for repairs out of pocket.

Derebew Shankute in BAR's Engineering Unit handles complaints about BAR-97 manufacturers and said nearly all stations have needed some service since the BAR-97 units came online nearly a year ago.

"Generally, the equipment did not perform without problems," he said. "There have been a lot of complaints from station owners."

In an informal survey conducted by the California Service Station and Automotive Repair Association (CSSARA), the average station called its BAR-97 manufacturer 2.5 times per month for problems that resulted in downtime for the machine. Software problems were the most

prevalent, but hardware failures across the three major brands averaged nearly two a month, according to the survey.

Service agreements vary slightly between manufacturers, but the basic components should be more or less the same. The most common concerns and questions station owners have regarding the service contracts include:

- ❖ Which parts of the BAR-97 units are covered and which are not?
- ❖ What is the response time for a service call?
- ❖ How long will it take to get the unit fixed?
- ❖ If a unit cannot be fixed within the specified time frame, will a loaner machine be provided?
- ❖ What are the station's responsibilities to maintain the warranty or service contract?

(See **Warranties Expire** on page 3)

Computerized Technician Testing Begins in Fall

The Bureau of Automotive Repair will begin using computer-based exams in the fall. The new vendor, Experior, will be offering the exam six days per week with exam scoring on-site, according to George Adelsperger, Manager of BAR's Standards and Training Unit.

The current contractor, PSI, will stop testing in early September, and Experior will begin administering the new computer-based exams in mid-October.

"That means between September 5 and October 15, 1999, no technician licensing exams will be given," he said.

In order to test before the changeover, technicians must send their completed license applications, along with applicable documents and appropriate fees, **postmarked no later than**

July 19, 1999, to the Department of Consumer Affairs Licensing Division. Applications hand-carried or sent by overnight mail will be accepted until July 23, 1999.

"Technicians should allow themselves plenty of time, so they are more likely to have a choice of exam dates and locations," Adelsperger added.

Applications received after the cutoff date will be processed and sent later to Experior. About September 24, Experior will start notifying technicians of exam eligibility. Exam scheduling will begin on October 15.

"Technicians are urged to watch for future Advisory articles, and electronic transmission (ET) blasts on these changes," he said. ❖



SNAPSHOT

Below are the Smog Check inspection and repair statistics for March and April 1999. The numbers include both Acceleration Simulation Mode (ASM) and Two-Speed Idle (TSI) testing and the number of certificates issued for all tests performed. The remainder of the data is for first tests.

	MARCH	APRIL
Program Volume		
Tests Conducted	1,025,423 *	907,661 *
Vehicles Tested	800,470	752,805
Vehicles Failed	64,288	61,727
Certificates Issued	928,467	820,532
Type of Failure		
Tailpipe:		
Gross Polluters	42,489 (5.8%)	44,106 (5.9%)
Visual	11,911 (1.8%) **	13,655 (1.8%) **
Functional	10,644 (1.6%)	12,251 (1.6%)
Failure by Station Type		
Test & Repair	23,602 (5.2%)	22,228 (5.1%)
GSGR	11,723 (6.7%)	10,738 (6.5%)
GPC	5,923 (8.2%)	5,448 (8.2%)
Test-Only	23,035 (27.2%)	23,240 (27.3%)
Consumer Assistance/Referee Centers		
Tests	1,887	1,644
Cost Waivers Issued	132	81
Hardship Extensions Issued	214	184
Average Reported Repair Costs		
Vehicles Repaired	68,856	68,856
Average Cost (statewide)	\$ 96	\$ 96
Test & Repair Stations	\$ 87	\$ 88
GSGR Stations	\$ 98	\$ 98

* Includes multiple tests on same vehicle.

** Subset of tailpipe failures.

Clarifying Fuel Cap Equipment and Software Update Purchases

A few questions raised at a recent Inspection and Maintenance Review Committee (IMRC) meeting indicated that some repair shop owners in Basic Areas are apparently confused about software updates and fuel cap testing.

In discussions with the IMRC, some shop owners said they were being required to purchase new BAR-90 software solely for the purpose of performing the fuel cap test. However, BAR representatives replied that the software update would have been required even without the addition of fuel cap testing.

“The purchase of the software update to the BAR-90 machines is a separate issue from the purchase of the fuel cap testing equipment,” explained Chris Edwards, BAR’s Acting Chief of Staff. “The software update to make the BAR-90 machines more operationally consistent with the BAR-97 is long overdue.”

For example, a pre-inspection mode has been added to the BAR-90. Look for a story on how to conduct a pre-inspection on the BAR-90 in next month’s *Advisory*.

In addition, BAR pointed out that the software update and the fuel cap tester can be purchased separately, but that BAR-90 manufacturers may offer a “package deal” that includes both the software update and the fuel cap tester. Stations need to purchase only one gas cap tester per station, but software updates are required for each BAR-90 machine.

“In fact, all manufacturers have informed us that they offer both purchase options,” Edwards said. “Each shop owner must evaluate the advantages and/or disadvantages of a package or separate purchase of these items” he added. ❖

1999 Calendar of Coming Events



June

**15 Industry Awareness Day—
State Capitol**
(Contact your association for
more details.)

July

**1 Fuel Cap Testing Begins in
Non-Enhanced Areas**
**5 State Holiday—
Independence Day**

Warranties Expire *(continued from page 1)*

“Anything inside the ‘secured’ part of the BAR-97 unit should be covered, including the gas bench, the computer, and all connections,” Shankute said. “The service contract should also cover the dynamometer and its connections, but may omit monitors, keyboards, or printers.”

Items such as probes, hoses, and filters are considered “consumables” and typically are not covered.

“Station owners should be aware that promises not specifically corroborated in writing under the original warranty, the service contract agreement, or an addendum may not be enforceable,” Shankute said. “If you have questions about whether a specific part is covered in your service contract, get the answer in writing.”

There are other circumstances and issues that are not covered by a service contract, such as those typically covered under your business insurance. For example, station owners should expect the damages incurred during an earthquake or riot to be covered by their insurance, rather than by the service contract.

Abuse of equipment also voids the warranty but is somewhat harder to define. Abuse has to be obvious, according to Pete Garrity, Emissions Service Manager for Equiserve (Snap-On/Sun).

“Antifreeze in the bench, coffee in the keyboard, or a unit that has been knocked over are clearly abusive situations,” he said.

Station owners are sometimes surprised about the prices of the service contracts, which run about \$3,000 a year. However, parts for the BAR-97 can be expensive. A gas bench costs more than \$1,000; circuit boards and NOx cells could each cost \$500 or more. Furthermore, service calls currently cost around \$130 for the first hour and about \$90 for each additional hour.

“Without a warranty or service contract, station owners may wind up paying out

of their pockets,” Shankute said. “It could be very expensive.”

The potential for more costs to repair BAR-97s has increased as a result of BAR’s new Quality Assurance (QA) inspection program, according to Acting BAR Chief Patrick Dorais.

“QA inspections can result in BAR ordering station owners to fix defective machines, even if nobody realized the machine was broken,” he said. “Without a service contract, stations may be forced to pay out of pocket to comply with the BAR order.”

Equiserve’s Garrity noted two advantages of a service contract. First, it allows station owners and managers to easily budget expenses since they know in advance what their BAR-97 maintenance costs will be. Secondly, service contracts typically include quarterly preventive maintenance visits, which

go a level deeper than the shops do themselves.

“It’s been demonstrated time and again that customers who perform regular maintenance experience less downtime and fewer service calls,” Garrity said. “With more uptime, they are better able to satisfy their customers on a consistent basis.”

Station owners with questions or concerns about a particular manufacturer’s service contract should contact BAR Engineering at (916) 255-3222. ♦



THE BOTTOM LINE



- 108** Cut score on the current smog exam.
- 74.96** Percent of technicians who passed EA Smog Check exam in April 1999.
- 7,627** Technicians who completed BAR-97 8-Hour Transition Training.
- 6,458** Technicians who completed the BAR-97 20-Hour Update Training (of approximately 8,700 EA technicians who will need it by June 30, 2000).
- 8,624** Advanced (EA) technicians licensed as of May 1, 1999.
- 4,417** Basic (EB) Area technicians licensed as of May 1, 1999.
- 2,260** GoldShield Guaranteed Repair Stations Statewide as of May 1, 1999.
- 291** Test-Only stations statewide as of May 1, 1999.
- 409** Test-Only lanes statewide as of May 1, 1999.



SMOG CHECK STATION CITATIONS



FACILITY NAME	ADDRESS	CITY	ZIP	LEVEL	ARD NUMBER	CITATION NUMBER	ASSESS AMOUNT	ASSESS DATE	DATE MAILED
Express Auto Center	2676 State Street #A	Carlsbad	92008	1	AF161192	C99-0204	\$250	02/20/99	12/03/98
VJ's Performance Auto Care	1046 Hacienda Blvd.	La Puente	91744	1	AE188862	C99-0216	\$250	02/09/99	01/07/99
Smog Pros	5200 East Whittier Blvd.	Los Angeles	90022	1	AA151190	C99-0218	\$250	02/08/99	01/07/99
Maverick Automotive	66 271 Pierson Blvd.	Desert Hot Springs	92240	1	AJ174817	C99-0220	\$250	02/02/99	01/07/99
Valley Smog & Auto Repair	68900 B Street	Cathedral	92234	1	AB187439	C99-0222	\$250	02/04/99	01/07/99
Payless Smog Center	31290 La Baya Drive #6	Westlake Village	91362	1	AK163517	C99-0224	\$750	02/18/99	01/07/99
Ray's Insta Tune	212 East Alvarado	Fallbrook	92028	1	AC057474	C99-0226	\$250	02/08/99	01/19/99
Econo Lube N Tune #50	1942 South Coast Hwy.	Oceanside	92054	1	AA187245	C99-0228	\$250	02/08/99	01/19/99
Charlie's Union 76 Service	23670 Pacific Coast Hwy.	Malibu	90265	1	AL106393	C99-0230	\$250	02/16/99	01/19/99
Master Auto Repair	11706 South Prairie Avenue	Hawthorne	90250	1	AM143906	C99-0232	\$250	02/22/99	01/19/99
Tim's Auto Lab	2220 Eastridge Avenue	Riverside	92507	1	AL169830	C99-0236	\$250	02/26/99	01/19/99
Hi Tech Automotive	128 1/2 Gateway Drive	Madera	93637	1	AA164429	C99-0240	\$250	02/23/99	01/19/99
* North Hills Shell	16961 Devonshire Blvd.	Granada Hills	91344	1	AB123343	C98-0071	\$250	04/15/99	08/13/97
Sanders Auto Sales	203 Palm Avenue	Auburn	95603	1	AM157343	C98-0510	\$250	04/19/99	05/27/98
L A Auto Care	20460 Sherman Way	Canoga Park	91306	3	AJ162610	C99-0242	\$1,500	04/08/99	01/20/99
Buy Rite Automotive	296 East Baseline Street	San Bernardino	92410	1	AC198672	C99-0276	\$250	04/02/99	02/16/99
North County Auto Center	750 North Escondido Blvd.	Escondido	92025	1	AM192186	C99-0280	\$250	04/28/99	02/16/99
Pacific Beach Shell	1885 Garnet Avenue	San Diego	92109	1	AC159018	C99-0285	\$250	04/12/99	02/22/99
* D Mac's Tire & Automotive	525 North Broadway	Escondido	92025	1	AH126805	C99-0287	\$250	04/22/99	02/26/99
Payne's Corner	1180 East Baseline Street	San Bernardino	92410	1	AJ149233	C99-0293	\$250	04/15/99	02/25/99
Smog N Tune	4335 East Gage Avenue	Bell	90201	2	AJ180388	C99-0296	\$750	04/23/99	03/11/99
J & L Auto Repair	107 Broadway	Chula Vista	91910	1	AC138499	C99-0298	\$250	04/28/99	03/11/99
R & R Smog & Auto Repair	10132 Atlantic Avenue	South Gate	90280	1	AC187982	C99-0300	\$250	04/09/99	03/11/99
** Greg's Automotive Service	4793 Valley Blvd.	Los Angeles	90032	1	AK040699	C99-0304	\$250	04/09/99	03/15/99
KAL Motors	3460 Firestone Blvd.	South Gate	90280	1	AH201319	C99-0308	\$250	04/02/99	03/11/99
** Smog Pros	1633 North Altadena Drive	Pasadena	91107	1	AM164071	C99-0310	\$250	04/20/99	03/15/99
* Nick's Auto Repair & Smog	1137 Broadway #E	Chula Vista	91911	1	AB152095	C99-0315	\$250	04/16/99	03/15/99
Oilmax 10 Minute Oil Change	4365 Genessee Blvd.	San Diego	92117	1	AJ174732	C99-0319	\$250	04/26/99	03/11/99
B & J Auto Repair Smog	696 Broadway	Chula Vista	91910	2	AL197282	C99-0325	\$750	04/13/99	03/11/99
All American Auto Service	627 North Atlantic Blvd.	Monterey Park	91754	2	AA164570	C99-0331	\$750	04/29/99	03/11/99

* Stations that have had their Gold Shield Guaranteed Repair (GSGR) certification withdrawn.

** Stations that have had their GSGR certification and Gross Polluter Certification (GPC) Pilot authority withdrawn (none reported).

*** Stations that have had their GSGR certification, GPC, and LIRAP authority withdrawn.

Low-Income Repair Assistance Co-Pay Reduced to \$75

The co-pay to initially qualify motorists for the state's Low Income-Repair Assistance Program (LIRAP) was reduced from \$250 to \$75, effective May 3, 1999.

"The reduction in a consumer's initial co-pay amount is expected to increase participation in LIRAP, which is now available statewide," said Patrick Dorais, Acting BAR Chief.

Currently, more than 100 Gross Polluter Certification (GPC) pilot stations have contracts with BAR to provide LIRAP services. Under the new LIRAP requirements, eligible

motorists must pay the first \$75 toward emissions-related repairs when their vehicles fail a *biennial* Smog Check inspection, and the state will pay for additional repair costs up to a maximum of \$450.

Consumers who fail their biennial Smog Check inspections may contact the Department of Consumer Affairs Consumer Information Center toll-free at (800) 952-5210 or visit the BAR website at www.smogcheck.ca.gov for a list of stations participating in LIRAP, a consumer application, or more information about the program. ❖

Hotlines Help Techs Make Effective Repairs

Hotline repair businesses offer their clients more than immediate help in the middle of a tricky repair. They also collect and store vital information that can save shops and technicians untold hours of work and headaches.

"We have a guy in Texas who fixes 15 cars a day, and he spends \$1,200 to \$1,300 a month (on the help line)," said Bill Kleinschmidt, a Snap-On Diagnostics representative. "You couldn't hire a technician for that amount."

In a presentation to BAR's Technician Advisory Committee (TAC) last fall, Kleinschmidt outlined the benefits of the diagnostic services his firm has to offer.

Snap-On's 35 diagnostic technicians, with a combined 535 years of experience, get between 500-700 calls during their 12-hour days from the 25,000 shops nationwide that subscribe to their service, according to Kleinschmidt.

He added that 98 percent of cars nationwide are completely repaired after an average of two, six-minute phone calls. Furthermore, the repairs are tracked in a database, which enables the Snap-On diagnostic technician to find and rank the most common problems. That database of information on each vehicle becomes invaluable for a technician under pressure to fix a vehicle.

"We have more than one million cars that have had confirmed repairs because we have technicians call back to tell us what actually fixed the problem," he said. "These are real-world fixes."

Just three people handle about 120 calls per day at the Taylor Automotive Tech-Line (TAT) in Franklin, Tennessee, said Robert Taylor, who started the Tech-Line in 1986.

Prior to owning Tech-Line, Taylor had been a technician for Ford Motor Company and Chrysler Corporation and a technical advisor for a major parts company. All of Taylor's Tech-Line employees are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified master technicians.

With a customer base of 450 "elite" shops, Taylor offers his clients technical assistance on a per-call basis or an option of four service packages.

By calling Tech-Line's 800 number, subscribers get a trained technician on the line or a call back within 15 minutes. Technical assistance and repair information can be given orally on the telephone, or it can be faxed or e-mailed.

"Electrical and driveability issues make up about 75 percent of the calls," Taylor said. In addition, calls are logged into a database and are used to keep track of and/or to identify any emerging trends and common fixes.

Most of the calls from California technicians are about emissions systems and vacuum diagrams, he added.

Much of the information provided by auto manufacturers is written for dealership repair, which often means independent technicians have to read between the lines to diagnose problems, Taylor said.

Philadelphia-based ASPIRE, primarily an education and training firm, also has a hotline system for its client base, according to spokesman J. R. King.

"We are the only company out there that is a full circle company," King said. "We develop and provide curriculum, conduct training for technicians and trainers, create and maintain a database of repairs, and then back it up with technician hotline support."

Under the ASPIRE program, callers can either purchase a two-hour block of time at a cost of \$300 or be billed for actual minutes of usage. Calls to the hotline last an average of five minutes; however, that doesn't mean the vehicles are fixed in an average of five minutes.

"We are not going to resolve the issue in five minutes; they (technicians) will fix the vehicle," he said. "We will provide the processes, procedures, and specification necessary for them to repair the vehicles."

Here are some auto repair resources, including online and hotline companies that offer repair diagnostics and repair assistance:

ASPIRE: 1-800-247-1099

iATN: www.iatn.com

Snap-On Diagnostic Customer Service: 1-800-758-5853

Taylor Automotive Tech-Line: 1-800-636-6414

King added that ASPIRE's strengths include its educational approach to repair, an in-house automotive laboratory and research function, and a database of unique problems and fixes that has been built over the last 20 years. Moreover, the company issues its own technical service bulletins to identify unique repair problems, and supplies much of the information to automotive trainers around the country, who teach ASPIRE's "FIRST" and "EDGE" programs.

The resources provided by all the hotline and database companies are used to help fill the gap between the information provided by auto manufacturers and information needed by independent repair shops that are not privy to the same information as dealerships. ♦

Next: ALLDATA and Mitchell talk about database support.

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of stories dedicated to helping technicians become aware of online or other hotline or subscription services that help technicians make effective repairs. While BAR editors conducted interviews with individuals at the firms mentioned, the article does not constitute an endorsement by BAR of the products or services offered by these companies or their representatives.



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BAR FIELD OFFICE PHONE NUMBERS

Bakersfield (661) 833-6304
Riverside (909) 782-4250
Canoga Park (818) 596-4400
Sacramento (916) 255-4200
Culver City (310) 410-0024
San Jose (408) 277-1860
Fresno (559) 445-5015
South El Monte .. (626) 575-6934
Fullerton (714) 680-7851
Hayward (510) 785-1961
Oceanside (760) 439-0942

DCA Cashiering (916) 322-7002
DCA Licensing... (916) 322-4010
ET Help Desk (916) 255-4476
MCI (800) 731-SMOG
(Then press 5 for technical support)

**Consumer Assistance and
Referee Center: (800) 622-7733**

DCA HOTLINE: (800) 952-5210

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Little Scoops...

- ❖ Ford Motor Company recently announced that it will begin selling used auto parts to autobody shops, insurance companies, and other customers on their website sometime in the near future. Included will be Ford, Honda, and Toyota parts. No website address has been given yet.
- ❖ Starting this month, BAR began using a new version of the Smog Check Technician Licensing Examination. The exam was developed using the same process and blueprint used for past

examinations, which means the level of difficulty is equivalent to the previous exam. In addition, the cut score remains at 108.

- ❖ And these historical facts just in from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) ... the number of registered California vehicles increased by 6.8 percent, or more than 1.7 million, for a total of 27,534,424 in 1998. In addition, there are now 20.7 million people with California driver's licenses, an increase of 1.2 percent statewide in 1998.

- ❖ The 24-hour toll-free automated Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) information line at **1-877-273-8324** is a resource for technicians in need of training opportunities. It provides information on ASE test dates, registration deadlines, and other programs. In addition, it is interactive and has a faxback system that can send requested documents directly to the caller's fax machine.