

**Not one but two major changes for truck and van body repairers, with the launch of a new commercial vehicle standard, and the revision of another light vehicle standard.**

**Will Dalrymple reports**

**T**he process to develop the first standard for commercial vehicle repair began before the pandemic, according to Thomas Hudd, national technical manager at vehicle body repair trade association NBRA. He says: “A number of influential truck body repairers met to discuss how car repairers have had a higher profile and greater retention than those in the truck world. We felt that they were getting more recognition because of BS10125. And there was no formal standard for CV body repair, which includes trucks and vans of medium volume, buses and coaches.

“One of the issues we’re facing is that some accident management and insurance companies want to put commercial vehicles into light body shops, where the rates are lower, but the shops don’t have the competencies – nor do they have the equipment, jigs and high-roof paint ovens.”

He expands on that point: “Truck workshops are entirely different to car and van workshops – different equipment, different attitudes, different staff, and in some cases different requirements for training. There are different sizes of ovens and cab jigs. There are different technologies, such as air brakes on commercials. There is no specific method agreed for [repair of] the ladder chassis; that requires specialist knowledge.”

Adds Gerry Braddock, national manager of NBRA subsidiary, VBRA Commercial: “We want to avoid the situation that some people find



# BODY DOUBLE

themselves in now where the truck comes in for repair, the company that it has gone into knows they can’t do it, so subcontracts the work. Or they don’t repair it properly.”

Two body repair competence standards currently exist: BS10125, for light vehicles up to 5t gvw, which is currently in revision (see below), and the coach builder trade-specific route through the Level 3 bus and coach engineering technician apprenticeship (which is also being reviewed).

As to the latter, Braddock contends that commercial vehicle body repair competencies were not properly considered when the trailblazer bus and coach apprenticeship was being developed. “The bus and coach industry rode roughshod over everyone else to get what they wanted. Neither do we have a bodybuilder standard.”

Aiming to help bridge the gap is a new truck body repair standard, VBRA Elite. This defines minimum competences and organises qualifications for individuals in structural repair (chassis and cab) of trucks and

vans. Four qualifications are available: Truck & Van repair (structural with cab and chassis repair); Truck repair (structural with cab and chassis repair); Van repair (structural with chassis repair); Truck & Van (non-structural).

“With this, we’re able to give transparency as to what the repairer can do, and can release information to insurance and fleet managers,” adds Hudd.

The standard sets out the requirements for competence based on qualifications given by the three principal awarding bodies in the sector: IMI, City & Guilds and GQA. In addition, VBRA Elite also includes the online database to track them, thanks to a collaboration with bodywork training company ITAS, which already manages the approved bodyshop programme for passenger car OEMs including Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen and Toyota.

“That enables someone who has undergone training, or wants to become an elite member, to download information on to one platform. All of the training certifications, assets, servicing,

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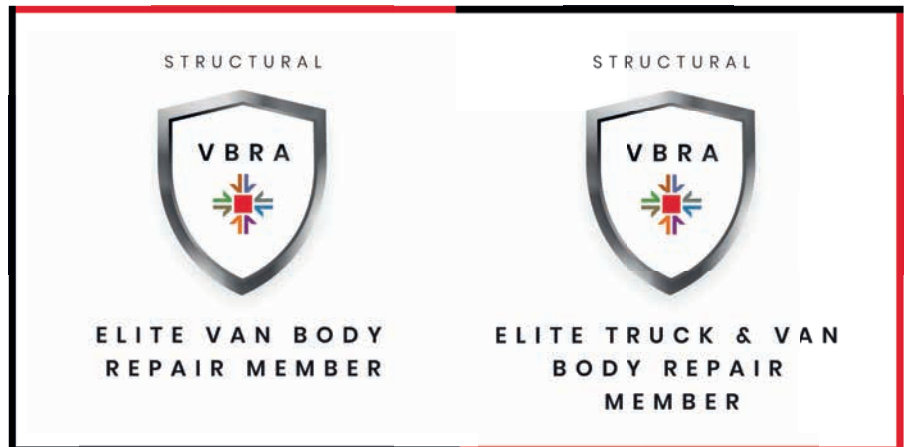
Gerry Braddock



## BS10125 COMPETENCE AREAS

- C0 - Repair preparation
- C1 - Dent removal on steel and aluminium panels
- C2 - Plastic repair and surface refinishing of exterior and interior components
- C3 - Refinishing
- C4 - Hot metal joining for steel
- C5 - Hot metal joining for aluminium
- C6 - Cold joining of mixed and multiple materials
- C7 - Autoglazing
- C8 - Vehicle body alignment and rectification
- C9 - Road wheels and tyres
- C10 - Steering, suspension and braking systems
- C11 - Advanced driver assistance and automated systems (ADAS)
- C12 - Supplementary restraint system (SRS) components
- C13 - Make safe and repair vehicle electrical systems of a low/medium voltage
- C14 - Transmission, air conditioning and other driveline systems
- C15 - Engine and fuel systems
- C16 - Make safe mild or high voltage electrical systems
- C17 - Isolate/discharge, and quarantine hydrogen fuel systems

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recalibration. Every document goes on there,” explains Hudd. Certificates are marked with an expiry date.

VBRA will take on the responsibility of the audit itself, drawing partly from the online platform, but also carrying out a physical visit and walk-around inspection of the facilities.

As of July, the first company to be accredited against the scheme was said to be D Gawthrope ACR of Knottingley, West Yorkshire.

### LIGHT VEHICLE EVOLUTION

Meanwhile, changes are coming to the light vehicle standard, too. The review of BS10125, Automotive services, Specification for vehicle damage repair processes, has passed the point of a public consultation, which closed in June, with an expectation of finishing the process toward the end of the year. But according to Mark Armitage, IMI head of member products and services, no changes are imminent; once the standard is published, an 18-month to two-year transition period kicks in to allow industry time to adapt.

He highlights significant changes including the inclusion of lots of detail about EVs (and hydrogen vehicles) as well as ADAS (advanced driver assistance systems, which rely on a number of body-mounted sensors, including on the windscreen). “The

standard is not just to keep up with today’s technologies as to plan ahead for future technologies that are turning up in bodyshops,” he observes. So seriously is the industry taking those issues that the standard will require all repair technicians to have high voltage and ADAS awareness training.

Hudd at NBRA praised that development, which is also picked up in the VBRA Elite qualification. He says that such competences are vital to safeguard technicians and ensure that they are keeping vehicles operating safely on the roads. Hudd recalls: “One bodybuilder who I was speaking with mentioned that he was involved in a conversion of a hybrid electric vehicle. I asked him how many certified technicians he has. He said that they had none. But the electrics regulations that everyone in the country has to conform to indicate that if something goes wrong, that company is looking at corporate manslaughter.

“We don’t want any injuries. Those repairers are not competent to work on these vehicles. And ADAS is vitally important also. There needs to be an audit trail about what they’ve done [training-wise], to make sure they put them back on the road as the manufacturer requires.”

The new BS10125 standard also clarifies how to conduct repairs when a defined method may not yet be available

**“Previously all MET had to undertake steering suspension geometry assessment every three years. But that may not always be required for the business, so there is the opportunity to flex”**

Mark Armitage



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Above: Ian Hemsworth of First Bus at IRTE Skills Challenge 2022 held at S&B Automotive Academy, Bristol

from a manufacturer, and about the use of green (validated used) parts on a vehicle, which is allowed provided that they are fit for purpose.

In terms of competence, it does not change the entry point for qualification – an apprenticeship or recognised assessment to check skills and knowledge – but now references the new apprenticeship standards in England, which means that employers will be able to access Apprenticeship Levy funding (or co-investment) to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment.

But the biggest changes are in the way that the roles are considered. Armitage explains: “For many years, standards and competence has focused on job role, as one of four job roles: panel technician, paint technician, MET – mechanical, electrical and trim – and damage assessor. Through consultation reviews with employers and conversations with individuals working in these bodyshops, it was clear that a greater level of flexibility of work would be better to prepare the workforce,

ensuring it is best-placed to meet business needs.”

Now, gone are the four roles to be replaced with 18 key repair activities (one example might be welding of steel – see box for full list). Each of those has been broken down in relation to the competence expected to perform the minimum required activity level, combining knowledge and ability.

Over a three-year window (which starts from initial qualification), individuals and employers will review the subject areas for which the individual carries out work in the bodyshop and agree a CPD, continuous professional development, plan, and these are the areas that he/she focuses on.

“The qualification was previously more restrictive, because it was organised by job role. A painter/ refinisher in the past was just doing the painting element in competence discussions. Now they are able to add other elements. Likewise, previously all MET had to undertake steering suspension geometry assessment every

three years. But that may not always be required for the business, so there is the opportunity to flex.”

That conversation is supported by certification bodies that monitor and police adherence, by training providers that support the employer (and which would also be assessed by awarding bodies such as IMI), and through assessments.

In terms of assessments, in some cases where the repair subject is seen as non safety-critical, the assessment method can be knowledge-only: an exam. Where the matter is safety-critical, such as welding or working on high-voltage, there is also a practical assessment where an individual’s skills ability is assessed as part of CPD.

Armitage argues that the change in competence offers a fresh approach to skills. “A good thing is that CPD provides ongoing training, and keeps competence up to date on a more regular basis, which is what people really like. If you go to the highest level of looking at employers and how they manage the workforce, retaining talent is a key focus for employers right now. This approach supports that in how they can provide development plans for staff.”

He says that IMI has used a similar CPD competence structure for its TechSafe qualification for technicians working on electric vehicles and ADAS systems.

Armitage adds that, although IMI won’t provide the training itself, it also wants to foster innovation in the way it is delivered, and moving beyond face-to-face instruction. He includes as examples e-learning to remote classroom delivery. “CPD could be more organically done in workplaces instead of taking people off of the tools and making them travel,” he says. [IE](#)