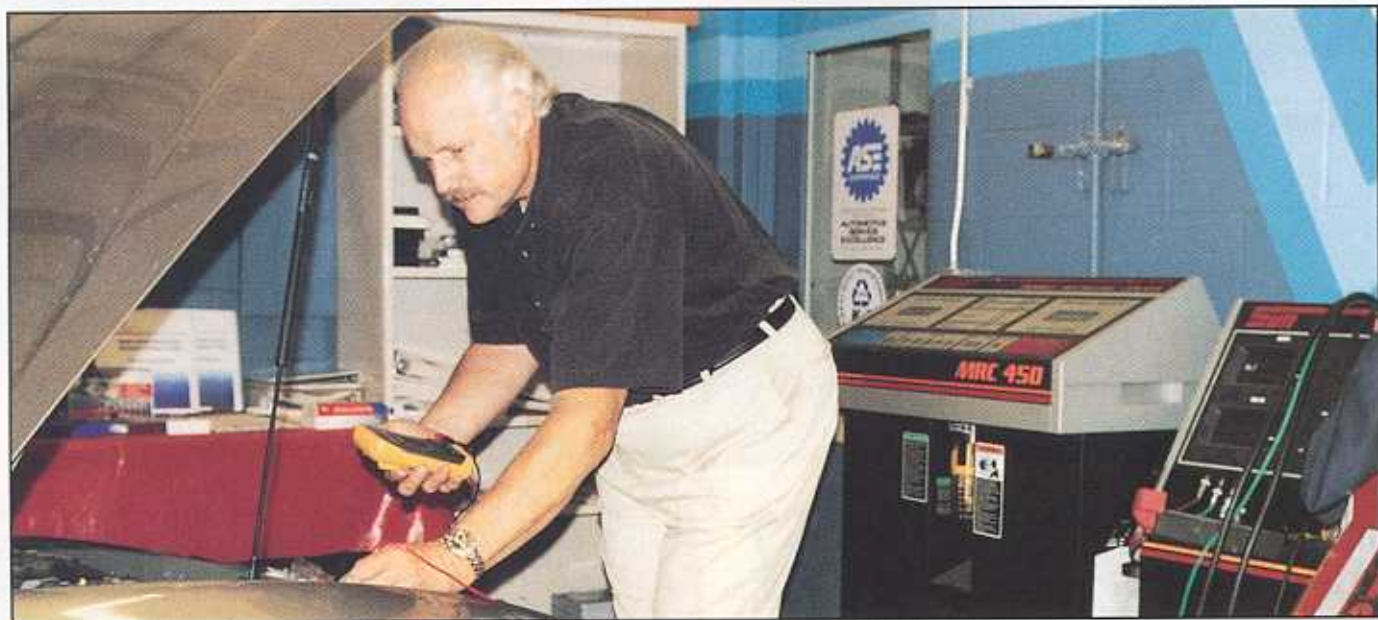


The Research Never Stops...



With all the technical advances found in the automotive industry today, keeping up with the latest automotive information can be daunting. Electric emergency brakes, lightweight suspension pieces and sensitive steering components, all unheard of just a few years ago, are some of the many challenges that can get in the way of a speedy and damage-free service call.

Combine this tough technical landscape with the ever-rising expectations of the vehicle owners, and you quickly realize the importance of having access to the right type of technical training and updates. AAA believes that by sharing this type of information, the industry as a whole can benefit. "The motoring public is impressed by the services of a confident, skilled professional who can quickly and skillfully diagnose and correct the problem," says Roy Cox, Manager of Technical Training & Research at AAA. "Placing importance on how to do things right the first time can save everyone time and money."

Cox is part of a two-man team responsible for the production of well-known industry reference publi-

cations such as the AAA/CAA Towing and Service Manual and the AAA/CAA Lockout Manual. Cox and Technical Training and Research Specialist Len Johannes have a collective 51 years of automotive experience notched in their belts and each holds ASE certification. Additional titles among them also include Master Auto Technician, IITR and SAE committee work, University of Georgia Light Duty Towing Certification, WreckMaster Level 4/5 Certification as well as various instructor titles.

To keep the information fresh and relevant each year, Cox and his team pay special attention to safety concern and damage-avoidance techniques. "Our research shows that the knowledge demonstrated on scene by the driver has a great impact on customer service," says Cox. In fact, driver knowledge is the third highest influencer on customer satisfaction. Only timeliness and appearance rank higher. "The goal of the manuals is to ensure that every service driver has the knowledge to exceed their customers' expectations," says Cox.

Cox readily admits they rely on a wide variety of sources, with auto manufacturers usually the first place they start. Research includes talking

to engineers and pouring over the service and owner's manuals as well as talking with the technical people at the dealer level. Then his group performs hands-on towing and lockout procedures under a variety of scenarios. "Tips from the industry come to us in a variety of ways and are carefully considered as well," according to Cox. More than 1,200 man-hours were spent on the 2003 manuals.

As the power of technology makes it more cost-effective to share this vital information to ever-growing numbers, Cox predicts the day will come when procedures and graphics that explain them can be delivered via in-cab and cell-phone displays.

AAA posts regular technical updates to the Automotive area of its service provider web site, www.aaa.biz.com. This information is available to the towing industry at large. "Since technology never seems to rest, we'll never stop harnessing it to distribute timely and accurate information to the guys out there who need it most," says Cox. 🚚

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