

AAIA Analysis of Canadian Automotive Service Information Standard

Overall, the problem with the Canadian Automotive Service Information Standard that was developed by Canadian vehicle manufacturers and the National Automotive Trades Association is that while it appears to commit the car companies to make information available, in reality it is a loosely-worded document which is not legally enforceable and excludes areas of information, software and tools that are currently the most problematic for independent shops.

In addition, and of major concern over the long term, is the fact that the agreement attempts to proclaim that all repair information is proprietary and therefore provides full control of use of that information to the vehicle manufacturer. The aftermarket believes that service information used to repair cars is not proprietary and should be widely available to the independent service industry. While we are agreeable to pay the car companies for the distribution of the information, we are unwilling to concede that it is proprietary since it is made widely available to franchised dealers and their employees.

Other problems with the agreement include:

- Failure to provide independent shops with the ability to download the latest updates to operating systems known as flash reprogramming. This is key to completing many repairs.
- Failure to make available to independent shops the ability to reinitialize vehicle immobilizer systems following a repair. Since car companies are increasingly running many of their vehicle systems through the same computer responsible for security, shops must have the ability to initialize this computer after performing even the simplest of repairs.
- No recourse to aftermarket shops regarding price. Therefore, car companies could price aftermarket shops out of the market for information and tools without any way for the aftermarket to take action.
- Exclusion of all repair information that is provided to dealers over hotlines. Much of this information is critical to independents obtaining the latest repair and diagnostic updates needed to provide effective repairs. Many of these might be safety related.
- Exclusion of all vehicle specific information. Much of the repair data is now becoming VIN specific including programming and re-initialization information. Without knowing the specific repair data applicable to a vehicle as identified by the VIN, a shop will find it difficult to fully repair many late-model vehicles.
- Fails to provide access to information that comes off of a vehicle wirelessly through telematic systems. This information is currently directed to the new car

dealer, providing them with a substantial competitive advantage in capturing post warranty customers and in maximizing the efficiencies of their service bays.

- Absence of any fine or penalty for a car company failing to meet its commitment under the agreement. In addition, there are extensive provisions that make it simple for a manufacturer to opt out of the agreement. Further, the agreement becomes null and void if legislation is enacted regarding service information availability.
- Absence of any independent arbiter to decide whether the car companies are meeting their end of the agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, a shop is forced to rely on a committee that is evenly comprised of the car companies and aftermarket to determine if a specific piece of information or tool should be made available.

The bottom line is that this agreement provides little of reassurance to independent shops that car companies will ensure availability of all of the service information, tools and software needed to repair late-model computer-controlled vehicles. This is just the latest example of how the car companies continue to avoid coming up with a real solution to the service information and tool issue both here and in Canada.