



What Consumers Don't Know About Auto Glass Replacement Could Cost Them Their Lives

Most families are very concerned about automobile safety, and they typically protect themselves through the use of seatbelts, car seats, anti-lock brakes, and air bags. The advantages of these devices are widely publicized. But what about another safety feature that is of equal importance: properly installed windshields?

Unfortunately, research indicates that 80 percent of those consumers who were surveyed had no knowledge about proper installation-and no idea that their lives are endangered if the job isn't done right.

The fact is, a properly installed windshield has three life-saving features in the event of an accident: It acts as a backboard for the deployment of air bags; it can keep passengers inside the vehicle in the event of an accident; and it prevents the roof from caving in during a rollover. Fortunately, informed consumers can reduce the number of life-threatening auto injuries.

To provide public information, we at Broco Glass have always advocated and provided information to our customers to ensure public safety information is readily available that involves the auto glass industry, auto dealers, insurance companies, business fleet managers, and consumers. As industry leaders, we all are in a strong position to perform a public service and help consumers protect their interests.

In general, we encourage drivers to make an educated choice in selecting an auto glass replacement company, to insist on the highest-quality products, and to expect highly trained technicians. The specific "tips" we share include the following:

Five Steps to Safety

1. Choose the right auto glass replacement company.

It is the legal right of consumers to select the auto glass replacement shop of their choice. If customers call an insurance company or car dealer for a referral, they should be directed to a reputable independent auto glass company that is reasonably near them. They should be wary of any rebates they may be offered. And if customers call a replacement company directly, they should make sure it meets the safety criteria listed below.

2. Insist on the right products.

As drivers are most likely covered by comprehensive insurance, they don't need to put a price tag on safety. Accordingly, we believe they should demand that the replacement company use products that meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards as established by the Transport Canada (Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards) these are established for new car sales, but



unfortunately, they are not enforced for aftermarket replacement. In particular, consumers should specify that they want original factory windshields and the highest-quality sealants and primers. These products cost auto glass shops more than standard brands (For example, the gun used to apply the most advanced adhesive costs about 10 times more than the standard gun.), but they are worth it because they protect the structural integrity of the car. Put another way, how damaging are lawsuits, more of which are now being filed by injured motorists? Moreover, what is the value of a human life?

3. Insist on the right people.

Even with the right products, the human element is critical. After all, auto glass installation is serious business, and installers-who don't have to be licensed-must perform complicated manual operations (at auto factories, these functions are automated). Further, they must know the specs and the required techniques for hundreds of models of cars. Accordingly, consumers should determine that the technicians assigned to their cars are indeed industry-certified and highly professional. For example, they should never install glass on corroded metal, they should know when two coats of primer are needed, and they should practice safe procedures such as always wearing nitrile gloves.

4. Ask about safe drive-away time.

Due to ignorance or questionable ethics, too many technicians release cars with newly installed windshields before the glass has properly cured. If this happens, the glass may never cure correctly, and the safety of drivers will be further jeopardized. Under the right circumstances-when the highest-quality sealants are applied at the acceptable temperature and humidity-the safe drive-away time may be as short as one hour (optimal conditions are 80° and 80 percent humidity). But when these variables change, it may be necessary to perform the installation in a controlled environment (i.e., a heated garage). Otherwise, it might require up to two days before the vehicle is safe to drive again. If that's the case, consumers, many of whom have an "I-want-it-now" mentality, should choose quality over convenience.

5. Ask about the warranty.

At a minimum, customers should expect a written warranty that covers the work done on their car for at least a year. But what about an assurance of original factory glass and sealants, as well as industry-certified technicians? Can they get that in writing?

In the final analysis, windshield replacement is a very sophisticated business, and because the industry isn't government-regulated, it's that much more important that consumers do their homework and select a company they can trust.

As industry leaders, we can serve as responsible corporate citizens and help inform consumers about what is at stake. Armed with this information, the public will be better equipped to make wise choices.



So let's give auto glass replacement the attention it deserves - after all, there is no replacement for our families.