

## CAPA: certified parts promote industry competition

By Jack Gillis

*Editor's note: During the past several months, there has been tremendous concern in the collision repair industry regarding Allstate's announcement that the company would use Certified Competitive Auto Parts, and State Farm's statement that "CAPA certified parts shall be deemed to be in compliance." The following document was written by a CAPA representative to explain what CAPA is and its parts certification process. ASA is in no manner affiliated with CAPA. By providing this information, ASA does not endorse or oppose the use of non-OEM sheet metal parts.*

**T**he Certified Automotive Parts Association (CAPA) is a non-profit corporation formed to fund, direct and oversee a testing and inspection program to certify the quality of body parts used for auto body repairs.

The purpose of CAPA is to promote price and quality competition in the automotive body parts industry. CAPA is not a manufacturing, marketing or sales organization — CAPA simply establishes standards for competitive parts to ensure their equivalency to original equipment manufacturers'

parts. The program provides auto body shop consumers and insurance adjusters with a method of evaluating the quality of aftermarket body parts.

CAPA has four main objectives:

- Upgrade and maintain the quality of competitive auto parts available to United States and Canadian consumers;
- Ensure that parts bearing the CAPA seal are in compliance with CAPA standards;
- Provide independent laboratory participation in the program to ensure conformity with generally acceptable guidelines for certification programs, and;
- Publicize the certification program to users — auto body shops, consumers, insurance companies, government agencies, parts locating companies and distributors.

CAPA has a nine-member board of directors that includes representatives from insurance companies, an auto body shop, a consumer group and a parts distributor. CAPA has contracted the Detroit Testing Laboratory, an independent testing facility, to conduct the testing, inspection and compliance aspects of the program.

Replacement body parts that meet or exceed CAPA quality standards for fit, materials, and corrosion-resistance are allowed

to display the CAPA seal and are listed in a quarterly directory that is made widely available to the crash parts industry.

### How the program works

In order for an aftermarket part to be certified by the CAPA program, a participating manufacturer must first allow detailed review and inspection of its factory and manufacturing process. CAPA must be given access to plants, storage areas and manufacturing processes. Manufacturers must work with CAPA's independent testing laboratory, which determines compliance with CAPA requirements. CAPA evaluates the tooling, processing, paint and inspection processes to ensure that the manufacturer is capable of producing aftermarket parts equal to, or better than, original equipment parts. In addition, the company's quality control manual is reviewed for compliance with CAPA quality control standards.

Once the factory has been approved, the company can submit individual parts for certification. These parts are tested for material content, fit, finish, paint adhesion and corrosion and are examined to ensure that they include marking identifying the manufacturer.

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and the country and date of manufacture. CAPA standards may exceed the original equipment manufacturers' specifications (for example, GM requires 336 hours of salt spray corrosion testing, CAPA requires 500 hours). If the part complies with all of the CAPA standards, then the manufacturer is allowed to apply a CAPA identification seal to that part — this is the final step in the certification process. Each seal has a unique identification number. Any part that does not have a CAPA seal should not be considered certified, regardless of how that part is listed in the CAPA Directory or other information sources.

Once the manufacturing facility has been approved and the part has been certified, the factory is subject to regular random checks to ensure that standards are maintained. In addition, there are random checks of the parts leaving the factory and in warehouses. CAPA also has a program which encourages users of parts bearing the CAPA seal to file a complaint if they believe the part may not meet CAPA standards. CAPA's random checks and complaint program have led to the decertification of parts which originally met CAPA standards.

The CAPA Technical Committee performs periodic, in-depth reviews of the standards, refining them as required, to assure the continued quality of aftermarket replacement parts receiving CAPA certification. *CAPA does not warrant parts. The warranting of parts is between the buyer and seller.*

#### What parts are certified?

CAPA certifies various types of parts made from different materials. The association is constantly expanding the certification program to include

more parts and new materials. To date, CAPA has three standards that set quality guidelines for parts made of metal (CAPA 101), Flexible Thermoset Plastic (CAPA 201) and Rigid Composite Thermoset Plastic (CAPA 204).

CAPA 101 covers stamped metal automobile parts, such as fenders, hoods, doors, quarter panels and deck lids. The standard includes dimensional checks (form and fit), metallurgical analysis (composition, mechanical properties and thickness), corrosion protection (salt spray tests) and construction requirements, as well as identification and certification markings. Form and fit measurements are made using a master checking fixture (specially fabricated for each part) and a part from the original manufacturer.

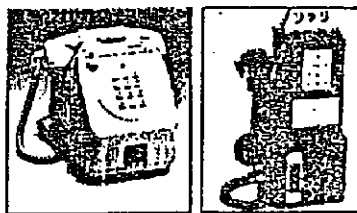
CAPA 201 covers parts made from thermoset polyurethane elastomer such as bumper fascias and covers. The standard includes dimensional checks (form and fit), material analysis (composition and physical properties), appearance, suitability for painting, and identification and certification markings. Form and fit measurements are made using a vehicle or a master checking fixture (specially fabricated for each part) and a part from the original manufacturer.

CAPA 204 covers parts fabricated from rigid thermoset composites, such as header panels, hoods, fenders and grille opening panels. The standard includes dimensional checks (form and fit), material analysis (composition and physical properties), appearance, suitability for painting, as well as identification and certification markings. Form and fit measurements are made using a vehicle or a master checking fixture (specially fabricated for each part) and a part from the original manufacturer.

You've heard a lot of talk lately about freedom of choice. The bottom line is — you do have the right to freedom of choice. The CAPA program helps protect that right. It gives you a standard by which you can judge the quality of the aftermarket parts that you may choose to use. You also have a right to fair prices and high quality — the CAPA Certification Program helps ensure both.

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