

Alan Anderson of Vale Training Solutions prepares to use a "dent gun" on a panel. Dent guns are designed to make dents of uniform size and depth for testing purposes.



Record Breakers

New certification process shows Canadian Hail Repair has the tools and the talent.

By Mike Davey

The dent is at the very limits of what can be repaired with paintless dent repair techniques, but Yannick Poirier isn't worried. Years of practicing PDR have led up to this moment, and he's confident he can repair the dent in the time allotted. When he's finished, the former dent is invisible to the naked eye. A sophisticated electronic scanning device confirms that the repair is good, and much more: the dent has been returned to within .995 standard deviation from the original. It may literally be the closest to perfection anyone has ever come with PDR.

Poirier was just one of the many technicians from Canadian Hail Repair who recently underwent a certification process offered by Vale Training Solutions. The company developed the process

after numerous requests from PDR industry professionals.

The certification is a timed evaluation of actual PDR work on steel and aluminum panels, using a state-of-the-art, digital-optic surface measurement device. According to Vale Training Solutions, this test is totally unique to the industry as a purely objective, hands-on demonstration of skill. Timed repairs must pass a very high standard to qualify the technician for certification.

Properly repairing various grades of dent can earn a technician one of three designations: journeyman, craftsman and master craftsman. The certification process uses a special "dent gun" to create dents of uniform size and depth, in addition to a precision scanner.

Alan Anderson and Jon McCreath are respectively the Programs Director and President of Vale Training Solutions, and were on hand to conduct the certification process. Both noted that, in all of the testing and certification they've done since the program was developed, no one has ever come closer than Poirier during his test.

"This is the closest we've ever seen anyone come," says Anderson. "Bear in mind that these differences are far smaller than the naked eye can detect. You could look at two quality repairs and think they were identical, but the scanner knows



Bing Wong and Sam Piercejr Jr. of Canadian Hail Repair.

better. We've had people come very close, but a result like Yannick's is unprecedented."

McCreath has certified dozens of PDR techs using the Vale method, and he agrees that the results achieved by Poirier are unmatched.

"It's very impressive, but the technicians we tested all achieved very good results," says McCreath. "The vast majority of Canadian Hail Repair techs we tested were able to repair the 'master craftsman' level dent so it was undetectable by eye or hand. Yannick's achievement goes a bit beyond that."

In addition to the PDR certification, Vale Training Solutions also conducted Remove & Install (R&I) certifications with Canadian Hail Repair.

"The final result was 23 certified PDR technicians and 21 R&I certifications, including having more of our PDR techs also certified in R&I," says Bing Wong, Managing Director of Canadian Hail Repair. "Of those 23 PDR certifications, 18 achieved master craftsman, the highest level."

The number of certifications issued makes this the single largest PDR certification event ever held in Canada. It's an impressive achievement. There are very few barriers to an untrained and unqualified person simply buying some equipment and calling themselves a PDR tech. The certification from Vale Training Solutions helps to distinguish professionals.

"We're very proud of Yannick's achievement, but we're very proud of our all of our techs," says Doug Best, VP and General Manager of Canadian Hail Repair. "We had another technician get back to .02 of the standard deviation in 16 minutes, and another who passed his Master Craftsman test in just nine minute. All of these tests were on aluminum panels, which are more challenging than steel."

Canadian Hail Repair held an information session on Wednesday, April 15 at The Auto Dentist in Oakville to brief partners from the insurance and collision industries on the certification process. Lunch was provided by food truck The Dirty South.

The company also held its annual technician's meeting at C Hotel in Hamilton, Ont. Technicians with Canadian Hail Repair spend the majority of their time on the road, so it was a rare opportunity for staff to reconnect.

The objectives for the meeting were to improve service in four areas: appraisal integrity, professionalism, audit trail and client satisfaction.

"Our chief focus at this meeting was to improve appraisal integrity," says Best.

"These meetings are effective. Our 2013 tech meeting focused on quality control, particularly in regards to R&I. The result of that focus was that we didn't have a single notable warranty claim in 2013 despite performing over 4,000 repairs."

Best says the intent behind the focus on the integrity of the appraisal process is to bring the same level of accountability to hail damage appraisals as current exists with collision appraisals.

Canadian Hail Repair also took the opportunity to introduce three new management staff and acknowledge that the company intends to bring more collision management experience into the ranks. Two of the new managers have over 10 years of collision repair facility appraisal and management experience.

"We also discussed emerging trends in performance management and the policy structures of dealership inventory insurance," says Wong. "We showed our third party audit program where we have independent appraisers review work-in-process and offer opinions on our appraisal quality, with the reports going to the insurer."



Yannick Poirier is one of many Canadian Hail Repair technicians to receive the master craftsman designation. During that test, he brought the panel back to within .995 standard deviation from the original.

Much of the afternoon was taken up with a discussion led by John Mills, who joined Canadian Hail Repair in 2013 and manages the company's national catastrophe centre efforts. The conversation focused on how the company expects to exceed expectations of the vehicle owner and the insurer in large scale repair operations.

For more information on Canadian Hail Repair, please visit hailrepair.ca. CRM