



## **Vehicle Body Repair Specialist**

Panel Beaters and Spray Painter (Vehicle Body Repair Specialists) are the Emergency Room Technicians of the Motor Industry. These very accomplished craft workers repair body parts damaged by accidents, rust, wear & tear and repaint vehicles that have been repaired or create customised new paint jobs. In Ireland these two crafts come under the job title Vehicle Body Repairer. Due to modern technology the use of computerised and electronically controlled systems is now an important aspect of a Vehicle Body Repairer's job.

### **What does a Vehicle Body Repairer do?**

A Vehicle Body Repairers' work is practical, hands on work involves straightening bent bodies, removing dents, and replacing crumpled parts that are beyond repair. They repair all types of vehicles. Vehicle Body Repairs use special equipment to restore damaged metals frames and body equipment.

They remove badly damaged panels with a pneumatic metal cutting gun and weld in replacement sections. They pull out minor dents with a hydraulic jack or knock them out with hand-tools or pneumatic hammers. They remove small pits in the panel with pick hammers and punches. Vehicle Body Repairers may also work on plastic panels using a hot air welding gun or install windscreens.

Once the repair work has been completed, the vehicle must be prepared for repainting. Power sanders and sandpapers are used to remove the original paint or rust, and small nicks and scratches are filled with body putty. Parts that do not need painting such as headlights or windows are removed or masked. The amount of paint required is calculated, the paint is mixed to match the desired colour and tested with a viscosity meter to make sure that it is at the right consistency.

Vehicle Body Repairs use a spray gun to apply both the primer and final coats of paint. After the final coat is applied, the vehicle is polished. In some cases, the Vehicle Body Repairer will also deal directly with the customer and give estimates on the cost of the work.

The mark of a good Vehicle Body Repairer is their ability to use their broad knowledge of automotive construction, paint technology and repair techniques, to develop appropriate methods for each job, as no two damaged vehicles present the same problems. You will work in a workshop or a garage, or for a company owning large fleets of cars. With the rate of change in modern automobile technology and paint technology, a Vehicle Body Repairer continues to learn throughout their whole career.

### **How do I become a Vehicle Body Repairer?**

The route to this exiting career is through a four- year learning apprenticeship. Most of your learning is on the job in the garage or workshop with Master Vehicle Body Repairers, with 3 phases of full time off the job study totalling 42 weeks. The first phase of full time study is with an ETB (Educational Training Board), the second and third with an Institute or College, such as an IT.

The minimum entry requirement is at that you are at least 16 years old and have at least a grade D in any 5 subjects in the Junior Certificate (or equivalent grades in other approved examinations). Some employers will look for more than this- up to Leaving Certificate. Maths, physics, technical drawing, metal work, technology and engineering are particularly relevant school subjects.

### **What it takes to be a Vehicle Body Repairer?**

- Physically fit
- Must pass a colour-vision test
- Aptitude for handling tools and equipment
- Mechanical and Maths aptitude
- Three dimensional reasoning to access and measure one body section relative to another and follow technical diagrams
- Problem solving & critical thinking skills
- Good reading skills for studying service manuals and analysing complex diagrams
- Patient and have great attention to detail

The Vehicle Body Repairer will report to the Workshop Manager, Service Manager or Dealer Principal.