

Alignments with Hunter Engineering 'Major Profit Center' for K & M Collision



by Autobody News Staff

Kevin and Meredith Bradshaw opened *K & M Collision* in 1991 in Hickory, NC. Over the last three decades, the mom-and-pop operation has grown from three employees to 35, earning 33 OE certifications and becoming I-CAR Gold Class.

"Our facility is right at 35,000 square feet, and we're adding 12,000 hopefully by the end of the year," said **Michael Bradshaw**, vice president of operations and son of the founders.

When Bradshaw started working at the family owned and operated business in 2006, it earned under \$1 million a year.

"Last year, we eclipsed \$1 million dollars in monthly revenue," he said.

Bradshaw said his and his family's foresight has led to success.

"We got ahead of the OE certification curve," he explained. "We trended toward the higher-end brands like Porsche, Lucid, Jaguar and Land Rover, which we now specialize in."

Bradshaw added *K & M Collision* makes a "commitment to quality."

"We won't use aftermarket parts in our facility," he said. "We operate on being the best at what we do, and we don't make any apologies for that."

K & M Collision houses top-tier equipment from Hunter Engineering Co. to meet multiple manufacturer certification requirements. The body shop uses Hunter's Flush Mount Rack and Aligner, the Road Force® Elite wheel balancer, and the Auto34S tire changer (TCA34S).

Bradshaw said *K & M Collision* started using an aligner from Hunter Engineering after a conversation with a local dealership.

"At that point, we were subletting all of our alignments," Bradshaw said. "We had a vehicle that stayed at the respective dealer for about a month; they kept changing parts on the vehicle because they claimed they couldn't get it to align properly."

Shortly after, one of *K & M Collision*'s other dealer partners put in a new Hunter aligner and gave away its old alignment console.

"We put the old alignment



K & M Collision is in the process of adding 12,000 square feet to its 35,000 square foot production space.

console in our shop to test out, and within three months, we purchased a brand new Hawkeye Elite® machine," Bradshaw said. "From then on, we've performed pre-alignment checks on every vehicle that comes through the facility."

Bradshaw explained a "conventional shop" alignment process versus the process *K & M Collision* implements with the Hunter aligner.

"If you have a conventional shop environment, where they're following OEM information to the letter on every repair, only about 30% to 40% of the vehicles they're repairing will have alignments at the end," he said. "So, an additional 20% to 30% of vehicles come through, and using the Hunter aligner, we've been able to identify suspension misalignment on impacts that largely, as an industry, go unidentified."

Bradshaw reported alignment checks fail "62% to 68% of the time in any given month."

"So, using the Hunter aligner has been a major profit center for us," he said.

On top of that, *K & M Collision* does a lot of ADAS in-house.

"Many of these manufacturers require suspension alignment to be within factory specifications before performing ADAS calibrations," Bradshaw said.

The Hunter aligner has also helped *K & M Collision* identify suspension misalignments in vehicles whose wheels appear unscathed.

"These are accidents, where the impact is from a direct front or rear hit," Bradshaw said. "And based on what the industry typically looks at, they're not considering

suspension alignment issues on those cars."

However, Bradshaw said the pre-alignment check tells a different story.

"Even in these situations, we find misalignments outside the tolerance," he explained. "And regarding driver safety, the vehicle manufacturers require a steering angle sensor initialization or zero-point calibration after the battery's disconnected and reconnected. If you've got a shop that assumed the suspension alignment is within specification, that can create some issues in the future."

Based on the impact and manufacturer requirements, *K & M Collision* uses Hunter's Road Force® Elite diagnostic wheel balancing machine to check each tire and wheel assembly. A collision repair technician then uses the TCA34S tire changer for tire replacements when needed.

Regarding support from Hunter Engineering, Bradshaw said *K & M Collision* has had a "very positive" experience.

"The sales rep we have—David—has been accommodating," Bradshaw said. "When I'm interested in new equipment or have questions, he's here within a day or two. He also sometimes brings in new equipment for us to demo."

Bradshaw deals with Todd on the service side, who has a schedule to meet *K & M Collision*'s needs proactively.

"I can't think of many times we've called Todd, and he hasn't answered his phone," Bradshaw recalled. "And when he isn't available, he always gets back to us immediately."

K & M Collision

Hickory, NC

828-569-1275

kandmcollision.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 35

In Business Since: 1991

Number of Locations: One

Production Space:

35,000 square feet



K & M Collision, which holds 33 OE certifications, trusts Hunter Engineering for factory-grade alignments.



K & M Collision, a family owned and operated body shop in Hickory, NC, opened its doors in 1991.

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