

Morton Collision Repair Elevates Operations with Axalta's Spies Hecker Hi-TEC



by Autobody News Staff

When **Ryan Bunton** took over *Morton Collision Repair* in 2016, he had a clear vision: grow the business, embrace cutting-edge technology, and build a facility that would future-proof the shop for years to come. That vision has now become reality with the completion of a new 23,000-square-foot facility. At the heart of this transformation is the shop's transition to Axalta's Spies Hecker Hi-TEC refinishing system, a move that has redefined efficiency, improved cycle times, and changed the way Morton Collision operates.

Morton Collision Repair was founded in 1996 by Ryan's father, who saw a need for a family-owned, customer-focused collision repair shop in Morton, IL. Bunton, who started working at the shop as a high school apprentice, learned every aspect of the business before officially taking over in 2016.

"I started as the shop grunt," Bunton said. "Sweeping floors, taking out the trash, masking cars for paint — it was hands-on learning from day one. By the time I took over the business, I had worked in every department."

Under Bunton's leadership, Morton Collision has steadily grown, driven by a commitment to continuous improvement. As he planned the new facility, he took the opportunity to reassess every aspect of operations, including the paint system, ultimately choosing Axalta's Spies Hecker Hi-TEC for its efficiency and quality.

"One big thing that I was impressed by was the cycle time. The amount of time it takes to apply the basecoat as opposed to our former paint system. It's a huge time saver and time is money," Bunton said. "We saw so many issues with our old paint system layering on itself, causing problems, but Axalta's wet-on-wet application and modifier technology held the basecoat together better, improving cycle times and getting cars in and out of the booth faster."

The transition to Spies Hecker Hi-TEC had an immediate impact on workflow, significantly increasing efficiency and prompting structural changes in the paint department. The system's speed exceeded expectations, requiring the shop



Morton Collision recently built a new collision repair facility in Morton, IL.

to add another prep person to keep up with the painter's accelerated pace. With Morton Collision averaging around 100 repair orders per month, the ability to push just one extra vehicle through the paint booth each day added up quickly. With an average repair order valued at approximately \$4,000, the increase in throughput made a substantial impact on the shop's bottom line.

Even with the expansion to 23,000 square feet, Bunton strategically decided to maintain only two paint booths in the new facility due to Axalta's efficiency.

"Think of the money we saved by only needing two booths," he said. "We installed two brand new Accudraft Italia booths, which aren't cheap, but thanks to Axalta's speed and efficiency, we maximize booth time while keeping operating costs down."

Beyond the product itself, Bunton praised Axalta's customer service and technical support, which played a major role in making the transition seamless.

"I didn't realize how much we were missing until we switched," he said. "With our previous supplier, getting help was a slow process — sometimes taking weeks. With Axalta, I can call **JR** (Axalta rep), and within 10 minutes, I have a solution." When implementing the new system, Axalta sent three paint reps on-site to train Morton's team, ensuring a smooth transition with minimal downtime.

"That kind of hands-on support makes all the difference," Bunton said. "And it never went away — if we need to tweak something or try a

new product, we get help instantly." Switching paint systems wasn't without its challenges. Some employees were hesitant to leave a system they had used for more than a decade.

"For three weeks, I thought I'd see my lead painter's taillights leaving," Bunton admitted. But one day, everything clicked.

"I walked in, and he was flying through jobs, singing," he said. "That was the turning point."

Soon, confidence turned into swagger. "Now, I ask if a job can be done by the end of the day, and they just say, 'Oh yeah, no problem,'" Bunton laughed.

Bunton prioritizes reinvesting to keep Morton Collision ahead with new advancements. With the new facility now in place, he sees it as a testament to the team's dedication and progress. "This new facility kind of showcases all of our hard work and Axalta highlights all of that with all of their new advancements on the paint side," he said, emphasizing how Axalta's innovations align with his vision for continuous improvement.

For shop owners considering a switch to Axalta, Bunton's advice is simple: Don't be afraid of change. "It's scary. Change is scary, but change is inevitable in this industry. If you are not consistently making changes, you are dying and it's a scary thought, but it's reality. You need to be evolving," he said.

With a state-of-the-art facility, advanced paint system and dedication to improvement, Morton Collision Repair is set for long-term success — with Axalta's partnership playing a key role.

Morton Collision Repair

Morton, IL

309-266-5154

mortoncollision.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 22

In Business Since: 1996

Number of Locations: One

Production Space:

23,000 square feet



Fleet Production Manager Chris Lamden takes a camera shot of the paint while mapping out repairs.



Head Painter Matt Thompson mixes his Spies Hecker Hi-TEC base coat before heading into the booth.

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