

# JDM Collision Depends on I-CAR Training to Repair Vehicles Properly & Acquire OEM Certifications



by Autobody News Staff

As a child, **John Melendez** spent much of his time at his father's body shop, *John's A1 Body Shop* in East Chicago, IN. In 1996, Melendez began working at a multi-line dealer with 19 stores in Park Forest, IL. He purchased the dealership's body shop in April 2005, and renamed it JDM Collision, incorporating the initials of his name, John David Melendez. Later, the facility moved to Olympia Fields and was sold in 2015.

Melendez bought a second collision repair facility in Lansing, IL, in 2010, which was moved five years later to a more modern, updated center in Thornton, IL. The company currently operates the one location in Thornton and prides itself on staying educated about the latest technology and repair methods to fix cars properly.

The business owner attributes his success to focusing on continuous training and improvement.

"What helped get me in the position I'm in today is education," said Melendez, a certified GM technician and mechanical technician.

A key element of the education is provided by I-CAR, the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair. The international nonprofit organization is dedicated to providing information, knowledge and skills required to perform complete, safe and quality repairs.

Melendez began attending live I-CAR courses in 2015.

"I took a liking to it and then became serious over the years," he recalled. The business achieved I-CAR Gold Class® recognition starting in late 2018 and continuing into 2019. At the same time, JDM Collision was recognized as a certified GM repair center.

Since taking his first I-CAR class, Melendez has noticed I-CAR always seems to provide the latest training and development for the collision industry. This includes a portfolio of more than 300 online, live, virtual and in-shop courses.

Whether an employee is focused on becoming an ADAS or non-structural technician or estimator, or taking on another role in the shop, such as production management, there is a path available through



**John Melendez, owner of JDM Collision in Thornton, IL, attributes his success to focusing on continuous training and improvement from I-CAR.**

I-CAR. A variety of programs are also available, including Hands-On Skills Development™, vehicle and technology classes and welding certification.

"Our employees are learning as we go along," he said. "It has been fun and interesting and keeps you sharp."

Since the pandemic, many technicians have become accustomed to taking online courses.

"Technicians can now complete online courses during a workday, and I'm not taking away their personal time," explained Melendez. "That has really helped my business grow and become more efficient."

As an I-CAR Gold Class facility owner, Melendez has prioritized training for himself and employees.

The Gold Class® recognition, which started in 1990, is the highest role-relevant training achievement recognized by the collision repair industry.

Having I-CAR Gold Class status has helped JDM Collision employees learn what is needed to complete safe and quality repairs. It has also helped the business acquire OEM certifications.

"OEMs want you to be trained and make sure you are following the correct repair procedures," he said. "That has led us to continue getting trained by I-CAR."

Their current path and dependence on I-CAR training will help the team at JDM Collision gain OEM certification for Ford, Nissan, JLR, Hyundai and Kia, and become one of GM's only certified centers equipped to handle the new EV platforms.

"Being I-CAR Gold Class will make it easier for us to acquire these

OEM certifications," said Melendez. "Honestly, we wouldn't have been able to acquire them if we didn't have I-CAR Gold Class recognition under our belt."

The shop's purchase of a building down the street is being set up as an advanced calibration center called JDM CALIBRATION Center. In addition to focusing on calibrations, alignment and EV mechanical repair center, it will also do body and aluminum repair.

When the facility opens, they plan to use tow trucks to transport vehicles to and from their existing shop. The new center will offer service to other collision repair centers in the Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana area.

"We're going to be a one-stop shop for consumers," he said. "It is so exciting to be able to operate with this type of status, and the repairs coming to our door are not driven by any insurance company."

Melendez is also looking forward to dealing with other EV manufacturers when the training paths are completed.

With a passion for industry training, Melendez has volunteered as the Northwest Indiana I-CAR Committee chairman for the past four years. In this role, he provides information to local shops about the options available.

He stresses the importance of technicians taking the time to stay up to date with new technology and repair methods.

"My advice to other shops that want to stay in the collision industry is to not be intimidated by the complexity of the cars on the road today," he said. "The information is out there, and any individual who doesn't take advantage of that should not be fixing cars."

**JDM Collision**  
Thornton, IL  
708-877-7300

## Company At A Glance...

**Type:** Collision Repair  
**Facility Employees:** 10  
**In Business Since:** 2005  
**Number of Locations:** One  
**Production Space:** 13,000+ square feet



**JDM Collision has found that it has been easier to acquire OEM certifications with its I-CAR Gold Class recognition.**



**Being I-CAR Gold Class creates a culture of learning at JDM Collision that benefits their customers.**

## I-CAR

**800-I-CAR-USA**  
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