

Continental Collision Elevates Shop Cleanliness, Paint Quality with 3M™ Clean Sanding System



by Autobody News Staff

Continental Collision in Austin, TX, operates at a level where OEM compliance isn't optional — it's the baseline. The Mercedes-Benz Elite Certified facility employs 47 people, holds additional certifications with Honda, Nissan, Infiniti, FCA and Subaru, and only repairs vehicles sold through its dealership network. That means every job must meet strict manufacturer standards so customers leave in a safe, properly repaired vehicle.

That same attention to detail extends to the tools the team uses. For **Scott Branum**, director of collision operations, that's what made the updated 3M™ Clean Sanding System an easy choice.

"I first tried it in 2014 when 3M [partnered] with the Festool system," Branum recalled from his time with a previous shop. "We were the first shop in Austin to get equipped with it. I reached out to **Xavier** with 3M, he let us demo one, and we were sold immediately."

Nearly a decade later, Branum had no hesitation bringing the updated Dustless system into Continental. "We already tape off openings, but minimizing dust is really important to us," he said. "I don't want estimators walking out there in a cloud of Bondo® dust. So it just made everything so much cleaner."

During hail season, when the shop handled a surge of roof replacements and roof rail repairs, airborne Bondo® dust was especially challenging. "The amount of dust in the shop was just ridiculous," Branum said. "But once we had the sanders in place, it cut down drastically and made the paint work much cleaner."

The 3M™ Clean Sanding System has also improved conditions in both Continental's calibration and detail departments. "It's definitely kept our calibration area cleaner," Branum said. Before switching to the updated sanding system, dust sometimes caused unexpected headaches — including times when the floor tape used for precise calibration measurements wouldn't stick because of buildup. In a process where accuracy is critical, even a small issue like that added unnecessary frustration.

"And the detailers don't have



Continental Collision's modern Austin, TX, location is equipped to handle advanced repairs, from structural work to precise ADAS calibrations.

to clean all the dust from under the hood and in the door jambs," Branum added. "That saves us time and makes for a better final product." The cleaner environment has eliminated those problems entirely.

When the system was first introduced, Branum estimated only about half the team embraced it right away. Some technicians took to it immediately, while others were more hesitant. Once the shop's top Mercedes-Benz-certified techs began using the system and demonstrating its benefits, the rest of the team quickly followed their lead.

Branum credits the updated ergonomics for that acceptance. "One complaint about the older systems was that the tools were bulky," he said. "This new system — the DAs, the blocks — it's all smaller and easier to manage. That made a big difference."

He also emphasized the support from 3M and his longtime rep, Xavier.

"Xavier comes out with the demo unit and trains the team. He did that before we even bought anything," Branum said. "He teaches them how to use everything — even the pads that snap onto the sanders to buzz over the panel and suck up the dirt."

That kind of partnership matters in a shop moving this much volume.

"The paint jobs come out cleaner. We're not buffing as much. And the final detail process is faster," Branum said. "When you only have to nib three specs of dust instead of 10, you're not sanding into the clear coat as much, and the end result is better."

From a business standpoint, the return on investment shows up in time saved. While the system didn't deliver a revenue jump like calibrations had, Branum noticed it boosted overall efficiency — increasing paint shop productivity, speeding up detail work, and improving the finished product.

As someone who has tried competing systems, Branum knows the difference.

"When we tried other systems in the past, the sandpaper would clog up," he said. "We'd go through two boxes of 800 grit to every one box of 3M. It just lasts longer."

That reliability, combined with 3M's educational resources and in-shop support, makes the partnership one worth holding onto.

"From the beginning, 3M has been fantastic," Branum said. "They've trained us on how to get paid for non-included operations, how to recoup material costs, and how to turn it into a profit center. They just do things right — and we like working with companies that do things right."

For Branum, maintaining a spotless, organized shop isn't just about appearances — it's part of delivering high-end, OEM-level repairs. A clean environment reinforces customer trust, reflects the precision of the work being done, and showcases the professionalism of the entire team.

"If I take a customer out there to show them a \$50,000 repair on their G-Wagon, I want them to walk into a nice clean shop. This system helps us do that every single day."

Continental Collision

Austin, TX

512-381-1101

www.continentalcollision.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 47

In Business Since: 2002

Number of Locations: One

Production Space:

35,000 square feet



Mercedes-Benz Elite Certified Technician Gene Larson uses the 3M™ Clean Sanding System to prepare a liftgate repair.



The Continental Collision team in Austin, TX, stands outside their state-of-the-art facility, where they deliver top-tier repairs and customer service.

3M

877-666-2277

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