

Axalta's Cromax® EZ Waterborne System Helps Auto Body Shop Look to the Future



by **Autobody News Staff**

The family at the helm of *Woodman Collision Center, Inc.*, in Alton, IL, certainly understands how to build a multi-generational business.

The business's first location—then known as *Woodman Auto Body*—was established in 1947 by **Jess O. Woodman Sr.** His son, **Jess O. Woodman Jr.**, learned the trade from his father and owned multiple Woodman shops in the area.

Jess H. Woodman, son of Jess O. Woodman Jr., also followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, and began working in the family business as a teenager.

Jess later worked for two decades for a couple insurance companies, but in 2004, he and his wife, Ginger, opened Woodman Collision Center's current location in Alton.

Jess and **Ginger's** sons, **Ryan** and **Chad**, are now the fourth generation of Woodmans to operate the auto body shop, taking over their parents' business.

Ryan Woodman has worked in the shop from the day his dad opened it in 2004, having grown up working alongside his dad and grandfather.

"It was just something I enjoyed doing in the garage with my dad when I was younger, and when I graduated from high school, I decided to give it a try as a career and enjoyed it," he said.

Chad Woodman, on the other hand, found his place in the family business in 2008 after graduating from college with a degree in criminal justice.

"I got involved in the business side, working with customers and insurance companies, which was something I enjoyed," he said.

Today, the I-CAR Gold certified shop repairs an average of 120 to 150 vehicles per month.

The brothers and co-owners said the industry has changed a lot since the shop opened 14 years ago.

"There was no such thing as a pre-scan and a post-scan; you didn't have all the sensors," Ryan said. "Paint was single-stage or a base clear. Now you've got everything from tri-coats to four coats.



Chad Woodman, left, and **Ryan Woodman**, right, are brothers and co-owners of *Woodman Collision Center, Inc.*, in Alton, IL, which uses the Axalta Cromax EZ® Waterborne System.

You've got to scan every car that comes in the door now."

"It's basically driving a computer on wheels," Chad said. "Now it's about writing proper estimates, getting repair procedures, documenting everything. Fixing cars properly is more of a challenge."

With that in mind, the Woodmans are keeping an eye on the future—of both the collision repair industry and the planet as a whole.

In addition to recycling all plastic bumper parts and sheet metal components and taking steps to make its equipment more energy efficient, the shop uses a downdraft spray booth and HVLP (high volume, low pressure) guns, to reduce overspray, which reduces harmful emissions.

Woodman Collision Center also started using a waterborne paint system in 2008, becoming one of the first collision repair centers in the St. Louis area to make the switch.

"We're doing our part to keep the planet good for the next generation," Ryan said. "It's also what most OEs are using now, so it just made sense to switch.

"It seemed like that was the forward progress of the collision industry, and we wanted to make sure we were ahead of that."

The shop website explains that, since it mixes an average of 2 gallons of basecoat per week, the move to waterborne from a solvent system saves more than 600 pounds of volatile organic compounds (VOC) every year—

the equivalent of eliminating the emissions of more than 200 cars per year.

In November 2020, the shop tried Axalta's Cromax® EZ, a waterborne system designed to achieve quality goals with products that provide quick and accurate application, and color tools that are convenient and reliable.

After the initial test run, the shop made the switch to the waterborne system.

"The thing I liked about Cromax was it was user-friendly once you got it into the booth," Ryan said. "You could sand out any issues you found in the booth."

The clear coats are more buffable, and the blends easier to lay down. The color match is also top-notch, with a wide range of variants to choose from, and the camera works well to provide a "third eye" when a painter is torn between two variants.

"Those were the big points that led us to switch," Ryan said. "Our painters like it too for those reasons.

"We don't have a lot of re-dos because we try to handle that before it gets to the booth, but at times it does happen," he explained. "Usually it's just a quick scuff and throw it back in there."

The shop has multiple Axalta reps it can call for assistance.

"There are two [reps] from the area we have known for a really long time, and they're on their game and ready if we have an issue," Ryan said. "They get on it real quick and get it solved."

Woodman Collision Center, Inc.

Location: Alton, IL
(618) 466-1450

www.woodmancollisioncenter.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 11

In Business Since: 1947

Number of Locations: One

Production Space:

14,000 square feet



The I-CAR Gold shop repairs between 120 and 150 vehicles per month, using Axalta Cromax EZ® to match the paint on the first try while producing far fewer VOCs than a solvent system.



Ryan Woodman said he likes how user-friendly Axalta Cromax EZ® is. "You could sand out any issues you found in the booth."

Axalta Coating Systems

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