

Freeman Collision Center Nurtures Culture of Merit, Praises New ANEST IWATA Spray Guns



by Autobody News Staff

Before the owners of *Freeman Motors*, a certified Toyota and Lexus dealership in Santa Rosa, CA, broke ground on a soon-to-be-built auto body shop, they toured the country to check out other top-notch shops. The resulting facility—a 43,000-square-foot body shop—opened its doors in 2001.

Freeman Collision Center currently holds structural repair certifications from Toyota and Lexus and was professionally recognized as the 2022 Lexus Shop of the Year. According to Shop Manager **Jesse Parks**, the company is the only dealer-owned, Lexus-certified collision center between Bakersfield and the Oregon border, a distance spanning some 800 miles. It is also the only Toyota-dealership-owned collision center within a 300-mile radius. But these are not the shop's only claims to fame.

"What sets us apart is the quality of work we perform. We only use OEM parts, we perform all calibrations in-house using OE software and scan tools, and we're very rigorous in adhering to the OEM procedures," said Parks, who joined the company in 2019.

"The owners built what is still considered a state-of-the-art facility. We have only the best of the best equipment," Parks said—everything from Car-O-Liner frame racks and an overhead Eurovac dust removal system to lighted and heated down-draft paint prep stations as well as drive-through Blowtherm paint booths, to name a few.

As a high-volume shop that services an average of 100 to 120 vehicles monthly, and prides itself on superior-quality workmanship, it's equally essential for technicians to have access to the latest and most advanced tools. Having worked with ANEST IWATA for many years, the company had an opportunity to test some new spray guns. Parks said the reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

"I've been using ANEST IWATA spray guns for almost 20 years," said **Joe Piehoff**, painting production technician. "I currently spray base coat with a 1.3 LPH-



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400 with an LVX orange cap (and clear coat with a 1.3 LPH-400 with an LV cap."

Piehoff noted he was able to demo the new WS 400 Series 2 digital line of base and clear guns. He was also able to test both the OBS and the OBS + 1 tips for the base gun.

"These guns are visually stunning," said Piehoff. "The finish on the Series 2 far exceeded my expectations. And the removable digital gauge is icing on the cake. The base gun atomized and sprayed beautifully.

"Laying down soft and undetectable blends with the Series 2 base was easy. I could see the OBS +1 being beneficial when the summer months heat up and the humidity drops, although I had no problem spraying wet, beautiful base coat with the OBS tip even at 80 degrees booth temperature and 20% humidity.

"The WS 400 Series 2 digital clear gun was equally impressive," he added. "Applying a clear coat finish that was very close to the factory appearance has never been easier. ANEST IWATA really hit a home run with the Series 2."

While having the best equipment and tools are essential to running a top-tier body shop, technicians also need to be at the top of their game. To this end, Freeman focuses as much on technician training and certifications as it does on fostering a culture of merit.

"We provide extensive

technician training. All of our technicians are master certified," said Parks, who holds four I-CAR platinum certifications and is working on attaining a fifth. Parks is ASE certified and also holds many factory OEM certifications.

The shop itself has achieved I-CAR Gold status as well as the ASE Blue Seal of Excellence designation, both the result of continuous training and a determination to enhance key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure operational and procedural performance.

But what ties these efforts together is the company's unwavering commitment to a positive workplace environment, one that encourages employees' personal and professional development through a merit-based culture that motivates team members to keep improving.

"I was brought into this organization to take the culture and the team to the next level," said Parks. "I encourage everyone to lead by example—we are all role models—whatever it takes to support the team. In a culture of merit, anyone can excel based on their own merit.

"It's been a wonderful experience. I go out of my way to identify ways we can set ourselves apart from the competition and provide a unique work experience. We have a great team and great processes and we continue to build a culture of merit every day."

Freeman Collision Center

Santa Rosa, CA

707-542-2349

freemancollisioncenter.net

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 33

In Business Since: 2001

Number of Locations: One

Production Space:

43,000 square feet



The high-volume shop services 100-120 vehicles monthly, including this damaged truck undergoing a post-collision scan.



The well-equipped facility features drive-through Blowtherm paint booths and heated down-draft paint prep stations.

ANEST IWATA

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