

# Windscreen ignorance

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**EXPERT ADVICE:** Repair if possible, change only as a last resort

**O**VER the past five years, there has been a mushrooming of windscreen repair shops.

The two biggest names are Dr Cermin and Dr Windscreen.

They are not franchisees in the strict sense of the word, but they are more like affiliations to two major windscreen suppliers. For instance, those shops that carry the Dr Windscreen sign will be supplied by one major windscreen wholesaler that carries the product from all over the world.

Those windscreen shops that carry the Dr Cermin signage will be supplied by another major windscreen importer.

Their windscreens are from all over the world. China is a big supplier, as is Malaysia Sheet Glass (MSG) itself.

The implication of the Dr Cermin or the Dr Windscreen name is that the shops will repair windcreens that are chipped or cracked.

But the probability is that these shops may advise you to change to a new windscreen.

As strange as it may sound, repairing a factory installed windscreen is cheaper and safer than changing to a new one in an aftermarket operation where the installation procedure is not certified by the car manufacturer, nor is the installer.

Much of the problem can be traced to windscreen insurance. Many people buy windscreen insurance with the thought that after a few dings in the glass, they will change to a new windscreen free of charge.

"The motor insurance companies amended their windscreen policies in April 2007 so that car owners could claim only for the repair work," said Glass Mechanic boss Yeoh Eng Hui.

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The injector has two functions, to extract air bubbles from the crack and to inject resin.

"If you get another ding in the glass within the policy period, then you can still claim on the repair work."

Yeoh said that the objective is to keep the factory installed windscreen as long as possible because it is a safety issue.

"The big problem is rust. If you can guarantee that the replacement wind-

screen is installed in such a way that water will not penetrate the metal surround, then it's OK," he said.

"But what we see here is that the aftermarket installation is a compromise. First of all, when the windscreen is installed in the factory, the car body is completely rust free. The sealant and the adhesive are as per manufacturer's

specifications. The curing time of the sealant and the adhesive is exactly as per manufacturer's specifications.

"Who can guarantee that the aftermarket installers are doing this? Are they treating the metal surround with a new coat of anti-rust primer? Are they allowing the adhesive and the sealant to cure in the three to six hours that are needed?"

"Many people don't bother to find out, especially the lady drivers."

So, when you have a small crack in the glass, attend to it as soon as possible. A small five sen coin sized star can grow to a six-inch long crack.

If you go to one of the Dr shops with the intention of getting your windscreen repaired, chances are that after checking the damage on the glass, they may persuade you to get a new windscreen as they have a stock of new ones on their premises.

A windscreen is a structural member of the body of the car. It supports the A-pillar which supports the roof. In a roll-over, the cars with original windcreens have a better chance of remaining in place and supporting the roofline.

In a frontal collision that is bad enough to activate the supplementary restraint system, the front air bags will inflate and absorb the impact of the driver and the front passenger only if the windscreen is in place. A factory installed windscreen will more likely remain in place than one that's fitted after-market.

If you need to change the windscreen after-market, it would be better to do it at an authorised 3S centre of the brand. Rust is the biggest enemy of aftermarket windscreen installation.

At Glass Mechanic, there are no stocks of new windcreens. Their business is to repair your original factory installed windscreen because they believe that's the safest windscreen. They will help if you can go to them as soon as you notice the crack in the windscreen. Repairing is cheaper, safer and reduces windscreen glass debris.

• GlassMechanic is at 60, Jalan SS2/55, Petaling Jaya, opposite Pelita Restaurant. Tel: 03-7873 7873 or 013-381 1133. Email: ehyeh@glassmechanic.com.my

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