



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR REUTILIZATION OF GENUINE OEM PARTS UNEQUIVOCAL PARTS IDENTIFICATION

Professional automotive recyclers remove and recycle automotive parts in an environmentally efficient and safe manner. The primary business model of professional automotive recycling entities includes acquiring total loss vehicles (salvage) along with other vehicles such as charity vehicles, older vehicles and end-of-life vehicles to harvest original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts for sale to service and repair facilities, consumers and other interested parties. Professional automotive recyclers are represented by the Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) which has approximately 4,500 members spanning 14 countries worldwide. Many automotive recycling companies employ 10 or fewer people but the total U.S. industry employs over 100,000 people at nearly 9,000 facilities.

Full-Serve and Self-Serve Resellers of Recycled Parts – Different Business Models:

There are two main types of automotive recycling operations: Full Service and Self Service. Full Service recyclers purchase vehicles and remove the parts from the vehicles for their customers. Self Service recyclers purchase vehicles and allow their customers to remove the parts. Self Service recyclers typically only inventory vehicles. Both types of recyclers need to be able to identify whether a particular vehicle, (by its specific VIN) contains recalled parts, and which part or component is subject to recall.

The ability to recycle, reuse and resell automotive parts is severely hampered by the inability of unequivocal OEM parts identification available to the professional automotive recycling industry. Data drives almost every aspect of a professional automotive recyclers' business.

Today's Vehicles – Variety of Models and Variants

Due to technical progress and a growing number of vehicle types and variants, the parts and components used in vehicle assembly are increasingly complex and difficult to identify. Different types of vehicles need different types of replacement parts and even within the same model, parts may differ. For instance, it is no longer sufficient to indicate that there is e.g. a brake pad for "The Volkswagen Golf model 2007", because different 2007 Volkswagen Golfs may require different brake pads. Therefore, it has become increasingly problematic for even the most highly skilled and trained repairers to identify the suitable replacement parts for a specific vehicle.

Currently, manufacturers and dealers in the automotive industry speak a totally different parts language than those in the automotive recycling community. Automakers and dealers utilize original equipment part numbers while automotive recyclers have historically utilized Hollander Interchange numbers.

The Hollander Interchange enables automotive recyclers, enthusiasts and parts suppliers to identify and find parts needed to keep their vehicles running and in original condition. The Hollander Interchange indexes millions of auto parts and their interchangeable equivalents from other vehicles, i.e. a specific part that is in a Ford F-150 is also interchangeable with that same part in a Ford Expedition, Mercury Mountaineer, or Lincoln Navigator. Regrettably, Hollander is prohibited, in many cases, from sharing OEM numbers with professional automotive recyclers and in some cases OEM part numbers are entirely withheld from them by the OEMs.

It is only through the utilization of both original equipment part numbers and the Hollander Interchange parts that automotive manufacturers and automotive recyclers can come together to enhance overall motor vehicle safety, help improve recall remedy rates and comply with the federal recall remedy statute for used equipment.

Why Is Unequivocal Parts Identification So Important?

Unequivocal identification of parts, systems and components is crucial in the professional automotive recycling and independent aftermarket not only for the correct repair and maintenance of the vehicle. It is also essential to ensure the delivery of the correct parts to the service or collision repair facility. If the service or repair center does not have access to the correct data on the component used in the respective vehicle to be repaired, the wrong replacement parts may be delivered and fitted, which is a threat to car safety and environmental compliance. If a part is fitted whose specifications do not exactly meet the functional and physical requirements, the vehicle's safety and integrity can be compromised, and product and service liability is affected.

What Is 'Parts Identification Data'?

Parts identification data is a set of information (a correlation of numbers) which attributes a spare part (as identified by the vehicle manufacturer's original spare part number) to a specific vehicle (as identified by its VIN number). It is the relationship between the VINs and the allocated vehicle manufacturer's OE spare parts numbers in a digital form, which enables access to and processing of the data with standard IT systems.

A "build sheet" lists everything the motor vehicle came with from the factory including interior colors, rear end gearing, engine codes and regular production option (RPO) codes. The details contained in the build sheet indicate everything that was put into the car in the factory. RPO codes define the specific configuration of a new vehicle and detail exactly what was built into that vehicle on the production line.

The codes are identified based on the last six digits of the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) and are identified on a motor vehicles "build sheet". Even a vehicle without option equipment will have RPOs that specify important information such as the engine type and exterior paint color.

VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS: AN IN-DEPTH EXPLANATION

A VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER, COMMONLY ABBREVIATED TO VIN, IS A UNIQUE SERIAL NUMBER USED BY THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUAL MOTOR VEHICLES. VINS WERE FIRST INTRODUCED IN 1954, AND FOR 27 YEARS, THERE WAS NO ACCEPTED STANDARD FOR THESE NUMBERS, RESULTING IN EACH MANUFACTURER USING A DIFFERENT VIN FORMAT. IN 1981, THE U.S. NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION STANDARDIZED THE FORMAT, REQUIRING ALL OVER-THE-ROAD VEHICLES SOLD TO CONTAIN A 17-CHARACTER VIN.

VIN Digits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
	MANUFACTURER The first three characters uniquely identify the manufacturer of the vehicle using the World Manufacturer Identifier (WMI) code.			VEHICLE ATTRIBUTES The fourth through eighth positions in the VIN are the Vehicle Descriptor Section (VDS). This is used according to local regulations to identify the vehicle type, and may include information on the automobile platform used, the model and the body style.					CHECK DIGIT The ninth digit is a VIN accuracy check digit, verifying the previous VIN characters.	MODEL YEAR	PLANT CODE The eleventh digit reveals the assembly plant for the vehicle.	SEQUENTIAL NUMBER The twelfth to seventeenth positions represent the Vehicle Identifier Section, or VIS. These digits may signify the options installed or engine and transmission choices. In North America, the last five digits must be numeric.						
EXAMPLES	WDB Mercedes-Benz)			WK54F SLK280 Model					5 Is the check digit	6 Year 2006	F Bremen Germany	077435 Standard edition/trim, 6 cylinder, gas 3.0, 7 speed automatic, comfort package, heating package, automatic dimming mirror, driver seat memory, dual power seats, heated front seats, power tilt steering wheel, metallic paint, and all standard options.						
	TRADITIONAL VIN DECODE										These identifying digits are used in combination with the first 11 digits of a VIN to map to RPO codes within the manufacturer's database and uncover detailed options information.							

Does This Data Already Exist?

Vehicle manufacturers do compile this kind of information for the production of their own spare parts catalogues. Many manufacturers offer VIN-based search engines, with which suitable parts for a vehicle can be identified. A parts catalogue could hardly exist if the vehicle manufacturer did not have data on the relationship between the VIN of a vehicle and the parts suitable for it. Moreover, vehicle manufacturers do provide the parts identification data to service providers such as insurance estimating companies and collision repair shops. Thus the data could be made available without significant effort.

Do Automakers Often Change Their Part Numbers?

Vehicle manufacturers change their original parts and components (and consequently the OE-spare part numbers) frequently. This may be due to product development, logistical or commercial reasons such as changing an OE supplier. Vehicle manufacturers do not normally communicate these changes to the professional automotive recyclers or the independent aftermarket. Where independent operators are not aware of these changes or “silent recalls”, they are in danger of supplying or using unsuitable parts or components.

Why Should ‘Parts Identification Data’ Be an Important Issue for Legislators and Regulators?

The professional automotive recycling industry has repeatedly asked for access to this modern parts identification, but have been constantly refused by vehicle manufacturers. As the vehicles’ safety and integrity are at stake when they refuse to release the correct parts identification, vehicle manufacturers’ refusal to supply the relevant data becomes a matter for legislator and regulators to address. It is no longer a matter of letting vehicle manufacturers decide whether it suits their business model to grant access to this data or not.