

BAR Advisory Group Meeting Summary from July 31, 2025 – by Jack Molodanof

BAR Advisory Group Committee Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

BAR Chief Patrick Dorais made opening remarks, introduced BAR staff, and BAG Committee members introduced themselves.

Legislation and Regulations Update

Legislative Bills: AB 987 (Vehicle Storage & Towing); AB 1368 (Smog Check Exemption); SB 615 (Vehicle Traction Batteries); SB 712 (Smog Check Exemption); SB 774 (Citation & Remedial Training); SB 861 (Business & Professions Code Clean-up).

Regulations Adopted include Bureau Accepted Educational Certifications; Omnibus Clean-up of Regulations and Code Sections; Tear Down Disclosure Requirements and Smog Check Readiness Monitor Limits.

Pending Regulations include Mobile and Referral Automotive Repair Dealers; Storage Fees; Change of Address Requirements and Biometric Device Updates. See link for presentation.

www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/legislation-regulations.pdf

Continuous Testing Program and Pilot Overview

This pilot program is only open to government agencies and allows the transmission of OBD II data to BAR. Participating agencies use the program in lieu of a traditional Smog Check inspection. It enables continuous monitoring and data transmission via telematics, replacing the biennial Smog Check process. The program helps streamline annual fleet reporting to BAR. Next steps include developing regulations to establish the program on a permanent basis. See the link for presentation.

www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/continuous-testing.pdf

Tear Down and Disclosure Requirements

The new regulations include a burdensome requirement: when a shop contracts a tow on behalf of the customer, the towing fees must be listed on a separate document and not included in the repair estimate. If a vehicle is towed into the shop, the tow must be documented on a separate form, not on the repair estimate or invoice, because towing is not covered under the Automotive Repair Act.

There was confusion about whether a second tow—such as when a vehicle needs to be transported to a sublet repair facility for services like wheel alignment or calibration—also requires a separate document, or if it can be included as a sublet line item on the repair estimate. This new towing section generated considerable discussion and confusion. BAR acknowledged that it failed to fully consider sublet repairs involving towing and stated it would review the issue and may hold a workshop to provide further clarification. The new teardown requirements also require a general description of the

vehicle area(s) to be disassembled as part of the teardown process. Additionally, when an Automotive Repair Dealer (ARD) adopts a third-party payor estimate as the method of repair, the ARD must include additional information on their own estimate. Customers must also be informed of the amount approved by the third-party payor, once that amount is known and documented. If the amount is unknown, the following disclosure must be included in the estimate:

This estimate is for repairs to meet vehicle manufacturer and industry standards. As the customer, it is your responsibility to contact the third-party payor for payment of the repairs you have authorized.

BAR has updated the Write It Right guide to assist Automotive Repair Dealers with the new teardown and disclosure requirements. The revised guide includes Q&As, updated definitions, and new sample estimates. Find the updated guide at www.bar.ca.gov/wir
See link for presentation. <https://www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/tear-down.pdf>

California Vehicle Inspection Systems Update

The California Vehicle Inspection System (Cal-VIS) is the information technology solution that supports all aspects of BAR's Smog Check and Vehicle Safety Systems Inspection (VSSI) Programs. Cal-VIS requires continuous monitoring, patching, and functional updates to achieve availability targets and meet evolving business needs. BAR is planning additional software updates for 2025. See link for presentation. <https://www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/Cal-VIS.pdf>

Complaint Case Study

BAR presented two case study examples. The first where, a consumer purchased a Certified Pre-Owned vehicle and later returned to the dealership due to a "blind spot malfunction" warning. The dealership initially estimated no charge for the diagnosis but ultimately performed \$2,190 worth of repairs at no cost to the customer. Because the service was free, the dealership did not obtain customer authorization—instead, the service writer approved the repairs on the customer's behalf. When further issues arose, the dealership issued a revised estimate of \$4,391 for additional repairs. A dispute followed, as the dealership again failed to obtain the required authorization. The dealership then offered to release the vehicle at no charge. **Key Point:** Even when repairs are performed at no cost, shops must obtain customer approval. An ARD (Automotive Repair Dealer) performing services or insurer involved in a claim cannot authorize repairs on behalf of the customer.

In another complaint, BAR reviewed an invoice for services covered by a maintenance agreement. The original estimate, totaling \$116, included an oil change, tire rotation, and vehicle inspection—all provided at no cost to the consumer. However, the final invoice showed a total of \$222, which included charges for an oil filter, oil, and engine air filter. The consumer had not been notified of, nor authorized, the \$222 charge for the air filter replacement—even though it was covered under the maintenance agreement. **Key Point:** Notification and customer authorization are required even when the consumer incurs no direct cost due to a service agreement. See link for presentation. <https://www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/complaint.pdf>

Enforcement Statistics

The enforcement statistics, detailing consumer complaints received by BAR in different categories, are as follows: Engine Repair 33%; General Repair/Maintenance 15%; Auto Body 16%; Transmission 6%; Vehicle Purchase 6%; Smog 6%; Used Car lots 8%; Towing and Storage 3%. Unlicensed activity 2%. See link for the handout presentation. <https://www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/enforcement-statistics.pdf>

Licensing Statistics

A total of 35,233 automotive repair dealers are in the state. There are 487 Vehicle Safety Systems Stations. See link for handout presentation <https://www.bar.ca.gov/pdf/bag/202507/licensing-statistics.pdf>

The next BAR Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2025.