

Success of Collision Shop Is No Accident

Sterling Trucks quit being manufactured in 2009, leaving INDOT with dozens of vehicles for which parts were no longer made. The shortage of parts could have left us in a lurch if not for the sound thinking of the Seymour District Collision Shop.

"The Sterling parts have been getting very hard to come by," said Shop Foreman Mike Jewell. "In situations where it is to our advantage, we may at times strip the good parts off Sterling trucks that need to be retired or have been wrecked before sending the vehicles to be auctioned. Then, when another Sterling needs just a part or two, we may have it on-hand to keep that Sterling on the road."



A Sterling Truck, transferred from the Seymour District to the Crawfordsville District several years ago, is still shining today.

INDOT's only collision shop performs body shop repairs for all of INDOT and other state agency vehicles.

"They're a huge asset for all six districts and the rest of INDOT," said Statewide Fleet Director Jason Kruse.

LaPorte District Fleet Manager Dan Barenie was amazed earlier this year, when the Seymour shop saved

a 2008 bucket truck that had an engine failure.

"The engine failure, combined with rusty work cabinets and front-end damage from accidents, meant that having it repaired locally wasn't cost effective," said Barenie. "We have older bucket trucks still in use, so it would have been a shame to lose this one."

Discussions with Seymour District Fleet Manager Jack Monroe led to the belief that the truck could be saved at a reasonable cost.

"Seymour's body shop completely rebuilt all the boxes on the back and painted them," said Barenie. "They added new metal; fixed the hood, grill and bumper in the front and painted them; replaced the diesel engine with a new motor with a one-year warranty; and even fixed the cab floor and seat."

When the bucket truck was returned to the LaPorte District, Barenie said it looked almost brand new and that most of the operators thought it was new; they couldn't believe it was their old truck.

“We are expecting to gain seven more years out of this truck,” said Barenie. “The cost of the whole project was just under \$23,000. The cost of a new truck is about \$130,000. Thanks to Seymour, we were able to save this truck and support operations with a clean, dependable, and safe bucket truck.”

Six INDOT employees work in the shop, which includes garage bays for mechanical work, a bay for metal fabrication, and a body shop. A stockroom clerk provides parts support.

Monroe’s supervisor, Seymour District Logistics Director Clark Packer, appreciates the crew’s daily work and for thinking of ways to reduce costs and stretch tax dollars by deciding to occasionally strip Sterling Trucks parts when it makes sense.

“Our core business is not restoration,” said Packer. “We do not spend time and money breaking down vehicles, but we do repurpose used parts when it makes sense either because of cost or because of reduced part availability. It’s a balancing act of the use of new parts and repurposed parts to manage cost efficiency while still producing a good product that will function to meet our needs.”

In 2017, the shop significantly rehabilitated the base chassis of a 1990 truck-mounted drilling rig for INDOT’s Pavement Division.



“The work accomplished by the Seymour shop enabled me to not have to scrap out the truck, as it was in exceptionally poor condition because of being stored outside and uncovered,” said Pavement Director David Holtz, who added that — after the base chassis was repaired — the drilling rig manufacturer repaired the drilling rig that is mounted on the truck’s flatbed.

“The Seymour shop’s work on the automotive systems and the body — including almost entirely rebuilding the truck’s flatbed — was the key factor in deciding to repair the drilling rig assembly. I expect a minimum of five to 10 years of more service. Commercially repairing the 1990 truck might have cost \$65,000

— if it even could be done. A new truck might run \$350,000. I could not be happier about the quality of their work.”

Crawfordsville District Fleet Manager Josh Montgomery is a huge fan of the shop.

“The Seymour shop is a great resource for INDOT,” said Montgomery. “I have sent various large repairs and modification jobs to Seymour. We send all our vehicles that have accident/body damage to be repaired there. Last fiscal year, they replaced an engine in a Ford F-350 for us during snow

season when we had a surge in workload. They also modified the spray system of a tanker to spray brine during Winter Operations.”

Montgomery said that the secret of the shop is the human element, not the equipment or tools being used.

“Mike and his crew make all the magic happen,” said Montgomery. “Mike coordinates and supervises his awesome crew to make major repairs, minor repairs, body work, painting, and modifications to all types of equipment from various districts and state agencies. They even transferred a Seymour District Sterling Truck to me a few years ago, and it’s still shining.”

Needless to say, the Seymour District Collision Shop has earned its sterling reputation.

Seymour District Equipment Mechanic Jeff Pennycuff sands an INDOT dump truck sent to the district's collision shop for repair and repaint.

