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ON THE COVER

It's more common than ever to find an overlanding vehicle outfitted with a versatile, feature-rich rooftop tent. See article on page 12. (Main photo by John Papa/ courtesy Overland Vehicle Systems; inset photo courtesy Yokohama)

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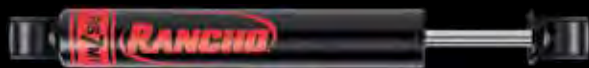
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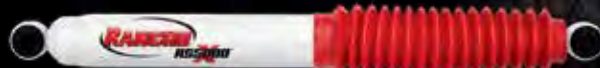
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Jef White
Editor in Chief
theshopmag.com

SEMA Emissions Program Recognized by EPA

Shops can trust that aftermarket products carrying a SEMA Certified-Emissions certification from the Specialty Equipment Market Association comply with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, after a recent EPA advisory opinion was announced in July.

With the formal recognition, the EPA is establishing a regulatory pathway allowing for 49-state sales (excluding California, which continues to require its own executive orders) of products carrying the SEMA certification, assuring shops that the certified upgrade components meet federal emissions standards, according to SEMA officials.

"The EPA has verified what SEMA for years has told regulators at the state and federal levels: that the automotive aftermarket industry has a precise mechanism to support emissions testing compliance with federal laws, and it's called SEMA Certified-Emissions," says SEMA CEO Mike Spagnola. "This EPA recognition of the SEMA Certified-Emissions program is nothing short of a pioneering action by the federal government to utilize private-public partnerships in service to industry regulatory compliance efforts. We're beyond pleased to continue to provide this service to aftermarket businesses so they can bring their innovative products to the market, and with a renewed certainty that our nation's clean-air laws are being followed."

The SEMA Certified-Emissions program is the product of years of heavy investment and development by the Specialty Equipment Market Association through its SEMA Garage program, officials note in a press release.

The goal was to create a robust, sustainable and practical pathway to Clean Air Act emissions compliance under federal law.

As a result, the SEMA Garage can now show a documented, reasonable basis for aftermarket products having no adverse impact on emissions, the release states. In the last decade, the EPA has ceded authority to California, enabling the state to serve as a de facto national regulator and require manufacturers to obtain California Air Resources Board (CARB) Executive Orders (EOs) to sell anywhere in the country.

"Americans should not be forced to solely rely on California to certify aftermarket products. Starting today, Americans can trust that products certified by SEMA meet federal requirements and can be used to repair vehicles," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin says in the release.

SEMA officials celebrated the program's recognition, saying it "verifies a transparent, data-driven process to serve as an affordable, accelerated pathway for aftermarket companies to follow. It offers much-needed certainty for aftermarket businesses, particularly with regards to products that meet federal standards (i.e., internal combustion engine products)."

SEMA Certified-Emissions products and components are tested and authorized for specific makes, models, model year and engine configurations, providing a path to emissions compliance for aftermarket companies creating emissions-related components.

The program maintains a centralized, transparent database of compliant products. The publicly searchable database adds to manufacturers', retailers', consumers' and federal stakeholders' confidence in the integrity of the nation's emissions standards, according to officials.

Learn more at semagarage.com. **TS**

THE SHOP

EDITORIAL

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Jef White
jwhite@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR: Chris Main
cmain@cahabamedia.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Jennifer King
jdking@cahabamedia.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:
Mark E. Battersby, John Carollo

CREATIVE SERVICES

ART DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Chick

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGER: Greg Ragsdale

WEB DEVELOPER: Greg Caudle

CIRCULATION

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES & INQUIRIES:
customer@cahabamedia.com

ADVERTISING

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE WEST COAST:

Krystal Franklin
kfranklin@cahabamedia.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE EAST COAST:

Luke LaValle
lvalle@cahabamedia.com

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR:

Holly Strickland
hstrickland@cahabamedia.com

CAHABA
MEDIA GROUP

PUBLISHER: Matthew G. Conroy

VP OF FINANCE: Brandon Whittemore

DIRECTOR OF CONTENT: Elizabeth Manning

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS: Laurie Tisdale

DIRECTOR OF SALES: Stacy Marshall

P.O. Box 530067
Birmingham, AL 35253



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Safety First

A rundown of shop responsibilities regarding protecting employees.

BY MARK E. BATTERSBY

Mark E. Battersby writes on financial and tax-related topics. Learn more at thetaxscribe.com.

Every specialty automotive aftermarket business, large or small, is responsible for protecting the safety and health of its employees. Safety is also good business, paying off in increased productivity, higher employee morale and, in many cases, reduced costs.

The safety-related expenses of a performance, restyling or vehicle customization business can often be reduced by tax deductions or credits. The tax rules can be rewarding for shop owners attempting to adhere to the safety standards imposed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

THE EPA

The EPA's environmental compliance requirements cover the disposal of waste oil, solvents and coolants. Shops must ensure proper containment and labeling to avoid EPA fines.

In addition to regulating spray booth emissions and requiring hazardous material training, the EPA also requires that "proper" extraction and ventilation systems must be utilized, particularly for welding, brazing or when operating internal combustion engines within the shop.

Fortunately, tax deductions exist that allow the cost of that required waste oil disposal, solvent replacement and hazardous material training to be written off. Even the cost of spray booth emissions monitoring can qualify as tax deductible.



Every specialty automotive aftermarket business is responsible for protecting the safety and health of its employees. (Photo credit: Alex - stock.adobe.com)



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Under OSHA provisions, shops must provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to employees. (Photo credit: abu - stock.adobe.com)

OSHA COMPLIANCE

OSHA is concerned with employee safety in the workplace. Under OSHA provisions, every specialty automotive aftermarket business must provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to employees—regardless of the size of the business.

Depending on the type of changes required, the costs may be immediately deductible or will have to be capitalized. A good example is the personal safety equipment purchased by many shops for their workers, such as goggles and protective gloves.

These are usually immediately deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense. Meanwhile, rewiring and other capital improvements made to a shop may have to be capitalized.

A performance, restyling or customization professional may want to consider OSHA's free on-site consultation offering. The program does not entail penalties or citations—it merely makes recommendations for improvements to be a safer workplace. This can help a shop avoid penalties that could result from inspections down the road.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

OSHA requires employers to provide training to workers who face hazards on the job.

Under the rules, a specialty automotive aftermarket business is required to establish an OSHA training program that employees receive at the time of their hiring and at least once a year afterward.

Often, governmental agencies at all levels may require safety training and education. Fortunately, the cost of providing employee safety training—such as safety certification courses, workshops and other required training programs—is usually tax deductible.

Under current tax rules, many of the educational and training expenses incurred by a shop or business are both tax deductible by

the business and, at the same time, tax-free to the recipients. An often-ignored provision of our tax law permits every specialty automotive aftermarket professional to claim a tax deduction for expenditures made to educate or train employees.

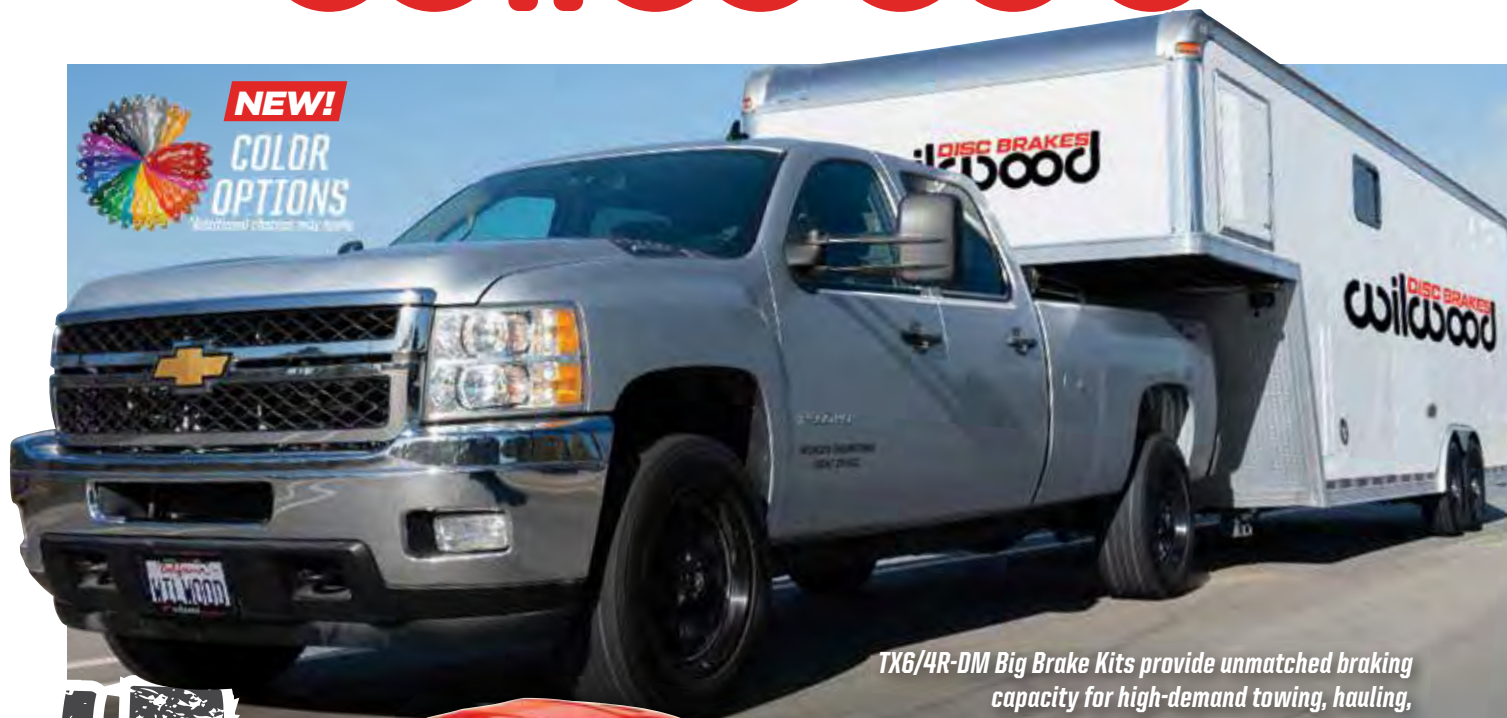
TAXES TO THE RESCUE

Shop owners can deduct safety-related expenditures, if they are “ordinary and necessary” for the operation or the industry. In fact, most specialty automotive aftermarket shops can immediately deduct or “expense” major machinery such as diagnostic scanners, lifts and tire balancers, thanks to



Safety is good business, paying off in increased productivity, higher employee morale and, in many cases, reduced costs. (Photo credit: NovaVision - stock.adobe.com)

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Section 179 first-year expensing rules. Or the business can take advantage of the recently restored 100% “bonus” depreciation for large machinery and equipment costs.

Under a unique “de minimis safe harbor,” a shop can deduct the cost of safety gear and small tools under \$2,500 per item/per invoice. Of course, an aftermarket operation without a qualified accounting system can also deduct them as “supplies.” Consider reimbursing workers who provide their own tools.

EMPLOYEE TOOL & EQUIPMENT PLANS

Employees in many industries routinely purchase their own safety clothing. Unfortunately, they are no longer permitted to claim a tax deduction for “employee business expenses” on their personal income tax returns. Should the employee provide his or her own tools, employers can often reimburse them for these expenditures.

An “Employee Tool and Equipment Plan” is an agreement between an employer and one or more of its employees to provide, maintain or reimburse for the tools and equipment necessary for work. In addition to saving the employee federal income taxes, the employer does not have to withhold employment taxes on that portion of the employee’s compensation.

As the IRS has pointed out, professionals achieve this tax result by structuring the Employee Tool and Equipment Plan as an “Accountable Plan” as defined in the tax law. To qualify as an Accountable Plan, it must meet some very minimal requirements.

Specifically, the plan must require the employee to substantiate the expense and provide that the employee must return



OSHA requires employers to provide training to workers who face hazards on the job. (Photo credit: Hayyat - stock.adobe.com)

any amount in excess of the amount of the expense that is substantiated.

UNFORTUNATE PENALTIES

Automotive aftermarket businesses forced to pay penalties for noncompliance or law violations will find that the penalties are not tax deductible.

The tax law specifically denies deductions for fines and penalties paid to the government for violating the law.

Thus, the shop has little choice but to comply with government-ordered improvements and do it as quickly as possible so as to minimize or avoid penalties.

However, while fines and penalties are not generally tax deductible, fees for legal and professional services are.

Amounts paid for legal services to battle fines and penalties levied for safety violations, as well as many other causes, are tax deductible.

In fact, in 1996, Congress passed the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA) to give small businesses assis-

tance in understanding and complying with regulations and more of a voice in the development of new regulations. Under SBREFA, OSHA and other federal agencies must:

- Produce Small Entity Compliance Guides for some rules.
- Be responsive to small business inquiries about compliance with the agency’s regulations.
- Submit final rules to Congress for review.
- Have a penalty reduction policy for small businesses.
- Involve small businesses in the development of some proposed rules through Small Business Advocacy Review Panels.

The legislation also gives small businesses expanded authority to recover attorneys’ fees and costs when a federal agency has been found to have acted excessively in enforcing regulations.

THE COST OF COMPLIANCE

The burden of complying with the many safety requirements, such as employee

Image Credit: dizain - stock.adobe.com

OSHA

OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY AND
HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION

training costs, ASE certification and safety training, qualifies as a write-off, including the costs of travel, lodging and meals.

Maintaining an OSHA-mandated Hazard Communication Standard program and the necessity of maintaining and displaying corresponding Safety Data Sheets for every chemical is required in many shops.

Don't overlook the requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE). Employers must provide and pay for mandatory PPE, including safety-toed shoes, welding helmets and ANSI-approved safety glasses, when needed.

Naturally, expenditures for items used within one year are fully deductible, while larger equipment may require depreciation.

Thanks to the tax law's de minimis safe harbor, a specialty automotive aftermarket business can expense, rather than capitalize, the cost of tangible property up to \$2,500 per item (or invoice), allowing for immediate deduction of smaller safety items such as specialized tools.

And don't forget those state-level incentives.

Many states offer unique tax write-offs and credits for safety equipment and training related to prevalent industries in their regions.

On the downside, equipment expensed under the Section 179 expensing rule or using bonus depreciation may be subject to recapture rules.

Invoices, installation costs and other detailed records are required to support deductions for safety equipment and maintenance.

Some major structural safety improvements may also need to be capitalized and depreciated over time rather than fully deducted in the current year.

SAFELY FINANCING SAFETY

Ensuring a safe workplace is a fundamental responsibility for every business. But paying for safety improvements—required or voluntarily made—is another story.

Fortunately, several lenders stand ready to assist.

The SBA, for instance, is authorized to make loans to assist small businesses with

meeting OSHA standards. Because SBA's definition of a "small" business varies from industry to industry, contact your local SBA field office to determine whether your shop qualifies.

Anyone applying for an SBA loan should be aware that most delays in processing SBA/OSHA loans are because applications either do not adequately describe each workplace condition to be corrected and identify one or more OSHA standards applicable to the condition to be corrected, or do not provide a reasonable estimate of the cost to correct each condition.

Establishing a safe and healthful working environment requires every specialty automotive aftermarket business and every worker to make safety and health a top priority.

Fortunately, an abundance of government programs and professional assistance exists, and workplace safety and health-related costs are usually manageable and often tax deductible. **TS**

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Restyling

AFTERMARKET ACCESSORIES

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Make It to the Top



A highlight purchase for many adventure travelers, rooftop tents continue to stand tall. By Jef White

As the off-road market continues to expand, accessory shops are encountering a wider range of customers, all with one goal in mind: getting away from it all. And, at the top of their shopping list—literally and figuratively—are rooftop tents.

Offered in hardshell and softshell designs and with features ranging from viewing windows to LED lighting, it's more common than ever to find an overlanding vehicle outfitted with a quick and easy rooftop tent (RTT). Not just for Jeeps and SUVs, systems are available for nearly any adventure vehicle.

For shops, some basic knowledge of the various model features and an attractive showroom display are the first steps toward becoming a successful RTT retailer and installer. Manufacturers are

then available for more in-depth instruction, including observations on industry trends, effective sales strategies and hot new offerings.

INNOVATION & EFFICIENCY

Now is a good time to enter the rooftop tent market, as the client base is strong, growing and knows what it wants.

"Overlanding has become much more mainstream, and customers now expect premium features that were once considered upgrades," says Michelle Bates, marketing manager for Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS). "Faster setup, hardshell construction, four-season performance and integrated accessories have become the new standard. Buyers are also looking for products that support complete vehicle-based adventures, not just a place to sleep."

Helping customers understand the differences in rooftop tent offerings does them a real service. (Photo courtesy Mammoth Overland)

Once an aspirational component, RTTs are now accessible to all types of drivers.

"Ten years ago, an item such as this was priced as a luxury item," says Lyle Willis, from the business development office at Rough Country. "We've created a quality product at a very reasonable price point."

Rooftop tents make for an impressive sight, sitting proudly on top of an off-road vehicle. Recent innovations allow the sturdy structures to offer unexpected weight savings.

"Just in the last few years, weight has become a big factor in customer buying decisions," says Charlie Mora, sales manager for Tuff Stuff Overland. "Drivers are looking for tents that are easy to take on

and off their vehicles and will not affect their gas mileage too much.”

Improved ease of use is another impactful change that’s hit the market, says Dan Caridi, associate category manager – adventure camping, for Thule.

“Tents open and close easier, and electronic integration has become standard,” he notes. “Dimmable LED lighting is almost ubiquitous in hardshell tents now, whereas just a few years ago it was a rare upgrade. Mattresses have gotten so much better over that time, too.”

Tough and ready for hard trails, the units are attractive to overlanders seeking quality and reliability.

“The category has matured significantly. Ten years ago, you were explaining what a rooftop tent was. Today, customers walk in having done their research—they know the category, they’ve seen the options and the best of them are asking about rooftop campers,” says Scott Taylor, president of Mammoth Overland. “They want hard walls, real insulation, onboard power and a product that doesn’t feel like a compromise.”



Being able to touch the material, climb inside and get a feel for the tent will help make buyers feel confident with their investment. (Photo courtesy Tuff Stuff Overland)

As the RTT market expands, quality manufacturers are offering broader product lines.

“With COVID lighting a fire under many to get outside, we now have a larger, more diverse consumer set for rooftop tents, which has allowed brands like us to expand and improve our offerings,” says Chris Horton, Yakima senior category manager. “We can

focus on making them better, lighter and faster to set up, with additional features and comfort. The category is still immature, but it’s starting to grow up.”

THE RIGHT FIT

Many customers assume every rooftop tent fits every vehicle.

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■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Pronounced "skull," a hard-sided rooftop camper built entirely from painted, high-strength aluminum using aerospace-grade monocoque construction; deploys in about 30 seconds; sleeps two adults comfortably; standard 6Ah onboard battery.

Mammoth Overland

Scott Taylor

President

■ HOT PRODUCT:

OVS XD K2

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Dual-action clamshell premium tent built for overlanders who want fast setup, all-season capability and premium comfort; lightweight aluminum honeycomb hardshell that's durable and aerodynamic; premium 320G blackout ripstop poly-cotton fabric.

Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS)

Michelle Bates

Marketing Manager

■ HOT PRODUCT:

Rack Mount Rooftop Tent

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Durable canvas; 12-volt accessory-compatible; LED light; attractive price point.

Rough Country

AJ Tate

Business Development

■ HOT PRODUCT:

Thule Widesky

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Hardshell rooftop tent with a quick, simple opening and closing system that's fully up or down in 15 seconds using a simple pull cord; no fabric to tuck; comfortable mattress that converts into a sofa.

Thule

Dan Caridi

Associate Category Manager –

Adventure Camping

■ HOT PRODUCT:

Trailhead PRO Softshell Hybrid

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Four-season tent for year-round camping; integrated driving cover with setup and take-down as fast as a hardshell tent; 2.75-inch mattress; at 110 pounds, light enough to be installed on most UTVs; cargo bars to secure additional gear when traveling.

Tuff Stuff Overland

Charlie Mora

Sales Manager

■ HOT PRODUCT:

Yakima SkyPeak HD

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Hardshell rooftop tent that's more like a roof rack system you can sleep in; with side T-slots and a top crossbar kit it can carry up to 165 pounds on top and up to 75 pounds on each side; accessory attachment setup; pop-out doorframe.

Yakima

Chris Horton

Senior Category Manager

"In reality, proper fitment depends on the vehicle's roof load capacity, rack system and how the customer plans to use it," says Bates. "Taking the time to educate customers on compatibility and installation leads to a better experience and fewer issues down the road."

While not necessarily one-size-fits-all, rooftop tents are surprisingly versatile for many applications.

"Often the only limiting factor is the roof rack weight capacity," Mora reveals.

Systems are available for a variety of off-road-capable vehicle models, says AJ Tate, from the business development office at Rough Country.

"A common misconception is that these are made just for Jeeps and SUVs. But there are several applications, from truck bed racks to overlanding trailers, with rooftop tents mounted on them."

And, although overlanding is an important market segment, it's not the only segment, says Caridi.

"There's a real shift toward more of a weekender crowd that really values the ease of use and comfort these tents can provide. Especially as tents continue to come down in weight, the number of cars that these tents are compatible with is ever-expanding," he reveals. "Once a tent crosses 165 pounds, it starts to eliminate something like 20% of the cars it could otherwise mount on, since

Overlanding has become more mainstream, and customers now expect premium RTT features that were once considered upgrades.
(John Papa photo/courtesy Overland Vehicle Systems)

that's roughly where a lot of factory roof racks hit their dynamic weight limit. We kept Thule Widesky at 147 pounds so that it'll mount just as easily on a midsize SUV as a fully kitted Tacoma."

Horton notes that many "less hardcore" users are often the most appreciative of the benefits of a hardshell rooftop tent.

"They like the treehouse view and separation from ground critters," he says. "There are fewer parts and less complexity for setup and teardown, plus the extra wind and weather protection. All of this makes it more comfortable than a ground tent or even a softshell tent for people that are more timid with the outdoors."

Taylor explains that Mammoth's SKL rooftop camper is a long way from a lighter softshell RTT. Shops that understand the full breadth of today's offerings will be the most effective at directing drivers to the proper setup for their unique travel adventures.

"The buyer shopping for a rooftop camper is making a considered purchase and they know it," he says. "They've done the research, they understand what they're paying for and they're looking for something they won't regret. A shop that helps a customer understand the differences is doing them a genuine service. The conversation isn't about price—it's about what they're actually getting for the money."

HIGH ABOVE IT ALL

As a driver's purchasing decision nears, sometimes an in-person experience can seal the deal.

"The best tip is to have a display or a rooftop tent on a shop truck," says Mora from Tuff Stuff Overland. "Overlanding is still a growing market. Most customers walking through your door will be new to overlanding and making their first purchase. Being able to touch the material, climb inside and get a feel for the tent will help make them feel confident with their investment."

An in-person demonstration is the only way to truly understand what the user experience will be like, says Taylor.

"A rooftop camper in a box sells on spec, while one deployed at eye level sells on experience," he says. "When customers can climb the ladder, look through the port-hole windows, feel the aluminum walls and understand what 30-second deployment actually means—that's when the product sells itself."

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TOYOTA & ONX EXPAND PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

Toyota and outdoor digital navigation platform onX have expanded their partnership to empower more people to confidently access and enjoy the outdoors while supporting responsible recreation and trail stewardship.

Rooted in the shared belief of more adventure for all, year two's partnership combines Toyota's off-road models with onX's navigation technology to help outdoor enthusiasts discover new places, plan their journeys and navigate with confidence. As part of the expanded partnership, eligible owners of select 2026 Toyota Tundra, Tacoma, 4Runner, Sequoia and Land Cruiser models will receive six months of complimentary onX Elite access.

Toyota and onX are also launching the Trail Creators Program, a community of outdoor enthusiasts and storytellers who will inspire responsible recreation through content and education, while expanding their Trail Revival Project across the country to help preserve access to public lands for future generations.

"Toyota and onX share a passion for helping people explore the outdoors with confidence while preserving the places that make those adventures possible," says Owen Peacock, general manager, vehicle marketing & communities, Toyota Motor North America. "Whether helping drivers discover new trails, navigate remote destinations or support stewardship of our public lands, this partnership is about empowering more people to create memorable outdoor experiences and venture farther with confidence."

The Trail Creators Program will bring together a community of outdoor enthusiasts, storytellers and advocates to showcase responsible recreation practices and inspire others to discover new outdoor experiences. Through content creation, education and community engagement, participants will demonstrate how technology and stewardship can work together to enhance outdoor exploration.



Toyota and onX have expanded a partnership to help outdoor enthusiasts discover new places, plan their journeys and navigate with confidence. (Photos courtesy Toyota)



Or, as Tate explains, "Put one in your showroom and let the product sell itself."

An enticing showroom setup can be a welcome mat for repeat customers.

"Tell a story with the display," advises Horton from Yakima. "Put some sleeping bags in there and a book, plug in the interior lights that come with the tent and set up other add-on accessories like air conditioners, crossbar kits, etc. If it's on a vehicle, add an awning or boat rack up top and have a ground mat with a couple chairs ready. Show the customer what their campsite is capable of being, spur their imagination and create more add-on sales for yourself."

Demo areas that simulate a complete off-road experience can be powerful sales tools, says Bates from Overland Vehicle Systems.

"Don't sell just the tent—sell the entire camping solution," she recommends. "Pair rooftop tents with bed racks or roof racks, awnings, annex rooms, recovery gear, power stations, lighting and storage accessories."

Once aspirational components, RTTs are now accessible to all types of drivers. (Photo courtesy Rough Country)



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Most of today's RTT offerings are better, lighter and faster to set up. (Photo courtesy Yakima)



Caridi agrees that seeing is believing for many adventure travelers.

"Nothing beats a demo, so keeping a tent on your floor will go a long way," he says. "Beyond that, I'm always surprised by how few accessories I see alongside tents. Large-footprint items like awnings are obviously tough to keep in stock, but smaller things like string lights, ladder padding, camp blankets and gear nets are all fairly inexpensive add-ons with great shop margins. Some people will wait and order these later, but if you have them at the point of sale, it's a great opportunity to capture the sale at the time of purchase. We're seeing a roughly 20% take rate on most of our accessories when they're available right at checkout." **TS**

Lightweight models allow installation on many vehicle types. (Photo courtesy Thule)



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Learn what there is to know about the lift kit market and then start asking customers for their business. (Photo courtesy Rancho Suspension and Shocks)

Q&A Lifts & Leveling Kits, PT2

Addressing buying trends, common misconceptions & hot new products in an elevated market.

BY JEF WHITE

Editor's note: This article is the second in a two-part series highlighting the latest trends in the lifts and leveling kits market. Part 1, featuring insights from a different batch of industry suppliers, appeared in the June 2026 issue of *THE SHOP*.

There's a lot for shops to like when it comes to offering lifts and leveling kits. It starts with strong demand from a variety of truck, van and SUV owners—everyone from off-roaders and overlanders to those simply looking for appearance upgrades with larger wheels and tires.

The fertile market has attracted a high number of manufacturers and system options, meaning a little education goes a long way when seeking out the perfect setup for each application.

Suppliers are here with answers to the big questions facing salespeople and installers, from market trends and common misconceptions to hot new products.

Add it all up and your shop can become the local expert vehicle owners turn to when they're looking to elevate their 4x4 experience.

ARE LIFTS AND LEVELING KITS A WORTHWHILE CATEGORY FOR AFTERMARKET SHOPS?



Lifts and leveling kits are attractive product offerings for shops for a variety of reasons. Shane McCormick, senior sales manager—specialty markets for Rancho Suspension and Shocks, a DRiV brand, lists three:

1. Ease of installation
2. Additional add-on sales such as tires, wheels and running boards
3. Few comebacks to the shop

The systems are proven favorites of off-roaders, overlanders and pickup fans, says Scott Zindroski, Camburg product manager for Camburg Engineering, a MagnaFlow Group company.

"Look at what the OEMs are doing with the Raptor and TRD Pro platforms—they're now doing what we (the aftermarket) have been doing for close to 30 years," he says. "Truck and SUV enthusiasts want to improve what they have and customize it to their needs—whether it's a daily driver, an overland build to take the family camping or just a vehicle to hit the trails and open desert on the weekends. The demand for quality

off-road suspension kits is only growing.”

That passion for off-road adventures is expected to continue, adds Brad Scott, director of sales – LVA/rec/snow/solar, for Gabriel Ride Control.

“Given the massive consumer shift toward pickup trucks, shops can expect strong market performance in this product category, with an excellent opportunity to upsell complementary upgrades and also maximize service revenue,” he says.

IS THE MARKET EVOLVING?



The suspension market continues to grow and evolve every year, says Blake Allen, territory sales manager for Superlift, a RealTruck brand.

“Shops that specialize in suspension kits know that, to stay on top, you must keep your eyes on the new innovations in the industry and lean on the brands that have built their name on quality,” he explains.

“Providing quality products and excellent service to your customers does more for your image in your community than anything else. The shops thriving in this space are almost never the cheapest or the ones that will say ‘yes’ to every request. They are shops that let the quality of their work speak for itself.”

The continued popularity of off-road-targeted vehicles keeps the market strong.

“In our segment, look at Jeep Wranglers and Gladiators,” says Brian Shephard, marketing director for RockJock 4x4 by John Currie. “How often do you see one that’s stock? Jeeps are gadget magnets, whether they ever go off-road or not. Most of them get lifted, with big tires and fancy shocks. As long as they keep making Jeeps, we are optimistic that lift kit sales will only continue to trend upward in sales as more vehicles are produced.”

The systems also make dreams of adventure a reality.

“Lift kits allow customers to go further with their vehicles, from adding accessories

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The added capabilities that come from quality lift kits allow adventurers to do more with their vehicles. (Photo courtesy ARB USA)



LIFTS & LEVELING KITS

■ HOT PRODUCTS:

BP-51 Remote Reservoir Internal Bypass Shock Absorber Range

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Fully adaptable damping through 10 rebound levels and compression adjustment to suit driving styles; can be adjusted while on the vehicle, allowing for fine-tuning based on load and trip requirements.

ARB USA

*Moea Theroux
Marketing Manager*

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** 3- to 4-inch Jeep Suspension and QuickLift Struts 1-1/2- to 2-1/2-inch Leveling Kit

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Fitment, performance and adjustability with RS9000XL shocks.

*Rancho Suspension and Shocks
A DRiV Brand*

*Shane McCormick, Senior Sales
Manager – Specialty Markets*

■ HOT PRODUCTS:

Performance Suspension Systems

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Starting with Camburg tubular or billet upper control arms and combining with various 2.5 front coil-overs and 2.5 rear shocks, complete packages can be created that best match a customer's planned usage and meet their needs and budget.

*Camburg Engineering
A MagnaFlow Group Company
Scott Zindroski
Camburg Product Manager*

■ HOT PRODUCTS:

Gabriel 2-Inch Leveling Assemblies

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Struts include preloaded coil spring and come fully assembled for fast, safe installation; tested in labs and on-road for performance and durability; G-Force Technology provides on-demand control, stability and comfort on- or off-road.

Gabriel Ride Control

*Brad Scott, Director of Sales –
LVA/Rec/Snow/Solar*

■ HOT PRODUCTS:

Johnny Joint Suspension Systems for Jeep JL/JL Wrangler

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Systems engineered as completely new projects for specific JL drive-trains; all kits, from base to deluxe models, can be installed with basic tools; higher-level kits include all eight control arms and both front and rear track bars.

*RockJock 4x4 by John Currie
Brian Shephard
Marketing Director*

■ HOT PRODUCTS:

Superlift Edition KING Kits

■ FEATURES & BENEFITS:

Premium product line featuring a precision-engineered lift system with specifically valved, matched shocks; King Shocks front coil overs and rear shocks include external reservoirs and are both easily adjustable with the simple twist of a knob.

*Superlift, A RealTruck Brand
Blake Allen
Territory Sales Manager*

like campers and rooftop tents to increasing capability," says Moea Theroux, marketing manager for ARB USA. "As customers look to carry more and go farther, lift kits have become an essential part of the vehicle build and accessory purchasing process."

ARE INSTALLATIONS COMPLICATED?



While some lift kits can be complex and time-intensive to install, others are built with maximum efficiency in mind, says McCormick.

"The QuickLift product line is designed to simplify the process. It features an easy bolt-on installation and comes as a complete solution with application-specific coil springs and an upper mounting plate included. The QuickLift product line provides an additional 1- to 2.5-inches of lift, allowing for larger tires and improved ground clearance."

DOES ONE SIZE FIT ALL?



Today's unique vehicles require specialized solutions designed for their unique needs and capabilities.

"You can't just buy a simple lift kit and expect the vehicle to sit right or drive right when it's done," says Shephard. "If you install a kit designed for a 2.0T 4-cylinder Jeep on a 392 Hemi Jeep, it's not going to work. With all coil spring vehicles, if a lift kit not designed for the drivetrain is installed, they are very prone to a lean or the expected lift amount not being achieved."

Sometimes, shops must reeducate customers who come in with incorrect information.

"Some consumers believe that any basic 'puck' spacer kit will work," says Scott. "They do not realize that low-tech coil spring spacers create a vastly different ride than high-quality replacement coils and longer-travel shocks, due to the altered suspension angles that pucks don't address."

ARE MOST LIFT KIT CUSTOMERS SHOPPING ON PRICE ALONE?



Lift kits can prompt add-on sales opportunities including wheels, tires, running boards and more. (Photo courtesy Rancho Suspension and Shocks)



Shops can expect strong market performance and the opportunity to upsell complementary upgrades. (Image courtesy Gabriel Ride Control)

A common mistake made by shops is quoting the cheapest option for the customer's goals first, even at the risk of lower quality, says Allen.

"It's important to understand what the customer's goals are with their build and how the vehicle will be used to make an accurate assessment," he notes. "Sometimes this may lead back to a more cost-effective option, or it could lead to a more involved,

all-encompassing build to meet their needs. Expert guidance and knowledge of the industry instill confidence in your customers and bring them and their circle of influence back to you."

Zindroski cautions against believing all kits are the same.

"You get what you pay for," he says. "Camburg products fall into the mid- and higher-cost levels, but it's because we're

using much higher-quality components and features. Selling and installing cheaper, lower-quality parts typically leads to dealing with issues down the road or losing a customer that wasn't happy with the kit over the long term."

Quality systems offer real-world benefits. "Lift kits are not just about looks or clearance," says Theroux. "Suspension upgrades can help your vehicle handle additional

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The demand for quality off-road suspension kits is only growing. (Photos courtesy Camburg Engineering)



weight in harsh off-road applications, maintaining or improving the stock driving characteristics.”

CAN SHOPS ALIGN WITH QUALITY MANUFACTURERS TO UNDERSTAND PRODUCT PERFORMANCE AND CREATE TARGETED SOLUTIONS?



Zindroski recommends shops align with respected suspension companies, with the understanding that not all clients are the same.

“Customers today are all about features and options and want something that improves the ride and handling as soon as they have a kit installed,” he reveals. “If their budget allows for it, they want adjustable shocks so they can tune the ride softer for everyday driving and then firm it up when they hit the dirt or are loaded down or towing. Selling high-quality parts keeps your customers happy and coming back year after year, along with their friends.”

Some enthusiasts don’t need top-of-the-line kits to meet their planned vehicle usage, says Shephard from RockJock 4x4

by John Currie. “Observe the customer’s end-goal needs. Different levels of lift kits are available, so as to not give sticker shock to a customer who simply wants to lift a vehicle and put big tires on it and look cool driving around. That customer does not need a top-level rock crawling kit—or its associated price tag.”

IS A WELL-INFORMED SHOP READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?



McCormick from Rancho recommends learning the category and then jumping in with both feet.

“Familiarize yourself with the product and lift kits you want to sell and, most importantly, ask for the business,” he says.

The next step is understanding each cus-



Top shops let the quality of their work speak for itself. (Photo courtesy Superlift Suspension Systems)

tomers’ unique goals, says Theroux from ARB USA.

“Pay attention to the accessories going on a vehicle,” she says. “If a customer is looking to add a winch or bumper, they should be considering a suspension system like our



Jeep owners love to accessorize, with wheels, tires and other accessories coming on the heels of an aftermarket lift kit. (Photos courtesy RockJock 4x4 by John Currie)

BP-51 suspension kits to effectively handle the extra constant weight and maintain or improve ride quality.”

Allen from Superlift believes that offering quality products and service and understanding your customers’ wants and needs are the most important factors in organically growing lift kit business through word of mouth.

“Outside of that, use all the tools available to you,” he adds. “Social media,

in-person truck and Jeep meets and car club events are all places where your customers are spending time. Being an active member of the truck and off-road community in your area keeps your business at the front of people’s minds when they need something.”

Those tools can also include dedicated suspension packages that are proven to work as a cohesive unit, says Scott from Gabriel Ride Control.

“The easiest and best way for shops to increase their leveling kit-related sales is to create a bundle that includes the leveling kit, installation and the required wheel alignment. At their discretion, they can also include an optional larger wheel and tire package to maximize the average job total,” he suggests. “Another valuable tip is to show before-and-after visuals of side-profile truck photos using point-of-purchase displays and social media posts.” **TS**



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Succeeding in the Wraps Marketplace

Two installers show how quality products & attention to detail is always a winning formula.

Editor's note: The following pair of case studies were provided by Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions as examples of profit paths in the wraps and graphics market.

Filling a 'Weird Little Niche' With Big-Vehicle Wraps

Sean Flanagan, the owner of Always A Good Sign, knows about passion, commitment and challenge.

In his youth, it was soccer. He honed both his footwork and his work ethic in his backyard, played in travel leagues and won a state championship in high school. Flanagan went on to play at Lock Haven University, then professionally with teams in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

After hanging up his cleats, Flanagan devoted his energy to multiple careers: marketing for a travel company, working as a casino host and selling pharmaceuticals.

In 2008, he partnered with his father to cofound Always A Good Sign.

The duo set up shop in a 2,100-square-foot space in southern New Jersey and soon joined the Signworld community, which helped them find the equipment and other necessities required to run a bustling sign shop. Signworld continues to be a resource—providing support, buying power and networking opportunities while allowing Always A Good Sign to work independently.

TELEVISION DEBUT

The shop's first job, a nonpaying gig, was for the TV show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." Flanagan and his father provided site signage for one of the show's episodes, including those posted around the construction set and surrounding area. The project helped the company get its name out into the marketplace and associate with a nationally recognized brand.

Flanagan always envisioned the business focusing on vehicles. So, as Always A

Always A Good Sign vehicle wrap shop in West Berlin, New Jersey, has found success tackling large projects including dump trucks, garbage trucks, oversized food trucks, ambulances and other nonstandard vehicles. (Photos courtesy Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions)

Good Sign (alwaysagoodsign.com) grew, it shifted its focus from general signage to vehicle wraps. Today, the company operates out of a 4,200-square-foot building in West Berlin, New Jersey, with a team of 11 employees.

It's known for tackling large, complex wrapping projects such as municipal vehicles, dump trucks, garbage trucks, ambulances, oversized food trucks and other nonstandard vehicles.

"We've just gotten into this weird little niche," says Flanagan. "We're the ones who do the oversized, challenging vehicles. They're projects that really test your mind, like the dump truck with the oddly shaped fenders, or the home services van with the big, curved hood."



It's been a winning strategy. Always A Good Sign's major auto wrapping accounts include a regional hospital system with an ambulance and support fleet of more than 150 vehicles, a food truck provider requiring 50-60 wraps annually, and other specialized fleets and agency vehicles in multiple states.

Big jobs like these put the shop's printing equipment to the test. The company uses two Epson printers and two Graphtec cutters to help optimize its print-then-cut workflow.

Flanagan and the team also rely on Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions. Every vehicle project (weird or not) uses Avery Dennison MPI 1105 EZRS Digital Wrapping Film that features unique Easy Apply technology with easy repositionability and controlled initial tack.

For a team of installers taking on a super-sized food truck, for instance, that ease of use is crucial for getting work done efficiently and accurately.

"We're working with 20- to 30-foot panels sometimes," says Flanagan, "and the initial tack of the MPI 1105 is really nice because it means the film doesn't 'suck in' and tack to the truck right away. So, we can move it if we have to, or we can pull it back without any issues."

Always A Good Sign usually pairs MPI 1105 with Avery Dennison DOL 1360Z gloss or DOL 1380Z matte overlaminate. The high-performance materials conform easily and ensure graphics are protected with a choice of finishes ideal for signage, vehicle and fleet applications.

A COMMITMENT TO TRAINING

Commercial fleet projects make up about 70% of Always A Good Sign's work. Most of the remaining 30% is signage. The formula generates recurring revenue streams from fleet churn, accident repair and new vehicle purchases.

"Customers are passionate about their

vehicles," Flanagan says, "so it's always cool to see how excited they are when the finished product is out on the road, and then to talk to them and hear about what a great return on investment wrapping is."

Flanagan has carried the Avery Dennison Certified Wrap Installer (CWI) designation since 2015. He's taken advanced CWI classes multiple times and shares what he learns with his team.

He considers Avery Dennison trainers and representatives as key partners to his business, looking to them for technical support, product guidance and training resources that help the shop execute complex work consistently.

"I've probably gone through most of their training classes," says Flanagan, "and I've had a couple of our employees go through some of them as well. It's always a huge asset for me to be able to bring tips and tricks back to the guys in the shop, show them easier ways to work on a certain panel or a certain part of a vehicle, or tell them about a new tool that they have access to. Avery Dennison's certification is the hardest to earn. They offer some of the best training classes, thanks to the people, the facilities and everything else they use."

Flanagan also credits the classes for their networking value. Getting to know and trust installers around the country has been particularly helpful, as Always A Good Sign does a healthy share of business outside of the Garden State.

"Building those relationships across the country is so important for our business," he says. "While we may be in New Jersey, not all of our work is in New Jersey. So, if we have a job in another state, we have that network of CWI installers we can reach out

WRAPS & FILMS

NEW WRAPPING FILM COLORS

Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions, Mentor, Ohio, has debuted five new colors in its flagship Supreme Wrapping Film color change vehicle wrapping film product line. The strategic color additions provide installers with high-demand finishes that bridge the gap between luxury aesthetics and the reliable, professional-grade performance of its SW900 series.

All five films deliver easy conformability. The new additions to the Avery Dennison portfolio, described by the company, include:

- **Gloss Ivory** – A sophisticated light beige that redefines “quiet luxury”
- **Gloss Sand Dune** – A timeless, medium beige designed to mirror modern OEM paint finishes
- **Satin Metallic Cyber Green** – An electric finish that captures light across every curve with a smooth, metallic glow
- **Matte Metallic Oasis Blue** – A serene turquoise blue that evokes ultimate tranquility
- **Gloss Metallic Gothic Rose** – A deep, moody rose with a heavy metallic flake for a premium custom-paint appearance

GLOSS PAINT PROTECTION FILM

3M Commercial Solutions, Saint Paul, Minnesota, presents its Series 150 Gloss Paint Protection Film, designed to shield paint against rocks, keys, salt, bugs and the elements. The clear PPF is designed to be professionally applied to a vehicle’s vulnerable areas including the hood, bumpers, fenders, mirror backs, door edges, trunk ledges, roofs and rocker panels.

Highlighted features include:

- High stain resistance for a low-maintenance finish
- High clarity with lower orange peel to help maintain the paint’s brilliance
- Virtually invisible protection
- Self-healing technology allows minor scratches to disappear
- Gloss finish

(Photos courtesy Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions)



(Photo courtesy 3M)



to and get assistance from. And our level of trust in that CWI is going to be a lot higher than in some mom-and-pop shop we don't know anything about.”

LEARN & NETWORK

Continuous learning and networking are also central to Flanagan’s advice to new installers. He recommends not only in-person training experiences such as Avery Dennison CWI, but online platforms such as the Wrap Institute and Wrap IQ.

He also encourages new installers to pursue projects that truly interest them, even if they do seem “weird” at first.

Reflecting on his own, nearly two-decade career in the industry, Flanagan emphasizes his passion for the business.

“I feel like a big kid who just plays with stickers all day—oversize stickers,” he says. “It’s fun. I love coming to work every day. You’ve got to be passionate about what you do. If you’re not, don’t do it.”

Oklahoma’s Lettering Express Focuses On Its Best Qualities

Spend a few minutes chatting with Charlie Trujillo and you might come away with the impression that he’s just a laid-back, go-with-the-flow kind of guy.

After all, he might tell you about how he spent some of his formative years living the life of a free-spirited snowboarder in Colorado. Or, he might tell you about how he started a job at the business he’d eventually lead and met the woman he’d eventually marry all in a single morning.

But probe a bit deeper and you’d realize that there’s even more going on here. In fact, Trujillo’s one of the most sought-after vehicle wrappers in the country. He’s part of the Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions training team, championing fundamentals while doing highly visible work in a media environment that often celebrates flashiness.

FAMILY FOUNDATION

Trujillo’s start in the industry was a bit roundabout. His parents, Rich and Toyah Braun, founded Lettering Express in 1988.

Operating before the era of digital printing, the Oklahoma City-based business produced die-cut vinyl lettering for local clientele.

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Owner of Lettering Express in Oklahoma City and an Avery Dennison Certified Wrap Installer (CWI), Charlie Trujillo's business advice is to learn the fundamentals and focus on the things you do exceptionally well. (Photos courtesy Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions)

As a teen, Charlie helped out in the shop on weekends and afternoons. It gave him his first taste of the business.

His parents sold Lettering Express in 2006 when Trujillo was a high school senior. After graduating, he made his way to Breckenridge to shred the slopes, work in a sandwich shop and have fun. But, when he'd finally had enough of the snowboard lifestyle, Trujillo decided to return to Oklahoma. His mom suggested asking their former company's new owner, Michael Lombardi, for a job.

It turned out to be a fateful suggestion. Trujillo was hired. Then, during his first-day-on-the-job orientation, he met Jill—Lombardi's daughter—working on the shop floor. They married three years later.

According to Trujillo, several Lettering

Express employees over the years have made a love connection at work. (Maybe something's in the air?) Fast-forward to 2015, and Charlie and Jill have been running the business since Lombardi retired.

TAKING OKLAHOMA CITY TO THE WORLD

Around the time Charlie and Jill moved into leadership positions at Lettering Express, Facebook had surpassed 1 billion daily active users, Instagram had launched and the rapid adoption of high-speed Internet access meant people could easily watch video content on YouTube and other sites. A popular content niche was (and still is) short videos showcasing creative manual work. This includes vinyl wrapping.



It all may have been just a fortunate coincidence. But to Trujillo, it was a sign that the fledgling field of vinyl wrapping was about to explode. He saw a potential opportunity for his career and business. So, he decided to act.

"Around 2014-15, social media really started changing things," he says. "The global connection really started. The world suddenly felt a lot smaller. It also felt more attainable for a small shop in Oklahoma to be recognized on a global level. And we also saw the way that the algorithms were pushing color change and restyling wraps, and really glamorizing that stuff. I wanted to be part of what was happening; part of that trend. So, I started getting certifications with Avery Dennison."

Trujillo became an Avery Dennison Certified Wrap Installer (CWI) in 2015. His manufacturer training taught him from the get-go that executing a quality vehicle wrap meant focusing on fundamentals that don't typically get boosted by the algorithms: preparation, surface management, material control, sequencing and patience with the complex geometries of many modern vehicles. These fundamentals became the foundation of Trujillo's approach to the craft.

The attention to detail paid off. With an Avery Dennison CWI and other manufacturer certifications under his belt, Trujillo was invited to show off his talents in live demos at the SEMA Show and other major industry gatherings. He also took part in timed wrap-off competitions and collaborated with material distributors to test wrap films.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

The high-profile appearances confirmed Trujillo's growing reputation, as installers are typically invited to participate based on



their technical credibility, consistency and peer recognition. They also highlighted his ability to pass on his knowledge.

"Around 2021, Avery Dennison brought me on to be a trainer for North America," says Trujillo. "At the time, they had three trainers. So, I ended up being the fourth. I already had a great relationship with Avery Dennison. But it just really blossomed and developed from there."

Since then, Trujillo's led approximately 20 Avery Dennison classes per year. A class holds up to 14 students, so he's trained thousands of installers.

His most gratifying moments, he says, are when students who had been making subtle technical mistakes discover the value of focusing on the fundamentals.

"The biggest thing I enjoy is seeing that light bulb go off in the student's face," Trujillo says. "It's that moment when they realize, 'Oh my goodness, I've been doing this wrong for so long. This class was really worth it.'"

Lettering Express (letteringexpress.com) has evolved alongside Trujillo's career. He and Jill have grown the company by discovering and doubling-down on what their team does exceptionally well: branded fleet wraps, vehicle color change and restyling, signage, merch and apparel.

"Over the years, I've always asked the question, 'If we have 20 things on the menu, how many of those things are we really good at and are really valued by the

customer?'" Trujillo asks. "We realized that we maybe could do all of those 20 things at a great level, but were only exceptional at maybe six or seven of them. So, basically, we leaned into those six or seven services and, over time, got rid of the rest. We became hyperfocused on what we like to do and do exceptionally well, what makes us money and what the customer really enjoys and wants."

The specialization has involved reducing staff by more than half since 2019. Trujillo stresses that the reduction has happened through natural attrition, as team members moved on to other opportunities.

He also notes that today's team—focused on fewer, higher-impact services—is driving the same revenue as the larger team of the past.

Trujillo's advice for those starting out? Real education is crucial.

"A lot of what's on social media is just smoke and mirrors," he says. "They (wrapping influencers) move too fast. It's like if they were going up flights of stairs, they'd be going from floor one to floor four without stopping at two and three. It's just not possible."

The process, he believes, takes time.

"Get yourself into a class by Avery Dennison or any other major manufacturer. Then put your head down and don't try to conquer the world overnight. Maybe you can conquer your neighborhood, but let's do it in small bites." **TS**

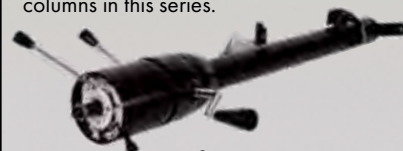


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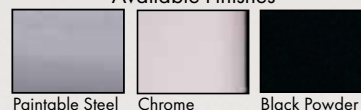
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Toyota ADAS-Compatible Aftermarket Bumpers

Fab Fours, Lancaster, South Carolina, presents its ADAS-Compatible Aftermarket Bumpers featuring SmartSteel technology. Designed to ensure seamless integration with OEM safety features

such as front-facing cameras, lane-keeping assist, automatic emergency braking and adaptive cruise control, SmartSteel bumpers are currently available for 2025-up Toyota 4Runner and the 2024-up Toyota Tacoma models.

Air System Upgrade Kits

Air Lift Performance, Lansing, Michigan, presents new ALP4 Upgrade Kits, now available in 1/4- and 3/8-inch configurations. Offering a path to the brand's latest air management technology, the kits are designed as a direct upgrade for Air Lift Performance 3P and 3H systems, allowing users to transition to the ALP4 platform without replacing their entire setup. At the core of the kits is a compact, all-in-one manifold integrating the ECU, solenoids and pressure sensors into an aluminum housing with advanced ride adjustment algorithms and adaptive learning.



Jeep Chassis System

RōMR Suspension, Plymouth, Michigan, the suspension brand of **Steer Smarts**, presents the Summit Chassis System, a fully integrated, purpose-engineered chassis solution for Jeep Wrangler and Gladiator models. The system harmonizes springs, shocks, steering components, track bars, sway bars and geometry-correcting chassis elements to transform the driving experience from pavement to peak. The system is offered in 2.5- and 3.5-inch configurations and includes **Bilstein** shocks.



Truck Cap With Windows

Overland Vehicle Systems (OVS), Santa Fe Springs, California, presents its Expedition Truck Cap with Windows. The new Expedition Cap variant combines strength, convenience and enhanced visibility with customization options. Highlights include full-window wing doors and rear hatch, tempered glass front and rear windows, a slider for airflow, third brake light, heavy-duty wing doors with gas assist struts, marine-grade stainless steel hardware, no-drill clamping system, optional crossbars and MOLLE/PALS channels and panels.



ProMaster Front Suspension Enhancement

Timbren Industries, Whitby, Ontario, presents its SES Suspension Enhancement Kit, designed for the front suspension of 2015-25 Ram ProMaster vans. Created to eliminate side-to-side sway and roll to improve handling, safety and stability for camper van owners and commercial operators, the system features Aeon rubber springs. The easy, bolt-on upgrade enhances ride quality under load, ensuring a smoother, more controlled driving experience.



Swing-Away Rack

Kuat Racks, Springfield, Missouri, presents the Pivot XD, a heavy-duty, swing-away, hitch-mounted rack engineered for reliability and stability. A forged latch ensures exceptional rigidity, and the conical ball bearing pivot creates a smooth, open-ended experience under heavy loads. Features include a 350-pound maximum load capacity and easy access to trunks or tailgates by swinging the loaded rack 90 or 120 degrees.



Simulated Beadlock Ring Wheels

Dirty Life Wheels, Ontario, California, a brand of **The Wheel Group**, presents its Dual Tek 9317 DT-3 wheels featuring a simulated beadlock ring. Available in 17x9 sizes, the wheels' Dual-Tek technology allows many uses. The wheels are designed to run as a simulated beadlock or convert to a true beadlock, giving users the flexibility to choose a setup that fits their build. Satin black and machined finishes are available.



Rooftop Camper

Mammoth Overland, Woodinville, Washington, a subsidiary of **Vashon Aircraft**, presents its SKL Rooftop Camper. Featuring a front door that folds up from the floor, cutting deployment time down to as little as 30 seconds, the painted high-strength aluminum camper is 89 inches long, 59 inches wide and 18 inches tall, with an interior width in between a queen and a full-size mattress. Its R5 insulation rating keeps campers comfortable in any season, it is prewired for solar panels and an optional roof rack can hold up to 500 pounds of gear. **TS**

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PERFORMANCE

Radford Racing p. 42 Performance Products p. 44

Road Racing Rundown

As technology has become more accessible, the road racing market has grown increasingly data-driven—even at the grassroots level. (Photo courtesy Yokohama)



Following the twists & turns of this fast-paced market.

BY JOHN CAROLLO

In a world where every second counts, it's easy to fall behind in the fast-paced realm of road racing.

New series and classes, updated vehicles and product innovations all keep the market moving forward.

Successful speed shops know they must stay one step ahead of customers with knowledgeable advice, creative product combinations and a passion for performance. Successful partnerships quickly build long-term relationships.

Observations from industry suppliers help identify market trends, best practices and hot new parts to help shop owners follow the twists and turns of this face-paced motor-sports favorite.

FASTER EVERY YEAR

Speed shops are finding success in the road racing market, thanks to a growing driver base and vehicle-based innovations.

"Track-specific cars get faster every year thanks to continually advancing technology that is accessible to more racers, so keeping pace with braking components and products is key for a winning combination," says David Brzozowski, motorsports manager at Wilwood Engineering. "AI is also having a major impact by helping drivers at every level better understand vehicle performance—provided they ask the right questions."

Like most automotive aftermarket clients, track-day competitors seemingly want it all.

"Today's road racing customer is building more power than ever before while expecting OE-like drivability," says Rich Barsamian, vice president of sales and marketing for Advanced Clutch Technology (ACT). "Racers want components that can withstand repeated heat cycles, deliver consistent lap times and remain reliable throughout an entire race weekend. We've also seen more enthusiasts building dual-purpose street and track vehicles, increasing demand for products that perform equally well on the street and at the racetrack."

It's no surprise that, here in the Digital Age, it takes more than just a gut feeling for the market to stay ahead.

"As technology has become more

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ROAD RACING PRODUCTS

■ **HOT PRODUCTS:** Modular Twin Disc (Mod-Twin) Clutch Kits

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**

Kits combine high torque capacity with smooth engagement, low rotational inertia and improved pedal feel; modular design allows racers to choose between organic street discs or cerametallic race discs, along with sprung or rigid Mono-Drive hubs.

Advanced Clutch Technology

Rich Barsamian

Vice President of Sales & Marketing

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**

XR Race-Only Brake Fluid

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**

True race-only fluid with no DOT specification; high boiling point; improved pedal feel; pairs well with the company's Burnished Spec37 rotors.

Wilwood Engineering

David Brzozowski

Motorsports Manager

■ **HOT PRODUCT:**

Yokohama ADVAN A052 Tire

■ **FEATURES & BENEFITS:**

Sought-after application among road racing, track day and Time Attack enthusiasts; dry-grip performance and proven ability to deliver fast lap times; quick warm-up characteristics for immediate performance, consistent handling and driver confidence.

Yokohama

Patricia Wall

Senior Manager of Motorsports

accessible, the road racing market has grown increasingly data-driven—even at the grass-roots level,” reveals Patricia Wall, senior manager of motorsports for Yokohama. “Not long ago, advanced vehicle and tire simulations were largely limited to factory-backed teams with significant resources. Today, it’s common for club racers and track-day enthusiasts to request tire models so they can incorporate accurate tire data into their own simulation and vehicle setup programs.”

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

Hard work early in projects pays off with loyalty (and winning!) down the road.

“Road racing customers are typically very knowledgeable and performance-focused. They value technical expertise and quality recommendations over simply finding the lowest price,” says Barsamian. “Shops that



Today's road racing customer is building more power than ever before, while often also expecting OE-like drivability. (Photo courtesy Advanced Clutch Technology)

understand the customer's goals and recommend the correct clutch system often build long-term relationships that lead to repeat business, referrals and additional performance upgrades.”

And those knowledgeable customers are often the ones that are most involved with the overall plan for their vehicles.

“Road racing customers tend to be highly engaged enthusiasts who invest continuously in their vehicles,” Wall notes. “As a result, they often generate repeat business that extends well beyond race tires. In my experience, a meaningful interaction around a single tire purchase can be the foundation for a long-term customer relationship and additional future sales.”

The myriad opportunities that now exist require a learning curve—for drivers and speed shops.

“Road racing includes many classes and is typically a close-knit community, so understanding the vehicles and classes active in your area helps customers feel confident they are talking to the right people and benefits both parties,” says Brzozowski.

SALES AROUND EVERY CORNER

Successful shops look to match the passion and competitive fire of road racing customers.

“Become a technical resource, not just a tire supplier. Customers value recommendations on tire selection, fitment, inflation pressures, alignment settings and track-specific setups,” says Wall from Yokohama. “Shops that provide personable, knowledgeable guidance and support often earn stronger customer loyalty and more repeat business.”

Wilwood's Brzozowski recommends researching the key racing organizations in your area and learning the rules and regulations associated with specific classes.

“That way, you will be able to communicate with customers, better understand their needs and ask informed questions,” he explains. “If they have questions in return and you do not know the answers, be honest and let them know you will do some research to get them answered correctly and get back to them shortly, as no one is expected to know everything.”

Finally, looking at road racing projects as a whole instead of piece by piece can help reveal winning combinations.

“Take the time to understand the customer's complete vehicle combination instead of simply asking about horsepower,” says Barsamian from Advanced Clutch Technology. “Vehicle weight, tire selection, intended use, transmission type, driving style and future power goals all influence clutch selection. Recommending the right clutch the first time builds confidence, minimizes returns and creates loyal customers who will come back for future performance upgrades.” **TS**



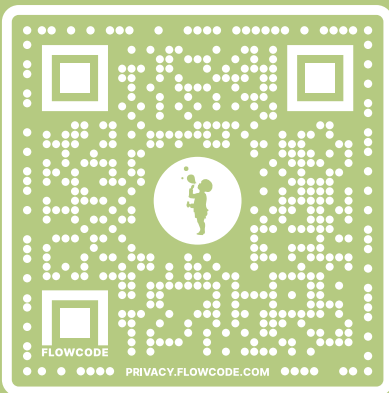
Track cars get faster every year, thanks to continually advancing technology that is accessible to more racers. (Photo courtesy Wilwood Engineering)



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P1 Motor Club Unveils 3-Mile Treasure Coast Circuit

Aurora Straus, P1 Motor Club founding partner and professional driver, recently introduced the facility's new 3-mile Treasure Coast Circuit. (Photos courtesy P1 Motor Club)

P1 Motor Club recently completed its new 3-mile Treasure Coast Circuit, the first of multiple race circuits set to debut at America's most expansive private motor club. Located on 650 acres in Port St. Lucie, Florida, P1 will have more than 9 miles of purpose-built race surfaces, trackside real estate ownership and fully integrated family country-club living.

"P1 is the most ambitious greenfield motorsports project in recent history, and we have over 260 members before we've formally opened our doors," says Aurora Straus, P1 Motor Club founding partner and professional driver. "We have two 'true North Stars.' First, great motor clubs are built by racers, not developers. We're building the best modern racetracks in the world, and our completely unique designs came from a consortium of racers—from the amateur to the ex-F1 level—all providing feedback to our track designers. It helps that our team is full of gearheads! Second, we are a place you escape to with your family, not from them. I'm a pro driver now, but I started off as a girl who wanted to camp at racetracks with her dad."

The new Treasure Coast circuit features three unique driving configurations with the West and East portions intentionally designed to operate simultaneously. It includes one of only two FIA-grade bridges in the world, and members and guests will have access to a 1,110-foot pit lane, large paddock and fueling area.

Treasure Coast will be joined by another new track called the P1 Circuit, which is a 4.5-mile course designed to FIA Grade 2 standards with three configurations, 22 turns and 100-plus-foot elevation changes including a rapid climb onto a Suzuka-style bridge followed by a dramatic lefthand blind descent.

Alongside the two main tracks, drivers can also enjoy a 1/2-mile rally circuit, a 1/4-mile drift track, a 1-mile karting circuit and slow speed off-road trails.

P1 Motor Club will have country club amenities like a member clubhouse, pool and

sports courts, and running and bike trails. Available to members, but not required for membership, are customizable garage townhomes and homestead-eligible single-family residences.

Luxury trackside residences combine sophisticated architecture with resort living and feature expansive garages, elevated decks and panoramic circuit views. **TS**



Goodwood's Inaugural American Event Coming to Willow Springs



Willow Springs International Raceway has announced its partnership with the Goodwood Road Racing Club of America (GRRC of America), setting the stage for Goodwood's first-ever presence in the United States, with the inaugural American event becoming a recurring cor-

nerstone of the historic California circuit. Best known for flagship events such as the Goodwood Festival of Speed, Goodwood Revival and Goodwood Members' Meeting in England, the partnership represents a defining moment for both institutions, according to officials.

Set to debut in California in 2027, the

GRRC of America will introduce Goodwood to a new audience through exclusive events, curated experiences and an enthusiast community built around a shared passion for motorsport, heritage and automotive culture. The inaugural headline event is scheduled to take place at Willow Springs Raceway in the fall of 2028.

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Goodwood Festival of Speed has launched the Goodwood Road Racing Club of America, marking the English event's first major expansion into the U.S. (Above photo by Jayson Fong/courtesy Goodwood Festival of Speed; page 39 photo courtesy Goodwood Festival of Speed)

"Willow Springs Raceway has always represented an authentic connection between drivers, cars and motorsport history," says Sam Byrne, co-founder of CrossHarbor Capital Partners. "To partner with Goodwood as the home of its first Goodwood Road Racing Club of America flagship event is an extraordinary honor and a testament to the significance of this circuit. Together, we have an opportunity to create something truly special, which celebrates the heritage of motorsport while inspiring a new generation of enthusiasts."

As the oldest permanent road course in the United States, Willow Springs Raceway will host Goodwood's celebrated motorsport community in America.

"The Goodwood Road Racing Club of America will be a club defined by unrivalled access, exclusive events and exceptional shared experiences, delivered with the charm, wit and style for which Goodwood is renowned," says Charles Richmond, Duke of Richmond and Gordon. "With California as our starting point, we aim to honor the automotive history of the United States,



and Willow Springs Raceway is the perfect partner and destination for us to begin this radical journey." **TS**

(Photo courtesy Monterey Sports Car Road Racers)



40 Historic Cars Take Grid at Rolex Monterey Motorsport Reunion

A record-breaking 40 competitors were set to fill the grid in August at the Rolex Monterey Motorsport Reunion at Laguna Seca, California. The Del Monte Trophy Race Group was prepping for a special lineup of historic and priceless race cars doing battle on the track to mark the 75th celebration of the Pebble Beach Road Races.



Bill Hart's 1954 MG Special R2 "Flying Shingle," created by Ken Miles, earned first place in the 1955 Pebble Beach Cup and third place in the Del Monte Trophy Races. (Photo courtesy Monterey Sports Car Road Racers)

Just as at the original races from 1950-56 that navigated around the pines of the Del Monte forest in Monterey, this year's entrants included European sports cars, California Specials and more, with power plants ranging from 1500cc engines to unlimited straight-sixes and V-8s.

The announced participation list included several cars racing for the first time in decades. One of the highlights was Bill Hart's 1954 MG Special R2 "Flying Shingle" created by Ken Miles, which won the Pebble Beach Cup and took third place in the Del Monte Trophy Races at the Pebble Beach Road Races in 1955.

Meanwhile, a 1956 HWM-Chevrolet Stovebolt Special was being shipped in from England to enter the races and Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, thanks to the American Hot Rod Foundation. Bill Pollack gave this car a spirited race in the 1956 Pebble Beach Road Races and British owner Simon Taylor was set to drive it this year.

The full list of 40 cars and drivers that were expected included: 1955 Mistral Special, Wesley Abendroth; 1955 Elva Mk 1, Dennis Adair; 1954 Swartley OSCA Special, Kevin Adair; 1952 Jaguar XK120 OTS, James Alder; 1951 Jaguar XK120, Timothy Barnes; 1953 Porsche 356, Uwe Biegner; 1953 Comet Glasspar Special, Douglas Brower; 1954 Cannon Mk IV, Rick Cannon; 1955 Cleary Devin Crosley Special, Jamie Cleary; 1954 Sutton Jaguar Special, Gary Cox; 1953 Siata 208S, Robert Davis; 1950 Allard J2, Bernard Dervieux; 1954 Porsche Pupilidy Special, Dave Hagan; 1954 MG Special R2 "Flying Shingle," William Hart Sr.; 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 Mk 1, Jonathan Kitchen; 1958 Devin J Special, Jon LeCarner; 1952 MG TD Schiavetti Special, Bill Lyon; 1952 Jaguar XK120, Luca Maciucescu; 1954 Porsche 356, Gregor Magnusson; 1953 Tatum GMC Special, Dave Zurlinden; 1952 Streets Manning Special, Marcus Bicknell; 1951 Barlow Simca Special,

Rob Manson; 1950 Jaguar Parkinson Special, Derek Hill; 1950 MG TD von Neumann Special, Don Pepperdene; 1953 Kurtis 500S Dodge, John Buddenbaum; 1952 Jaguar XK120, Lars Mapstead; 1951 MG TD Supercharged, Kaiden Marouf; 1956 Cooper Bobtail T39, Charles McCabe; 1955 Kurtis Sorrell GMC Special, John Mote Sr.; 1950 Allard K-2, Johnny Mote Jr.; 1955 Triumph TR2, David Nelson; 1955 Jaguar XK140, David Olson; 1954 Warrior Bristol, John Jack Perkins; 1956 AVIA Streamline, Mark Sange; 1953 Denzel, Steve Schmidt; 1955 Hagemann Chrysler Special, Steve Schuler; 1955 Austin Healey 100-4, Walter Sikes; 1956 HWM-Chevrolet Stovebolt Special, Simon Taylor; 1955 Austin Healey 100S, Greg Whitten; 1952 Porsche Glockler Ben Wysard.

The Del Monte Trophy Race group is the class of car that typically races together, defined as primarily front-engined, drum-brake sports cars that would, and could, have raced at Pebble Beach from 1950-56. **TS**



A 1956 HWM-Chevrolet Stovebolt Special was being shipped in from England for this year's races and the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. (Photo courtesy Monterey Sports Car Road Racers)

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Radford Racing School's High-Performance Playground

From drag strips to road courses, the Phoenix-area facility allows enthusiasts to experience motorsports the right way.

TEXT & PHOTOS COURTESY PENNZOIL

Editor's note: As part of its ongoing Long May We Drive campaign, motor oil company Pennzoil recently shared an interview with high-performance partner Radford Racing School to discuss the state of the motorsports industry, ways to develop skilled drivers and how to harness the excitement of the next generation of automotive enthusiasts.

Founded in 1968 and based just outside of Phoenix, the Radford Racing School has long been a legendary hub of driver education and performance training. As the only purpose-built facility in the world where drivers can earn a Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) license in a single session, Radford blends immersive driving experiences with top-tier instruction to help students master the art of vehicle control on and off the track.

With a fleet powered by Pennzoil Ultra Platinum Full Synthetic motor oil and a roster of professional instructors (many with decades of experience), the school welcomes everyone from first-time drivers to elite motorsports professionals. Whether they're learning driving techniques in a skid car or launching a Pennzoil Dodge Challenger SRT Demon 170 down the drag strip, the facility offers personalized training that pushes boundaries in a safe, controlled environment.

In this interview, Radford Racing School shares more about the school's legacy, philosophy and why its relationship with Pennzoil continues to help drive its success.

PENNZOIL: Radford Racing School has been a cornerstone of performance driving education for decades. How has your mission evolved, and what continues to drive your passion today?

RADFORD: The mission, in a way, has almost remained the same. We are teaching people to be better drivers on and off the track. The main focus is to bring them to our purpose-built facility.

The individuals who have come through here range from professional race car drivers to those seeking safer driving conditions on the highway and young drivers wanting to learn more. Helping those audiences—whether it's fulfilling a dream or a need to be a better driver—is our biggest focus.

PENNZOIL: What kind of training does a student experience at Radford, whether they're a total beginner or a seasoned motorsports enthusiast?

RADFORD: That's a great question. If they're a seasoned motorist looking to get into racing, we offer multiday advanced classes with professional instructors.

Our instructors are racers themselves, and most of them have been here for 20 to 30 years. They can break down the fundamentals of car control, including both racing and non-racing aspects, as well as vehicle dynamics.

For less experienced or younger drivers, we use exercises like braking and control. We

even have a skid car that helps simulate loss of control. In that controlled environment, students learn how to correct for oversteer, understeer or sudden loss of traction, so they're prepared for the real world.

PENNZOIL: Radford Racing School has hosted everyone from first-time drivers to elite racing professionals. What makes your facility and instructors uniquely equipped to support such a wide range of skill levels?

RADFORD: Our facility was purpose-built for training, not just for racing. It's a track that incorporates different technical features that simulate real-world racing environments.

We've been at this facility since the early 1990s. The property includes three race-tracks and a drag strip. It's the only purpose-built training facility in the world, making us uniquely suited to train anyone, from first-timers to elite professionals.

PENNZOIL: In recent years, there's been renewed interest in motorsports, especially among younger generations. How is Radford connecting with and inspiring the next wave of driving enthusiasts?

RADFORD: This is an exciting topic, because the industry needs the next generation. Many young people aren't getting their licenses until their 20s, but the popularization of motorsports in movies and gaming

has sparked new interest. At Radford, we offer experiences, not just racing classes. Someone might not want to be a Formula 1 driver, but they can still experience the thrill of driving a real Formula 4 open-wheel car. We also offer a one-day drag racing experience, as well as road course driving and drifting fundamentals.

Movies like “The Fast and the Furious” and “Ford v. Ferrari,” as well as games like “Gran Turismo,” have definitely contributed to this resurgence. We’re here to foster that creativity and interest.

PENNZOIL: Pennzoil powers vehicles across your entire fleet. How has using Pennzoil products supported vehicle performance and long-term reliability, especially under the intense conditions of track driving?

RADFORD: We’re very proud to celebrate our reliance on Pennzoil in our fleet, especially since it can reach up to 115 degrees out here in the Arizona desert.

We run some very demanding courses, and students spend about 80% of their days behind the wheel. The tires, wheels, brakes and engines take a beating, but we’re very proud to share that we haven’t lost an engine due to oil-related circumstances.

PENNZOIL: The Long May We Drive campaign is about celebrating driving passion for years to come. How does that message align with Radford’s approach to education and vehicle preservation?

RADFORD: We love that message. We



The Radford Racing School in Phoenix is a long-time hub of driver education and performance training.

actually have a similar campaign called “Discover Driving.”

Driving is a personal and subjective experience; it means something different to everyone. Long May We Drive is about celebrating that freedom and storytelling. Whether you’re talking about a classic car or a modern vehicle, everyone has a story to tell.

It’s about passing that passion on to future generations. That’s what we believe in, too.

From novice drivers to seasoned pros, Radford Racing School offers a unique and transformational experience rooted in skill, passion and performance. With its blend of real-world training and sensory driving experiences, it’s no wonder that Radford remains the only place in the world where drivers can earn their SCCA license in a single sitting.

Whether you’re looking to perfect your technique, earn your license or embrace the thrill of the drive, Radford Racing School delivers a once-in-a-lifetime experience every time you take the wheel. **TS**



The facility looks to teach everyone, from novices to pros, to be better drivers, on and off the track.




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A/C Cooling Gains

Orbia Fluor & Energy Materials, Waltham, Massachusetts, presents its Klea Edge 444A, a direct replacement for R-1234yf. With proven gains in cooling efficiency in comparison to R-1234yf, R-444A cools the cabin up to four minutes faster for enhanced comfort. R-444A is a more economical alternative to R-1234yf and can be used in any vehicle that currently uses R-1234yf. R-444A may also provide gains in fuel mileage or EV driving range with a minimal-cost retrofit for A/C performance service.

Stingray Supercharger Kits

ProCharger, Lenexa, Kansas, presents an all-new ProCharger Supercharger System for 2025 C8 Corvette Stingray models that brings race-proven centrifugal technology to Chevrolet's midengine sports car. Adding 230-plus hp with a clean, reversible bolt-on design, the systems transform the driving experience of the Stingray without sacrificing reliability. Features include a 100% billet, highly compact and effective air-to-water intercooled intake manifold that fits coupes and convertibles.



Skyline GT-R Clutch Kits

Advanced Clutch Technology (ACT), Lancaster, California, presents its 225mm Mod-Twin Clutch Kits for 1999-2002 Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34) applications. Shown to increase torque up to 232% over stock, highlights include a Mono-Drive hub design

that helps reduce input shaft spline wear, choice of sprung or rigid hub configurations, organic street and 6-puck race disc options, forged aluminum cover assembly and precision-balanced complete assembly. Kits include flywheel, hardware, release bearing, pilot bearing and alignment tool.

Double-Barrel Fuel Rail

S&S Diesel Motorsport, Seymour, Indiana, presents its Double-Barrel Fuel Rail, shown to offer 154% more volume than a stock 6.7L Cummins fuel rail. Designed to maintain pressure throughout the injection event with more injected quantity for the same injection duration, the components deliver improved rail pressure control due to more consistent sensor feedback. Highlights include a modular design for flexibility of feed port, sensor and PRV placement. Made in the USA, they are sold as a bare rail and are not a direct bolt-on replacement.



Lexus Rear Springs

Eibach Inc., Corona, California, presents its PRO-LIFT-KIT HD Heavy-Duty Rear Springs, available for 2024-26 Lexus GX550 SUV applications. Made in the USA, the springs are ideal for modified vehicles equipped with heavier loads on the rear axle. They allow up to 500 pounds of static load over the rear axle, featuring an optimized spring rate that delivers more usable bump travel and vehicle control, both on- and off-road. The increased height allows for larger tires and improved ground clearance.



Vintage Stud Fasteners

ARP, Ventura, California, presents its new Head Stud Kit for 1927-31 Ford Model A 201-ci 4-cylinder engines. The kit includes 8740 chromoly studs rated at 190,000 psi tensile strength, plus parallel ground washers and forged, hardened, CNC machined and polished stainless steel acorn nuts. Five kits for Ford flathead V-8 applications that cover various blocks from 1936-53 with factory or aftermarket cylinder heads are also available. For inline-6 Ford applications (1965-96) ARP offers head stud kits for both 240- and 300-ci engines.



UTV Wheels

Method Race Wheels, Santa Fe Springs, California, presents its purpose-built 416 UTV Bead Grip and 416 UTV Beadlock wheels. Engineered for strength, performance and aggressive styling in demanding off-road environments, the wheels are designed to meet the demands of modern high-performance UTVs with race-proven technologies, higher offsets, Grade 8 beadlock hardware and 1,800-pound load ratings. They are built from solid A356 aluminum with T6 heat treatment for durability and impact resistance.

Sprint Car Race Pedal

Wilwood Racing, Camarillo, California, presents its new XRZ Sprint Car Brake Pedal, featuring a 360-degree adjustable foot pad plate to set the exact angle for driver preference. Features include dual-option pedal ratios to fine-tune pedal feel and achieve consistent performance—a 6:1 ratio for most standard raised-rail frames and a 7:1 ratio often preferred for both winged and nonwinged cars to provide optimal feel, modulation and pedal pressure. A nonskid machine-serviced pad plate delivers enhanced foot traction. The pedals include a black e-coat finish.



Blow Off Valve

Granatelli Motor Sports, Oxnard, California, presents its new Anaconda 64mm Blow Off Valve. Featuring a billet 6061 aluminum design for maximum flow, the BOV includes a standard 76mm/3-inch V-band connection with a weld-on mounting flange. The internal dynamic spring with adjuster shaft allows for a multitude of variable spring rates and pressure settings. A variety of plumbing configurations are possible with the dual 1/8-inch NPT top-mount female fittings, and the valves come in a black anodized finish.



Mustang Supercharger

Roush Performance, Livonia, Michigan, presents its Ford Mustang Supercharger Kit that recently received E.O. approval and is now 50-state legal. Designed for 2026 Mustang GT and Dark Horse models equipped with 5.0L V-8 engines, the systems boost output to 810 hp and 630 pound-feet of torque. Developed in partnership with **Magnuson Superchargers** and featuring an **Eaton TVS R2650** supercharger (inverted) with a front-inlet, front-drive design, the system produces 13 psi of peak boost at 7,500 rpm and reuses the factory dual 80mm throttle bodies. **TS**

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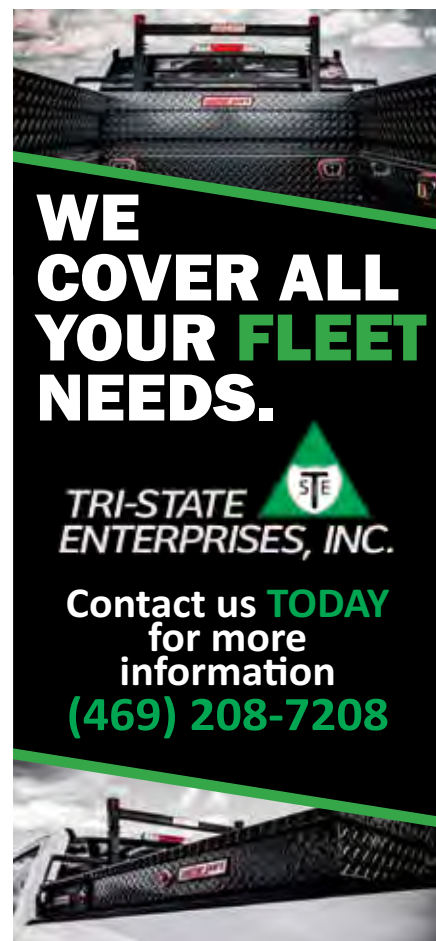


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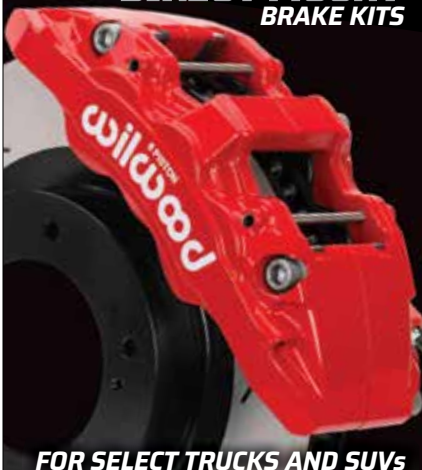
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World's Fair 1965 Mustang Added to National Historic Vehicle Register

A 1965 Ford Mustang convertible from the 1964-65 New York World's Fair is the 38th vehicle added to the National Historic Vehicle Register. (Photos courtesy Hagerty Drivers Foundation)



The Hagerty Drivers Foundation inducted a 1965 Ford Mustang convertible as the 38th vehicle added to the National Historic Vehicle Register (NHVR). The July announcement coincided with the opening of Ford Motor Company's "Driving America Forward" exhibit at Union Station in Washington, D.C., where the car was displayed this summer.

The vehicle, a Wimbledon White convertible, is one of 23 Mustangs that carried visitors through the Ford Pavilion's legendary Magic Skyway attraction at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

Fitted with special undercarriage rigging and pulled along a cable track, the Mustang traveled an estimated 5,000 miles over six months, transporting approximately 40,000 passengers through a Disney-designed journey from prehistoric times into the space age—all without burning a drop of fuel. It is one of only a handful of Magic Skyway Mustangs known to survive, and among the finest restored examples.

"The 1965 Mustang display at the World's Fair wasn't just a car launch—in many ways it was the launch of an entire generation," says McKeel Hagerty, chairman of Hagerty and the president of the board of directors of the Hagerty Drivers Foundation. "This

particular car carried tens of thousands of enthusiasts into the future at the most celebrated exhibition of its era. Its story belongs to all Americans, and there is no better moment to make that official than America's 250th birthday."

The 1965 Ford Mustang, VIN 5F08T383386, is owned by Sam Pack of Texas and was treated to a careful restoration in 2015 that preserved its original components, including its factory 200-ci inline-six engine and 3-speed Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission. The Hagerty Drivers Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving automotive culture and history, was working on completing the full NHVR documentation package, including laser scanning, professional photography and a written historic report in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Historic American Engineering Record (HAER).

The documentation will be permanently archived in the Library of Congress as HAER No. TX-3410 and is underwritten by Ford Motor Company.

"The Mustang is one of America's most beloved automobiles, and this car represents its very birth—unveiled not in a showroom, but on the grandest stage imaginable, carrying tens of thousands of people through

a vision of the future at the New York World's Fair," says Casey Maxon, director of heritage, Hagerty Drivers Foundation. "It was an immediate, undeniable hit. The public didn't just notice the Mustang; they fell in love with it on the spot. As we mark 250 years of American history, it's worth remembering that for nearly half of that history, the automobile has been woven into the fabric of this country's identity. What better way to honor that legacy than with this Mustang convertible, one of the most iconic enthusiast cars ever produced."

The NHVR documents and records vehicles of significant importance in American history and culture. Documentation of each vehicle is a partnership between the Hagerty Drivers Foundation and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Historic American Engineering Record and is permanently archived in the Library of Congress.

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