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November 2, 2009

## AASA asks, Do you Know Your Parts?

By Chris Miller



STEVE HANDSCHUH, AASA

We've all heard the adage that everything has its price. And for low-cost, low-quality aftermarket parts, the cost could be steep and devastating for the entire industry.

This is the message that the Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association (AASA) is urging everyone to consider - namely, Know Your Parts. The association is asking all channel partners to pay attention to the quality of products entering the U.S. aftermarket so high standards can be maintained.

AASA President and COO Steve Handschuh, who spoke at a Monday lunch event, notes there are many positive trends throughout the industry (like an aging vehicle fleet and a slight upswing in miles driven), but the trend toward low-cost, low-quality products is a troubling one, he adds, which could lead to a lowered

confidence in the aftermarket from the driver's perspective.

"We think that's a cause of serious concern," says Handschuh. "We think there's a message that needs to be communicated at every level of the distribution channel, because right now there tends to be a growing trend to try to find this low-cost product all over the world."

As direct importing and line buying replace branded parts, essential services like training, technical support and

cataloging are taken for granted. This could inevitably lead to strong brands being pushed out of the marketplace, along with the add-on services the brands may carry.

FOR A VIDEO EXCERPT, CLICK HERE [[http://workshop.search-autoparts.com/\\_aasa-know-your-parts/video/828938/31710.html](http://workshop.search-autoparts.com/_aasa-know-your-parts/video/828938/31710.html)].

Direct importing also can pose more risk to the resellers, some of whom are held responsible for faulty products.

The call to action is aimed at suppliers, repairers and vehicle owners, among other stakeholders.

Handschuh stresses that the campaign is not aimed at overseas competition. "We think country of origin is no longer the issue it once was," Handschuh says. "The intent is the health and well-being of our industry, and the confidence that the American motoring public has in the independent automotive aftermarket."

"The issue is not where the product is made, but who stands behind it," he continues. "Brands have got to mean something in our industry."

Thanks to a grant from the University of the Aftermarket foundation, a public service announcement was created, and

NASCAR has donated airtime to broadcast the PSA.


At the lunch event, AASA also announced the availability of a new executive summary, "Automotive Aftermarket Channel Partners," which concludes that the most effective driver of sales growth within a product category is product line coverage, and for many surveyed, product knowledge ranks as a higher priority than price.

Other AASA research offerings include the "Morgan Stanley Aftermarket Metrics Report," which will be offered quarterly, and the availability of Vehicles in Operation (VIO) data, which will now be affordable to the small- and medium-sized member companies that previously couldn't afford this information.

Hands Schuh also took time out to honor some members who have reached significant milestones: American Grease Stick Co. is celebrating 75 years of AASA membership; ArvinMeritor and Exide Technologies have been members for 45 years; and celebrating their 25th AASA anniversaries are Four Seasons, Gates Corp., Grote Industries, Mark IV Automotive, Melling Tool Co., Robert Bosch and S&G Tool Aid Corp.



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