



3M Announces Grand Opening of the 3M™ Skills Development Center

New 15,000 square foot training facility is dedicated to upskilling technicians and fostering talent in the collision repair industry

ST. PAUL, Minn., Oct. 11, 2023 – 3M today announced the grand opening of the [3M™ Skills Development Center](#), a new, 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art training facility in St. Paul, Minnesota. The 3M Skills Development Center is dedicated to educating and upskilling technicians across all experience levels on the most updated automotive collision repair and refinishing processes through intensive, hands-on training.

As the industry rapidly evolves, body shops have seen increasingly complex repairs and pressure for higher productivity and faster throughput. The need for qualified collision repair technicians is significant, yet the industry faces challenges in attracting and retaining talent. According to research from [FenderBender](#), 34 percent of shop owners believe finding qualified technicians is the single biggest challenge they face, while [TechForce](#) projects a shortage of over 100,000 collision technicians by 2026. A firm foundation of knowledge, rooted in rich teaching and training, is critical for shops to adapt. Shops with properly trained staff can realize increased profit margins as experienced technicians can complete jobs faster, more efficiently, and with fewer errors.

“With rapidly changing vehicle technology and a shortage of qualified collision repair technicians, investment in training is crucial to today’s aftermarket”, said Dave Gunderson, president, 3M Automotive Aftermarket Division. “Whether technicians are here to deepen their skills, challenge their own experiences or learn from experts to broaden their knowledge of collision repair, we want the 3M Skills Development Center to be the source of continuing education for industry leaders.”

The 3M Skills Development Center further builds on 3M’s commitment to investing in training for skilled trades. The facility complements the company’s suite of online training programs available through the [3M™ Collision Repair Academy](#), offering a dedicated physical space for technicians to experience comprehensive and hands-on training courses led by seasoned collision repair experts.

Core to the 3M Skills Development Center are [multi-day training courses](#) for technicians that are focused on body repair, paint preparation and refinishing. And with an eye toward bringing new talent into the trades, each summer the 3M Skills Development Center also hosts vocational technical instructors from across the country for intensive training courses on proper OEM repair procedures. Leading instruction at the 3M Skills Development Center is a dedicated and passionate staff of seasoned collision repair veterans who bring over 85 years of combined industry experience and expertise in OEM repair procedures and requirements, with 60 of those years spent working on the shop floor as technicians.

With the new, dedicated training facility and training staff, 3M will be able to accommodate over 100 training sessions annually, providing hands-on education to over 1,000 technicians and associated industry professionals – ranging from seasoned experts looking to enhance their comprehensive understanding of the latest OEM specs and repair Standard Operating Procedures, to students who are exploring careers in collision repair and attending vocational training for the first time.

A key design theme in the 3M Skills Development Center is its flexibility. The modular layout of the facility can be readjusted to adapt to the needs of the students and partners in attendance. Recognizing



the value of a hands-on, kinesthetic learning environment, the facility's traditional classroom space for instruction is complemented with a hands-on work environment that represents 70 percent of the building's overall square footage, and features workshop stations with 24 drops for electrical and air service. This is accompanied by a 35-foot GFS XL paint booth with 3-stage filtration, among one of the largest automotive paint booths available on the market, and capable of accommodating 16 painters simultaneously. The facility also features a space dedicated to welding, with a dozen stations individually equipped with fume extraction hoods.

3M's roots to the city of St. Paul and involvement with the collision repair industry dates back over a century. As the 3M Skills Development Center was built on land that housed the first company operations outside of Duluth and Two Harbors, it was imperative for 3M to add design features that showcase the company's deep connection with the local community. In putting the finishing touches together on the facility, 3M commissioned four Minnesota-based artists – Adam Turman, Rock 'CYFI' Martinez, Biafra and Wundr – to conceptualize and produce distinct murals inspired by 3M history, local culture, and the collision technicians the facility will serve.

"The 3M Skills Development Center takes our training to a new level, and helps give technicians the capabilities they need to upskill their talents and exceed value for their shops," said Jason Scharton, senior manager, Global Expertise Delivery, 3M. "We firmly believe that the best trained teams deliver the best results. Nurturing your talent through continued training and education is an invaluable return on investment."

"With the way the collision repair industry is changing, training is very important to me so I can keep up-to-date with new materials and processes and offer the most knowledge I can to my students," said Bree Downs, an auto body collision repair instructor at Seward County Community College who recently attended a four-day vocational technical instructor training at the 3M Skills Development Center. "With the knowledge I gained at the 3M training, I will be able to teach my students the most current repair methods. When they enter the workforce, they will be able to complete the repairs in the most efficient and effective way possible."

About 3M

3M (NYSE: MMM) believes science helps create a brighter world for everyone. By unlocking the power of people, ideas and science to reimagine what's possible, our global team uniquely addresses the opportunities and challenges of our customers, communities, and planet. Learn how we're working to improve lives and make what's next at [3M.com/news](https://www.3m.com/news).