

# PARTS & PEOPLE

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## ECS Automotive Concepts provides certified printing of VIN data decals

by Josh Nelson

Wildwood, Mo.—Until recent years, collision repair shops have been forced to invent solutions to the problem of not having easy access to replacement VIN data labels, but ECS Automotive Concepts Co-owner David Walden has helped alleviate

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this problem through certified, on-demand printing and production of manufacturer-approved VIN data decals.

Walden and his wife, Co-owner Cindy Walden, started ECS Automotive Concepts in the 1990s to serve the restoration industry. In 2001, however, upon recognizing the need for a service provider to fill this niche within the industry, they began the certification process to be able to legally produce and distribute replacement VIN data labels for all makes and models of vehicles. According to David Walden, it took more than four years to organize the licensing agreements necessary to grant ECS Automotive Concepts approval from all the various agencies and companies that regulate the publishing of this information, and maintaining these agreements requires both time and monetary commitments.

“We pay a lot of money to the manufacturers to be able to do this,” Walden said, “but it’s worth it for us to be able to do this right.”

According to Walden, VIN data labels contain safety information that is particular to the vehicle for which it was created, and it is often useful or necessary for



David and Cindy Walden, owners of ECS Automotive Concepts, work hard to maintain the licensing agreements necessary to produce replacement VIN data labels.

consumers, repair professionals, and law enforcement officials to reference this information. That is one reason, Walden said, that it is of the utmost importance that replacement labels be manufactured to the exact specifications of the original label.

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were intended for. The highway patrol has started scanning them to quickly and safely get information about whether or not a car has been stolen, and mechanics are using them to determine and record the repair history of the vehicle.

“I’ve heard of other companies,” he continued, “that have produced multiple copies of the same label for use in helping smuggle cars in from across the border. Then those cars end up in a shop somewhere, the labels get scanned, and they realize that the same car they’re working on in Colorado is supposedly in California at the same time.”

Fraudulent and unlicensed production of VIN data labels by other companies, Walden said, is both a blessing and a curse for his business.

“These other guys think that they can just change up the wording a little bit and sell shops these labels without needing the manufacturer’s or government’s consent,” he said, “but there’s going to be a major crack down on that soon. Customers and insurance companies are paying thousands of dollars and technicians are spending hundreds of hours returning damaged vehicles to their original condition, which means they need labels of the exact quality and appearance as the ones originally offered by Chrysler, Ford, and GM. As far as I know, we’re the only company that offers that.” ■



The ECS Automotive Concepts team is faced with the task of organizing replacement VIN data decals and other information labels for all makes and models.