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## INSURANCE NEWS

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**Author:** Matt Peterson

**SIIS Office:** (512) 795-8214  
**SIIS Cell:** (512) 965-4001 Jerry  
(512) 468-6965 Sandra

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### **Oklahoma body shops catching up on hail damage repairs**

***Nearly four months after May's hailstorm caused major damage throughout the metro, vehicle repairs are winding down.***

Cars with dimpled hoods and makeshift cardboard windows are lingering evidence of the May 16 hailstorm that ravaged parts of Oklahoma City.

Body shop owners say they just now are getting caught up with the backlog of work created by the storm.

Most estimates put the damage from the hailstorm at \$500 million for central Oklahoma, most of it to homes and businesses. But cars make up a big chunk of that total about \$80 million, Southwest Insurance Information Services President Jerry Johns said.

"From an insurance perspective it will go down as one of, if not the most significant weather-related events since 1999," Johns said. "Obviously much of it was roof damage and things like that but vehicle claims were extremely high for those not fortunate enough to shelter their car or truck before it hit."

Customers waited for weeks and even months to get their hail-damaged cars repaired.

"To say the least we've had an abundance of it," Body Works manager Bob White said. "We've now worked through the first wave of it. We're at the point now where we can work in some regular collision work."

White said the focus after the storm was on cars that weren't drivable because of broken windshields. Now the focus is on less-serious hail damage, such as dented hoods.

*For Additional Information:*

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8303 N Mopac, Ste B-231  
Austin, TX 78759

Phone: (512) 795-8214  
Fax: (512) 795-9363



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"There's still a lot of work out there," White said. "But now we're getting cars in that may not be as damaged as some of the early vehicles we saw right after the storm. Those cars, many of them, had to be towed in because they weren't drivable."

Some cars that haven't been repaired might remain on the road and pose hazards. It's up to officers to decide whether to cite a driver for a cracked windshield, which is against the law in Oklahoma.

"It's at the officer's discretion every time," Oklahoma City police spokeswoman Sgt. Jennifer Wardlow said. "We don't want to see anyone driving around with windows or windshields that would pose an obvious safety hazard."

Tickets are most likely to be written when the vehicle damage might impede someone's ability to drive safely.

"We are seeing fewer and fewer vehicles with hail damage and those still with it should get their vehicles repaired as soon as possible," Edmond police spokeswoman Glynda Chu said. "Our major concern is safety of the operator, passengers and others on the roadway."

Johns said people with damage should make their claims as soon as possible. He said adjusters likely will remain in Oklahoma for up to a year after the storm.

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