



Michael V. Schoenecker

MDE Hires Automotive Master Mechanic/Technician

Michael V. Schoenecker has joined MDE to augment its vehicle accident investigation capabilities. With thirty years of experience as an automotive mechanic, Mr. Schoenecker will be a valuable member of MDE's forensic team.

Accident reconstruction cases often involve evaluating losses caused by negligent repairs, manufacturing defects, neglected maintenance issues, or normal wear and tear. Mr. Schoenecker will assist MDE's engineers in investigating vehicle mechanical failures along with the cause and origin of automobile and light truck fires.

Over the past ten years, Mr. Schoenecker has acted as a consultant to MDE for automotive cases. He has courtroom experience with cases in Washington and Oregon.

For fifteen years prior to joining MDE, Mr. Schoenecker owned and operated High Tech Automotive, an independent auto repair shop in Tacoma, Washington. Before that, he worked as a service manager for a new car dealership and as a mechanic on a variety of makes and models of cars and light trucks through several repair shops in the Tacoma area.

Mr. Schoenecker has been a member of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (**ASE**) for thirteen years and is certified by ASE in **engine repair, suspension and steering, brakes, and engine performance**. He is also a member of the Service Technicians Society, which is an affiliate of the Society of Automotive Engineers (**SAE**), and has applied for membership to the National Association of Fire Investigators (**NAFI**).

Recently, Mr. Schoenecker received training from Lee Cole, a nationally recognized expert in automobile fires. This training will make Mr. Schoenecker a valuable asset to MDE, as vehicle fires are becoming more problematic due to the increased complexity of new car systems and the increasing use of combustibles such as plastic components.

Automobile and Light Truck Accident Investigation

Automotive technology is becoming more complex with each new car or truck model. Many previously mechanical systems have been replaced by electronic systems such as fuel injection, engine heating and cooling control, and the use of more powered accessories. Many vehicle systems interact with each other, making accident reconstruction difficult. MDE investigates a variety of vehicle accidents including those resulting from ABS brake failures, engine and electrical system fires, and mechanical failures. Some cases involve runaway vehicles, arson, or fraud.

Losses can be reduced by understanding the nature of the failure and whose liability it is. Failures can be broken down into four general categories:

- Normal wear and tear
- Manufacturing Defects

- Fraud
- Negligent repair.

Manufacturing defects are often reported by the news media, but some defects go unreported or may be unique to one vehicle. Ford's ignition switches are a good example of a defective part. To reduce its costs, Ford changed the plastic material used in the switch, resulting in multiple failures. Another example is a new fuel blended for experimental markets in California. This fuel became a fire hazard due to the fuel system leaks it caused.

Fraud is costly to the insurance industry and consumers. Arson is difficult to prove, but often evidence can be found or motive discovered which may help to reduce claim costs.

Negligent repairs are a major cause today of vehicle failures. Many auto mechanics are generally inexperienced or not trained specifically in the latest technology used in new vehicles. Many potential failures could be found by a more experienced technician. Negligent repairs account for a large number of vehicle failures causing accidents. A master mechanic can usually spot evidence of a bad repair and can reconstruct repair history from invoices showing parts used.

MDE's experienced personnel are capable of evaluating a wide range of vehicle losses resulting from mechanical failures, accidents, fires, fraud, and arson. Give MDE a call and put our expertise to work for you.

MDE Engineers, Inc.

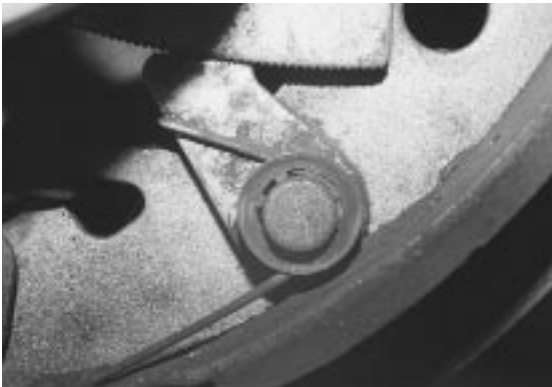
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This photo shows a connector from a fuel injection system.
The connector overheated and eventually ignited.



Which brake adjuster bolt below was the cause of a complete automotive brake failure?



This is the original manufacturer's bolt.



This bolt was substituted during a repair job.