



## Manufacturer Responds to Changing Industry

"To be effective in today's marketplace, it is vital for us to respond proactively to evolving vehicle designs and stricter OEM requirements that are becoming more common in the automotive aftermarket," said Lorna Hamlin, sales manager at C.O. Tools, Inc. / Prime Designs, in Elkhart, Indiana.

C.O. Tools manufactures aftermarket bug shields, headlight covers, taillight covers, window shades, rear air deflectors, running boards and wheel flares for distribution through warehouses and catalog companies.

C.O. Tools has been in business since 1971 manufacturing products for the recreation vehicle (RV) industry, the food industry, machine industry and the automotive aftermarket. Prime Designs was established in 1989 as a marketing arm for the automotive accessories manufactured by C.O. Tools.

"Today's vehicles, especially trucks, are becoming more aerodynamic, with rounded and radical hood styles. We are challenged to develop hood accessories that complement the look of new vehicles," said Hamlin.

In 1995 Prime Designs introduced the uniquely designed GENUS IV bug shield for pickups, sport utility vehicles and mini vans. It installs completely and quickly with 3M™ Acrylic Foam Tape.

According to Hamlin, "Our new bug shield is especially effective on trucks like the 1997 Dodge pickup that is designed with the hood and grill attached, so when the hood is raised, the grill configuration is lifted as well. This style leaves no room for an attractive, mechanically attached bug shield."

The GENUS IV is made of Lexan polycarbonate plastic that provides superior flexibility and withstands temperature extremes. When a rock or other road debris comes in contact with a GENUS IV shield, the Lexan material will flex and absorb the blow instead of cracking.

Traditional, mechanically attached bug shields have a flip-up and wrap-around design. Essentially it is a commodity item because, aside from the actual materials used in manufacturing, there is little differentiation between bug deflection products of competing manufacturers.



"We wanted to design a bug shield that would take us out of the commodity market where competition is at its highest. The GENUS IV is a higher-priced item, but because of its special styling, our customer has greater room for markup, increasing profit margin," according to Hamlin.

The GENUS IV is meant to be a complementary element on the vehicle. Its styling provides improved bug deflection over traditional designs. Because the GENUS IV can be custom painted and finished with an exact OEM color match, there are no hassles with priming, sanding or mismatched paint shades. It complements, instead of competes, with the smooth, rounded appearance of today's pickups, SUVs and mini vans.

"OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) are becoming increasingly demanding on dealers for warranty claims where an application requires drilling into the metal, which can threaten a vehicle's finish. Because our GENUS IV is attached with 3M acrylic foam tape, the concern for rust and decay is eliminated, and the warranty remains intact. This is an excellent selling tool, as concern over warranty issues continues to grow," said Hamlin.

# How-to Hints for Successful Bug Shield Installation

Proper surface preparation and application technique are crucial for successful and lasting adhesion of automotive aftermarket accessories. Here are a few photographs and step-by-step instructions for proper bug shield installation:

Note - A bug shield should be applied at temperatures not less than 68°F (20°C).

Photo 1 - Prior to installing the bug deflector, vehicle hood surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned with a cotton cloth and rubbing alcohol to remove any minor surface contaminants. If the hood has recently been painted or waxed, use 3M™ General Purpose Adhesive Cleaner 08984 followed by an alcohol wipe, to remove any build-up.



Photo 2 - Place the bug shield on the hood in the desired location. With the tape backing still in place, mark the hood with a grease pencil or masking tape as a guide for final installation.



Photo 3 - Turn the deflector over, peel back and fold out about 3/4" to 1" of the red tape liner on each piece of tape located on the back of the deflector. Avoid touching the tape surface once the liner has been removed as skin oils and dirt can seriously affect its ability to bond with the hood. Replace the deflector in the marked position on the hood and, starting with the front edge, slowly remove the red tape liner. Press the edge of the shield with your hand for adhesion. Follow along the edge as you peel the backing, pressing the tape to the hood with your hand to achieve maximum bond.



Photo 4 - Once the tape and shield have been installed, a 24-hour curing period is recommended. During this period, the vehicle should remain dry and must not be driven in excess of 30 mph.



Dale Stewart,  
senior technical  
service engineer

## Trends

*Automotive aftermarket accessory manufacturers must stay current with industry trends in order to be successful long-term. Knowing what types of vehicles and products are selling the most can be a helpful marketing tool. SEMA tracks sales of aftermarket specialty equipment, and in 1994\* reported these sales of appearance, performance and/or handling equipment:*

*Light truck - \$1.53 billion, vans, pickups and SUVs for street use;*

*Off-road - \$181 million, off-road light trucks and all-terrain vehicles;*

*Street performance - \$459 million, light vehicles, except trucks, for street use;*

*Restyling - \$702 million, all products to modify the exterior and/or interior of vehicles after they've left the factory, and those not specifically included in other segments of the specialty equipment market;*

*Street rod and custom - \$178 million, all products used in construction and operation.*

\*Most current figures available

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