

Headlamp Reconditioning

How safe is your vehicle? Most of the headlamps in today's vehicles no longer have the 'sealed bulb/beam'. Mitchell collision Estimating guides call the new lamp assemblies "Combination Lamps" as in both high and low beams (Mitchell, CEG). The bulbs can be purchased separately on most vehicles at both the dealerships and aftermarket part stores. The prices range per vehicle. But what about the lens when it becomes dull, faded and/or yellowed? Do you replace? If so how much do you think it will cost?

Ultraviolet light, heat, road debris and other caustic materials cause the plastic lenses (typically polycarbonate, ISO Code "PC") to dull the light that is supposed to pass through the lens is making reduced. The lenses can be reduced by 90% in some cases where very little light passes through the lens for the driver and the other drivers that need to see that vehicle! From a curb appeal point of view, the vehicle can have a clean appearance through other reconditioning methodologies but with dulled headlamps, the vehicle tends to appear 'older' and/or 'abused'. The laws differ from municipality, county and state relative to headlamps (aftermarket, amount of, fields of view, types etc.) but in the event of a collision (you hitting someone, something or something, someone hitting you) who is liable when the predictable "I didn't even see you!" comments are made? **Bottom line, headlamps with reduced light increase the odds of collision and makes a vehicle look bad.**



What is the solution for this? Replacing versus repair is a question every estimator or service writer struggles with every day. Replacing is typically the best strategy for structural components and typically costs more than a repair. The headlamps are no different. Let us use a 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee as an example. Mitchell CEG lists a combination lamp for around \$299 with a labor time (remove, install and re-aim) of 0.7 hour. Given most shops get discounts (average is 25%) and use a \$40 per hour labor rate, the replacement cost would be \$177.50! That is for just one! What about all of the ancillary costs like fuel, transportation, financing/carrying costs and the down time of the vehicle NOT in your possession (dealership, private owner etc.)? How much is your time

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worth to deal with all this? For dealers making buying decisions at the local auctions, does this vehicle fit your needs? How much does this de-value a vehicle?

Using the same lamp but from a repair point of view. Depending on the severity of the lamp, replacement may still be the best option. This is rare with a technician that is well versed in headlamp reconditioning. The lamps undergo a pre-cleaning, specialized scrub (removes the build up) and specialized polish process to recondition the lens. The process time varies due to lens size, shape and severity. The cycle time of the repair is faster than the replacement (see sample flowchart below). The price is \$40 per vehicle. Using the 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee for an 'apples to apples' type comparison, which is 78% percent cheaper!



Headlamp reconditioning along with many other cost effective products and services are available at all Manheim Auctions that offer Clean Team Detail Services. Visit www.manheim.com for a complete list of Manheim's auctions. This Manheim Technical Center

