



FEATURED BUSINESS IN WATERTOWN

Auto Body Specialties (ABS) was founded in 1950 in Sioux Falls. The business has grown to have branch stores in Mitchell, Brookings and Watertown, SD and Mankato, MN providing service to South Dakota, Northwest Iowa, Southern Minnesota, and Northeast Nebraska. Auto Body Specialties is a complete PB&E supplier featuring PPG paint and glass, 3M products, as well as sheet metal, bumpers, tools, equipment and other collision repair parts. ABS Industrial Division features PPG, Matthews, and Ameron industrial coatings for fleet and manufacturing. Their paint experts can provide you with custom paint matching, tinting and the right spray equipment. They are committed to delivering quality products and service and to help their customers keep pace with the fast changing world of paint finishes and coatings.

Recently the company completed construction on a new facility in Watertown. ABS expanded to Watertown in 2000 as their #4 store. "We already had a store in Brookings and were servicing the Watertown area and it was obvious for us to have a larger impact, we needed a local presence there," says company President Jim Roddel. "Watertown is very progressive and has an excellent business climate and a great customer base. Our business blossomed and exploded in Watertown once we had a local presence there."

Local store manager, Gary Haight, has been with ABS since they opened the Watertown location. "Gary helped make our decision to expand to Watertown easier," adds Roddel. "He is a lifelong resident of Watertown and was looking for a career change. We knew he would be the perfect fit for our family business. He not only has a wealth of knowledge of the auto industry but also a dedication to customer service that we demand."



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Since 2000, ABS has leased space downtown. Over time they outgrew that 5,000 square foot facility. They doubled their space with this new building, with the ability to double the size again in the future. "We did not build the building for people to find us. We built it to give us more efficiencies and better access to our customers. The building allowed us to step up our inventory and have more technology in our system. Our paint mixing facility is state-of-the-art. Our loading docks allow for better inbound freight acceptance. Our shipping area allows us to load inside the building for all of our four delivery trucks at the same time. The building also features a large meeting room where we can hold training seminars."



The Watertown location employs 11 people at this time. Gary has decades of industry experience and their two field reps that call on their customer base from this location come from the body shop background. Product knowledge is crucial to their success. ABS not only provides internal staff training but also sends people to vendor training seminars all over the country. "We value training because this industry is changing dramatically every day every year. We take that seriously and it is important we stay on top of that so we can bring more value to our clients."

ABS supports local charities and is also very active with the local car clubs and the motorcycle community. The staff and management are proud of their new building and feel it is a perfect representation of their presence in Watertown. "It demonstrates our tremendous growth and ability to service our customers." An Open House is planned for later this fall.

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