

Emergency Roadside Repairs

Over the years there have been several postings to the Healey e-Mail List (the list) giving rather detailed itemizations of tools and repair items that should be carried in the boot. Among these items are the normal selection of wrenches, screwdrivers and the ubiquitous roll of duct tape and can of WD-40. While we probably know what to carry in the boot, until recently there was only one's imagination for the necessity of some of the items.

A current thread, as e-mail conversations on the list are called, started with a general request for members of the list to relate their experiences of breakdowns on the road. After several weeks of exchanges, these can be broken down into several categories, electrical, mechanical, unknown and just plain weird with the fixes even more so. Solutions to some of these problems show the intuitiveness of Healeyites.

Flat tires are perhaps the most common failure on the road. With lack of use, tires will lose their flexibility and will fail. Following flat tires as the most common problems are broken rotors, loose wires, failed fuel pumps and general failures in the ignition system and carburetors. Checking these items before a trip is always good advice but, no matter how new the parts or careful the checks that have been made, failures will occur. Knowing the most common areas of failure should lead you to plan for your tool kit.

Obviously with the number of failed rotors in general driving, one should carry spares as well as condensers and points. It is a good idea to have a spare fuel pump in your boot. Wires of different gauges are handy also. Carburetor rebuild kits are inexpensive and can save a trip from being a disaster as they do not take up much room and, remember, that there are a lot of rubber parts in a carb that are prone to deterioration. Nothing takes the place of thinking ahead to consider what may fail because, most assuredly, it will. And, as noted by several listers, nothing takes the place of imagination and spur of the moment invention.

Beer cans as emergency parts? Yes. One Lister related a story in which he had a flat tire (common on trips) and did not have the proper knock off nut tool. He used a block of wood and a jack handle, removed his wire wheel, fixed the flat and discovered that the spline was stripped. Enter the beer can, empty, of course. It is supposed that a soda can will work just as well but . . . Our faithful lister placed the beer can over the spline and then jammed the wheel over it causing a tight seal when the knockoff nut was firmly tightened. The beer can acted as a spacer tightening the wheel against the damaged spline enough so that he was able to continue on his drive. Ingenuity! Another use for a beer can is as a patch for a hole in the exhaust system. A piece of can, wire and muffler putty will work wonders on the road.

Super glue and rubber bands? Yes. One of the more common failures on the road is the rotor. Hours can be spent on the list reading stories about broken rotors. Once while driving on the Interstate in Las Vegas, it was my misfortune to have a rotor break on the skirt section. Not to worry, liberal shots of super glue with a rubber band holding the assembly together fixed the problem allowing me to drive 15 miles to my home. Needless to say, not only do I now carry several rotors but the repaired one as well in my emergency kit.

Coat hangers? One lister had the pot metal vacuum advance break off from the distributor housing. Enter the faithful coat hanger – metal of course – which twisted and formed was strong enough to hold the diaphragm to the distributor body.

Toilet plunger? Driving without the rubber gear shift cover will allow enough heat into the cockpit to fry an egg. Enter the trusty plumber's friend which can be found at the next hardware store as opposed to waiting on the road for several days for a package to arrive from your favorite Healey parts supplier. Just remove the wooden handle, poke a hole in the rubber center, mount it and voila! You now have a jury rigged gear shift boot. And, by the way, keep the plunger handle. You never know what lies ahead on the road. While it is not suggested that one carry a plunger in the boot, in

addition to the rubber piece, the handle can be pressed into service as an emergency gas gauge. Never assume that you are getting great gas mileage if your gauge is moving S L O W L Y. It is most probably not working correctly.

In addition to the normal tools it is interesting to see comments made by listers of simple items that are essential but easily forgotten such as:

- 1. Make sure that your cell phone is charged and that you have the charger in your bag.**
- 2. Always carry your club Resource Book. No matter where you are, there is a fellow Healeyite nearby.**
- 3. Carry a GPS device not only to know where you are but to find the location of the nearest car parts store.**
- 4. Always carry the roadside emergency telephone number issued by your insurance carrier.**
- 5. Sunscreen**
- 6. Remember to confirm your reservations for your next stop before you get there and find out that a mistake has been made.**

So what have we learned from a simple email request? Before any trip, normal maintenance is mandatory. Check all wiring connections especially at the coil, generator, distributor and fuel pump. Inspect your tires closely.

Check all rubber parts for wear and cracks. Rubber is affected by cold and heat and will deteriorate over time. And, most importantly, be sure that you have packed your imagination in your Healey and have not left it home.

Vital Statistics

These messages and others can be found in the Healey Mail List Archives.

If you are interested in joining the Healey Mail List or viewing the archives, all that is necessary is to go to the following web site <http://autox.team.net/mailman/listinfo/healeys> and follow the instructions. You will not be disappointed.