

Flush-Mount Your Tail-Lights!

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Andy Murphy
(aka Murph)

Tired of hanging yours up on rocks? Anything left of your stock ones? Here's a super easy mod to take care of that...and they look cool!

As I see it, Jeep mods, just like corporate mentalities, fall into two different categories - proactive, and reactive. One I will be talking about here is reactive. And as much as I'd like to have a cool trail story that leads up to the need for replacement tail lights, alas, I do not. I was simply making a u-turn on a not so tight stretch of trail when I heard the always comical "Watch out for the..." CRUNCH "tree". What tree - 3" sapling is more like it. Damn, I really hate when that happens...The end result being a slightly crunched driver side tail light. I've always liked the look of flush mount tail lights, and this was the perfect opportunity to upgrade.

Who would believe what would appear under the tree, but 2 Truck-Lite Model 80 (p/n 80335R) stop/tail/turn lights from AW Direct (p/n [DT-5](#)). How can you argue with a wife that gets you Jeep stuff for both your birthday and Christmas?!?!?

It didn't take much thinking to determine the Saturday after Christmas would be a perfect day for the install. So with a big pot of Dunkin' Donuts finest in one hand, and a digital camera in the other, I set off to work.

The first item at hand was to remove the stock light. Remove the four screws that hold the lens on, you will see the three bolts that hold the light to the body. There is also a Weatherpak connector that needs to be removed. I could have eliminated this connection, but I chose to keep it and splice the new lights into it, not only does that make the lights removable, but the wiring is neater also.

Now comes the interesting part, drilling the hole for the lights. First, measure and mark the center point for the pilot hole. I chose 2" up from the existing hole in the corner, and 2" in from the outside of the tub. Once the starting point is determined, use duct tape on the corner to protect the paint (if you are so inclined :) and cover the gas filler. Looking at the pic, you can see the top of the outline of the stock light through the tape. The lights need a cutout of slightly less than 4.25 inches, instead of a 4.25 inch holesaw, I got a 4 inch one and would use a Dremel for the final fit. Due to the size of the mandrel, a 1/2" drill is called for.

Use both hands to hold the drill, and have an accomplice adding the cutting fluid at regular intervals. Or if you are like me and doing this yourself, stop every minute or two and add a squirt or two. .

After about 10 minutes of this, the cut will be complete, and look like this. Test fit the light, and use a grinding wheel in a Dremel to make the hole the perfect size. Two words of advice - don't remove the tape yet, not only does it keep the dust and whatnot from the gas filler, it also protects the paint (again, if you care about such things) if your hand happens to slip while the Dremel is running...BTDT :)

Not bad for about an hour so far, now just mark the holes for the mounting screws, drill them, test fit again, remove all the tape and clean the gum that duct tape always seems to leave



behind.

Now move on to the passenger side and repeat the above process.

One item to note - the contacts for the 3rd brake light can be used for the license plate light. Using these contacts eliminates the need to have a wire running across the gap between the tailgate and tub.

Now that the lights have been fit to the tub, it's now time for the wiring. Looking at the connector, you will see 4 wires on the tub side and 3 on the light side. The wires on the tub side - Violet and black are for backup lights, dark green and red is left turn/hazard, black and yellow is tail lights, and black for (I think) ground. On the passenger side, the violet/black, black/yellow and black are there, but instead of the turn signal/hazard being dark green and red, the wire is brown and red. The 3 wires on light side of the connector are white and black for the backup lights, green for turn/hazard and white for tail light function. The light is grounded through the housing, so there is no separate ground wire.

You might be looking at the new lights and wonder why they only have 2 wires - red and black. The red is for stop/turn/hazard and the black for tail lights. Like the factory lights, the new ones are also grounded through the housing. Cut the connector off the factory lights, leaving enough wire to splice. The red wire on the lights gets spliced to the green wire on the connector, and black wire on the lights goes to the white wire. These lights do not have clear lights for backup, so the white and black wire is taped off. Plug the connector together, insert the light into the hole in the tub and screw it down, and life is good.

For the licence plate light, simply splice one of the wires for the 3rd brake light into the black and yellow wire on the passenger side. I picked up a light at Pep Boys for ~\$4.99 and a 2 way trailer connector for ~\$2.99. The connector is needed so when the plate can be easily removed in the event the spare tire is needed.



As for mounting the license plate, I added a 1/2" pipe flange to the spare tire carrier, and to a piece of sheetmetal a little smaller than the plate itself, and used a 2" pipe nipple to connect them.

Presto Chango - now you have flush mounted tail lights. Two things to note - by swapping to these lights, backup light and rear side marker light functionality are gone. I have rear mounted tractor lights as backup lights, but they are on a manual switch. I'm also still checking into smaller lights such as these, also from [Truck-Lite](#)

