

LATCH HANDLE RELOCATOR KIT FOR 73-79 FULLSIZE FORD PICKUPS

This kit changes the tailgate latch handle to operate the tailgate latches from the inside, or front face, of the tailgate. This modification requires cutting and drilling on the tailgate. The suggested procedure is as follows.

1. Take tailgate off the truck and remove the handle, latches, and rods. The latches will be used but the handle and rods will be replaced with new parts provided in the kit.
2. Use the paper template as a guide for locating the area to be cut out on inside surface, of the tailgate. Align the paper template to the top of the tailgate, and center the cutout area from each end of the tailgate. Secure it with masking tape.
3. Center punch through the paper to mark the four corners of the area to be cut out as noted on the paper template. Remove the paper template and use a felt marking pen to draw four straight lines connecting the center punched corners of the area to be cut out. This is the outline of the area to be cut out for the new handle mechanism. The opening is 6-1/4" wide and 4" tall and the top of the opening is 2-1/2" below the top of the tailgate.
4. Using a suitable saw or grinder, cut out the rectangular opening marked in #3 above. The curved surface makes this difficult and a small grinder may be needed to smooth the opening.
5. Lay the assembled adaptor panel handle over the opening in the position it will be mounted. The adaptor panel should fit over the embossed pattern of the tailgate and match the shape of the tailgate. Check that there is clearance around the handle mechanism and that it will operate freely without rubbing the sheet metal. While holding the adaptor panel in its correct position, centered on the tailgate surface, centerpunch and drill for two screw holes diagonally opposite each other. Use a 5/32" drill.
6. Install the handle adaptor panel using phillips screws in the 2 holes drilled in # 5 above. Carefully center punch the four remaining holes in the adaptor panel. Drill the holes with the 5/32" drill, being careful not to drill the holes oversize. Remove the adaptor panel and remove the handle mechanism from the adaptor panel. At this time the adaptor panel may be painted as desired to match the tailgate.
7. Lay the tailgate on a work table with the inside surface of the tailgate facing upward. Install the new rods on the original latches so that the bent end next to the handle is pointing upward, which will be toward the front of the truck when the tailgate is installed on the truck. Slide the rods and latches into the tailgate from the ends and bolt the latches in position. The tips of the rods should be visible through the opening cut in step #4 above. If not, use a wire or needle nose plier to move the rod tips near the opening.
8. Position the new latch operating mechanism (without the adaptor panel and handle) in the opening cut in step #4 above. The two bolt holes should be up and the two arms should point toward the bottom of the tailgate. Insert the rod tips into the plastic retainers on the handle mechanism. Pull the rods tight against the latches before closing the plastic retainers to help keep them from rattling in the latches. Snap the retainers over the rods to hold them in place. Operate the mechanism to verify it will open and close the tailgate latches smoothly.

9. Insert the new handle into the adaptor plate. The two 6mm studs should extend through the two holes in the handle opening. Hold the plate and handle over the handle mechanism so that the two 6mm studs are aligned with the two bolt holes in the latch operating mechanism. Lift the mechanism partially out of the tailgate and insert the two 6mm studs into the two bolt holes in the latch operating mechanism. Carefully attach the mechanism to the handle and adaptor plate using the two 6mm nuts and lockwashers. Tighten with a 10mm wrench.

10. Lower the assembly into the opening in the tailgate. The adaptor plate should mount smoothly on the surface of the tailgate following the embossed contours. The screw holes should line up with the holes drilled in steps 5 and 6 above. If the adaptor plate appears to be off center in the tailgate the rods may need to be shifted in the plastic retainers. As in step 8 above, release the rods and adjust them as necessary to center the handle assembly in the tailgate. When the assembly is properly centered, attach the plate with the six stainless phillips screws provided. Check that the handle and latches operate smoothly.

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