Flush Mounting a 3rd Brake Light Does Your Street Rod Have One?

Article & Photos By **Larry Crain**

How many of you reading this are driving a street rod that doesn't have a 3rd brake light? Do you tense up every time you come to a stop in fear that the car behind you will not notice that you are stopped because the brake lights on your street rod are not eye catching. A 3rd brake light is an added assurance that the car following you will know that you are stopped. If you have a 3rd brake light now is it up to current technology? Is it a bright LED light or one of those old style bulb types that puts out some not so bright light? Is your current 3rd brake light one of those nuisances that takes up space in your rear window & obstructs your view? If the answer is yes to the above questions, it is probably time to bring your street rod up to date with a Lambert Enterprises flush mount LED 3rd brake light.

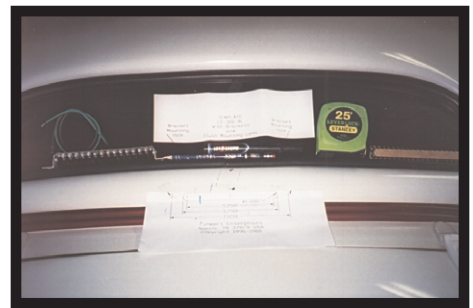
Errol Hicks owns the 1937 Chevy sedan that is being worked on.

Close up of area that is to receive 3rd brake light.

The undertaking of installing a flush mount 3rd brake light in your street rod might not be for everyone since it does require some skills beyond just turning wrenches. If you have the patience, tools, and some of the skills required I will try & walk you through the basic steps of flush mounting a 3rd brake light in your street rod. Follow me through the installation of a Lambert Enterprises 3rd brake light in Errol Hicks 1937 Chevy sedan and see if you & your street rod are ready for the trickiest looking 3rd brake light around.

Some of the tools required for this job.

The first step of this project is to lay out the tools you will need & they are as follows, air compressor, paint gun, 3/8 drill, jig saw, die grinder with burring bit or flat mill file & rat tail file, drill bit set, extension cord, mig welder, tape measure, 8/32 x 1" 1/4 machine screws with nuts, Scotch transparent tape, duct tape, industrial grade 2 part epoxy 5 minute gel, and a paint pen or magic marker. You will also need some of your basic hand tools for this project that can be found in almost all of our workshops.



Laying out the template correctly is very critical, measure & remeasure.

To get this job going locate where you will be installing the light & verify that there is easy access to the back of that area. Using the supplied instruction sheet with attached template & measurements center the template in the desired location and mark location.

Stud holes drilled & lens opening cut out.

Hold template in place with transparent tape so you can see where to drill out mounting holes for studs & holes for jig saw blade access. Using a 9/64 drill bit drill out holes in template for studs & as a starter bit for the 5/16 bit that is used for the access hole for the jig saw blade. With 5/16 access holes drilled use a jig saw with a fine tooth blade for metal to cut through the template inside leading edge at top & bottom. With opening cut out use either a die grinder with burring bit or a rat-tail file to finish out the radius at both ends of opening. At this point trial fit lens to see if opening is correct, lens should fit without binding. With lens opening finished & lens out of the way

Some of the safety items you will need for you & the vehicle, goggles, welding hood, gloves, duct tape, cardboard, and an old blanket.

screw 8/32 machine screws into stud holes leaving about 1/8 inch of screw head & thread above body surface. Grind or cut off screw head & weld threaded end in place and grind flush with body. Be sure to cover all glass & body areas that you do not want affected by welding & grinding,

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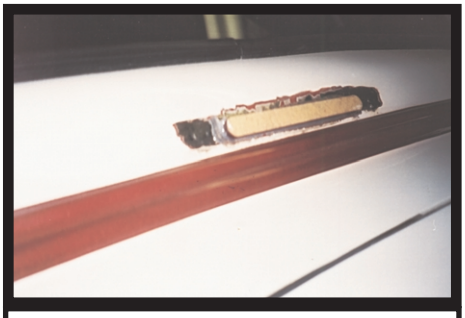
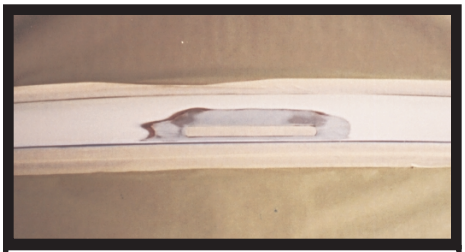
this is a sure way to create more work if those areas are not covered. With the studs in place & lens opening ready you can now sand the outside area around the opening and where the studs have been ground down in preparation for future body filler. The backside of the panel where lens is to be mounted must be cleaned to bare metal at this point. Mount the lens in place using a 2-part gel type industrial epoxy for plastic to metal bonding, epoxy is used on outside leading edge of lens border only and excess can be removed from outside facing at this point. At this stage of the project I stop for the day & allow the epoxy to cure overnight for maximum strength against the pressure that is to be used in sanding the lens flush.



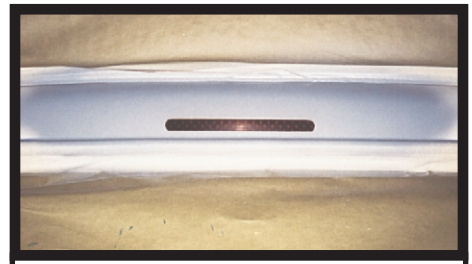
Lens epoxied in place.

With the epoxy cured the lens can now be sanded down starting with an 80 grit disc on a dual action sander or use a sanding block with 36 grit air file paper. The 36 grit can be used to cut the lens quicker but you will need to stop before you reach the body surface & switch to 80 grit to cut the lens almost flush. At this point you can mix up a small amount of good quality body filler and spread it evenly over the lens & area of stud mounts, be sure & wipe lens clear of filler before it starts to harden leaving a slightly raised edge at outside



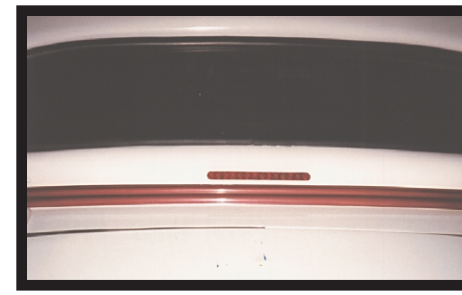
Lens sanded down & surrounding area filled in, ready to tape off & prime in.

edge of lens. Allow the body filler to cure then lightly sand down using 80 grit paper then step to 180 grit to flush out lens. You might have a slight edge at the lens to body surface but don't worry it will disappear later as we progress with the primer. All major sand scratches should be out of the lens & surrounding area by now, if not work them lightly with a sanding block mounted with 180 grit & then 240 grit paper to get rid of them. At this point blow off your work area & clean the area that is to be primed. Tape off the entire vehicle except for area to be primed, painted & cleared. Tape the lens off using 3M Fine Line 1/4 tape, this tape will not bleed through & leaves a smooth edge. Using a quality urethane primer spray at least 3 coats allowing each coat to flash. After primer has cured remove tape and block sand primered area with 400 grit wet dry paper to achieve a uniform finish from body to lens. Before proceeding to paint check for sand scratches or other imperfections in lens & surrounding area, these need to be removed now since paint & clear will just enhance them.



Now we are starting to look good, next step will be paint & then clear.

With the lens & area ready for paint you will need to tape up the lens one more time before you start spraying the base coat. I find that a base coat clear coat paint system easier to work with than single stage because you can blend the new clear coat into the old. Spray a light coat of paint & allow to flash before applying following coats until you achieve color coverage of primer. With area painted in base coat you can now remove tape from the lens. Now you can proceed to clearing the lens using progressive stages of clear allowing each coat to flash before applying the next. After the last coat of clear has flashed you can use a blending solvent with a small amount of clear to blend the outer area between old clear & new, spray this very lightly at low pressure and at a good distance from area. If in doubt on any of these procedures or for other paint questions contact your local automotive paint supplier they can really help you out. Allow the vehicle to cure over night & then lightly sand the clear over lens area with 1200 grit wet dry paper using soapy water. This should level your clear & lens to the point of no seam or edge. Now you can hand buff & polish this area to finish out your street rod and be almost road ready. You can now mount the LED panel behind the lens using the 2 supplied brackets and the 8/32 machine nuts for the mounting studs. With only two wires coming off the LED one of them is for the ground and the other goes to the switched side of the brake light switch. At this point you can step back and have someone step on the brake pedal so you can admire what your hard work has achieved. You will now be Cruisin in Style with a Lambert Enterprises flush mount 3rd brake light in your street rod.



Errol Hicks 1937 Chevy is ready to Cruise in Style with a Lambert Enterprises flush mounted 3rd brake light.

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