

News Column
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MISFORTUNE TO GOOD FORTUNE

This is a tale of good fortune,....a tale that at first might appear to be a tale of misfortune.

To understand how my good fortune occurred you need to know that my garage is on the east end of my house and my barn is farther east. They share a common driveway and small courtyard. When I pull up to the garage with my pickup the barn is directly behind me.

The other important detail to know is that we normally park the gooseneck stock trailer near the barn, but a bit to the south so it isn't right in front of the barn, and so it isn't directly behind my pickup. Some of you already know where this is headed....

Actually, you only think you know where this is headed. If you are a truck guy, then you'll really know where this is headed when I tell you my pickup is a 2008 Chevrolet Silverado and this story involves the spare tire.

Does anybody feel my pain yet?

My good fortune started on a Friday morning about three weeks ago when I hopped in my pickup to head to work and decided to check the weather on my phone while I backed out. Thump! You saw that coming, I'm sure.

The trailer wasn't parked in its normal spot and I backed in to the gooseneck hitch, making a small dent in the tailgate and another above the taillight, and also breaking the right taillight.

I thought, "Well, that was stupid!" But I didn't swear. I just calmly headed in to work

and immediately went on online to order a taillight, with plans to replace it before my wife or son noticed. This stuff happens. There is no sense in getting upset.

Two weeks later, when I finally found time to install the new taillight, I opened the box I discovered that the taillight was complete with a wiring harness that was about six feet long. I just needed to remove a couple of screws to take out the busted light, pop the new light in place and plug it in, then put the two screws back in.

Fifteen minutes. Tops.

I crawled under the pickup to replace the wiring harness and was having trouble removing the clips holding the old harness in place because the spare tire was in the way. I'm stubborn, so I struggled for several minutes before deciding to get the tools out of the pickup cab and lower the spare tire to give me room to work.

I inserted the rod in the slot in the bumper, connected an extension and attached the handle to crank the mechanism that would lower the tire. After a couple of turns, lowering the tire an inch or two, everything tightened up. I thought I needed some WD-40.

I tried WD-40, and I tried cranking the other direction, but it was stuck and I eventually realized I was rounding out the hole in the end of the rod I was using to crank the tire down. I gave up after about an hour and drove to a tire store to ask for help. I thought they would have a sturdier tool and could get the job done in no time.

I politely asked if they could help me get the spare tire off my pickup and the guy behind the counter immediately told me no. He couldn't help me. He didn't say he didn't want to help me. Instead, he meant exactly what he said,... that he couldn't help me.

He explained that Chevy's brilliant engineers added a safety feature that would prevent my tire from falling out from under my pickup if the crank mechanism failed. It has a spring-

loaded device that pops out when you start to lower the tire, locking it in place.

The owner's manual tells you to put a jack under the tire and raise it up again to release the safety lock, but the tire guy told me I would be using a cutting wheel instead. He assured me that on a 14 year old pickup that had never had the spare tire off, that mechanism was going to be stuck and would never come loose. I should use a cutting wheel.

Another guy in the waiting room heard our conversation and said he learned about Chevrolet pickup spare tires during a three hour ordeal in a snow storm. He now drives a Ford. The other guy in the waiting room also owned a Chevy pickup. He cut the cable and his spare now rides in the bed of his pickup.

So, now you understand why I was fortunate to back into my own trailer. If I hadn't busted a taillight and struggled replacing it, I wouldn't have known my spare tire was permanently attached to the underside of my pickup.

Because of my good fortune – breaking a taillight – I now have a spare tire riding in the bed of my pickup where I can access it when I need it. I took the tire guy's advice and cut it loose.

It only took me about three hours to do what I thought was going to be a 15 minute job. My life is good!

If you drive a Chevy pickup and need a sympathetic ear to listen to your problems, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmclure@ksu.edu.

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