Classic Performance Products
Cures Your Straight Axle Stopping Blues

Since the fifties, many advances have been made in the field of vehicle safety, and none have been more important or more necessary than those made to braking systems. When this 1957 Chevrolet was produced, drum brakes were the norm, as were the problems associated with them: lack of stopping power; brake fade due to heat or water; inadequate pad material. The problems were simply less noticeable because the speeds were not as great. But as technology has continued to evolve, the shortcomings of four-wheel drum brake systems have become all too apparent. While many classic trucks today have been upgraded with IFS front ends that come with disc brakes, those of you who have elected

Luckily, Classic Performance Products in Buena Park, California, has come to the rescue with an easy-to-install disc brake kit that is made for the six-lug, straight axle lover. The kit consists of everything you need to turn your 1949-59 Chevy into a sure stopping sled. The Classic Performance kit is a bolt-on affair that can be installed in a single afternoon. The instructions provide an exploded view of how the kit goes together. Anyone who has ever changed a set of disc brake pads can get the job done. It is strongly recommended that in addition to the disc brake kit, the master cylinder and wheel bearings also be replaced with Classic Performance units. While it is technically possible to run

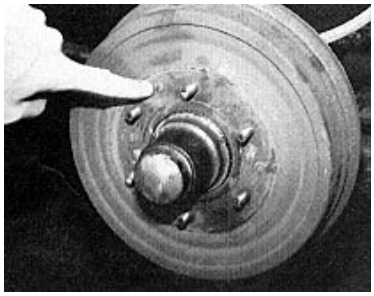
has an excellent unit available. Remember that the disc brakes are being installed for safety's sake, and to get the full effect of the discs, the power booster is a must. You should also consider replacing the stock ball bearing-type wheel bearings with new tapered roller bearings. The tapered bearings are stronger and create less friction than the stock units. It is also important to inspect the spindle and kingpins at this time. If there is marring or other irregularities on the spindle's surface, it should be replaced. The king-pins are another safety concern. If they are too loose, the additional play could cause the holes to become elongated and possibly destroy the spindle or axle.

to go the resto route have to have a heavy brake foot to bring your trucks to a halt.

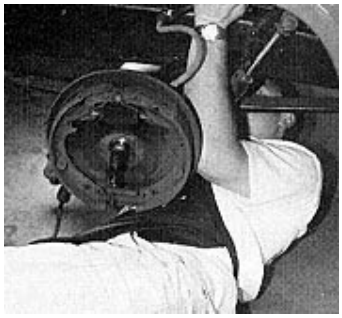
the disc brakes with the stock master, it is not the smart thing to do. The disc brakes are designed to be used with a power booster, and Classic Performance

The Classic performance kit consists of a pair of vented rotors, calipers and pads, brackets and spacer plates, new rubber brake lines and all the hardware and directions you will need to turn your classic into a sure stopper.

It is highly recommended that the original ball bearing-type bearings be replaced with tapered roller-type bearings. Classic Performance offers a high-quality bearing kit at a reasonable price.



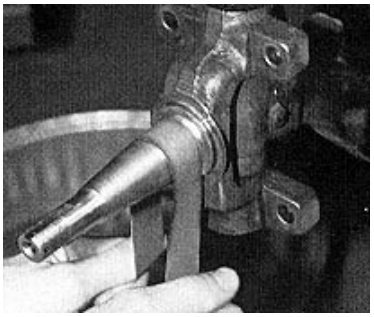
These rivets hold the drum to the hub assembly. They will need to be ground off and punched out so the two pieces will come apart.



The first step is to remove the brake line from the metal hard line fitting.

Remove the bolts that hold the backing plate to the spindle, then remove the backing plate. It is not necessary to remove the brakes or related hardware from the plate.

Using 180-grit emery cloth, the spindle is cleaned and inspected for wear. Also, check for end play on the spindle. If it were excessive, this would be the time to replace the kingpins and or bushings if they are worn.



The new caliper bracket is bolted onto the spindle using the new hardware provided in the kit.

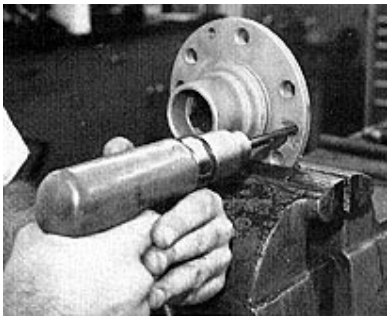
A grinder is used to grind off the heads of the rivets, and a punch is used to drive the rivets out.

After placing the hub on a set of wood blocks, the old bearings are driven from the hub.

The stock wheel lugs are also driven out. They will be replaced with new and longer units that come with the Classic kit.

The rivets that hold the two pieces of the hub together are ground down, and a punch is used to drive the rivets out.

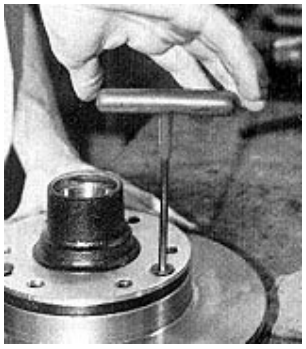
The hub is blasted clean and thoroughly inspected before being reused. For those of you who do not have access to a blaster, brake cleaning solvent can be used.



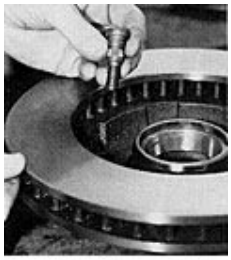
The stock rivets holes are drilled out to 3/8 inch.

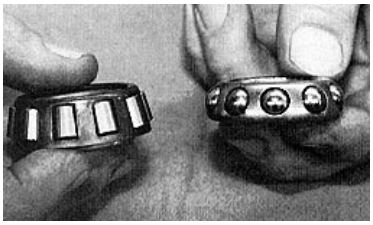
The stock wheel bearings are replaced with new tapered bearings, and the tapered race for the new bearings is installed with a driver. DO NOT HIT THE EDGE OF THE RACE WITH A HAMMER! It is possible to use a socket to do this job, but be very careful not to wedge the race in sideways, and be sure the race is completely seated.

Place the rotor on a flat surface and set the hub in place.

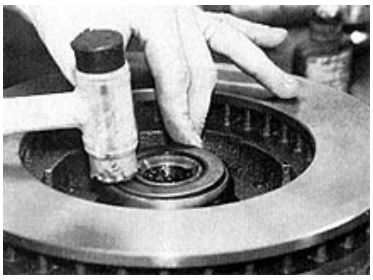


Set the spacer plate over the hub and align the screw holes. Loctite should be used on the screws before they are installed.

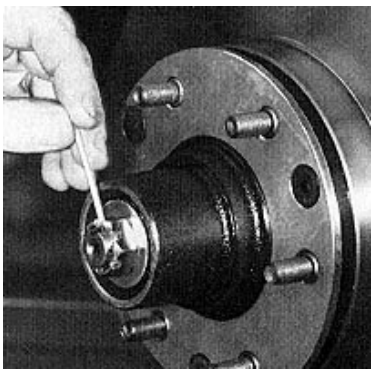




Ball bearings may have been okay in the fifties, but tapered roller bearings are the only way to go now. The tapers disperse the load better and are much stronger units.

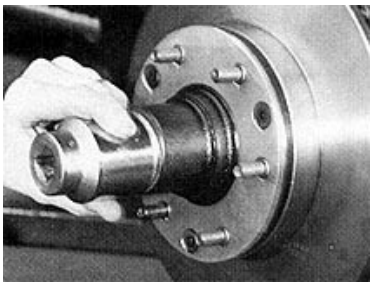


The bearings are greased using high-temp lithium grease and are then installed with a grease seal. A soft-headed mallet is used to tap the seal into place.

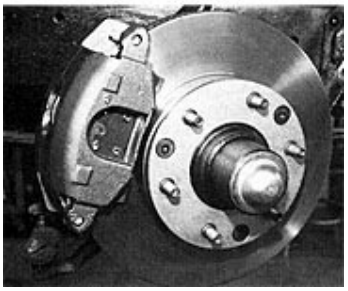


The front bearing is greased and set in place, the assembly is placed on the spindle, and the hardware is installed. Do not forget the cotter pins!

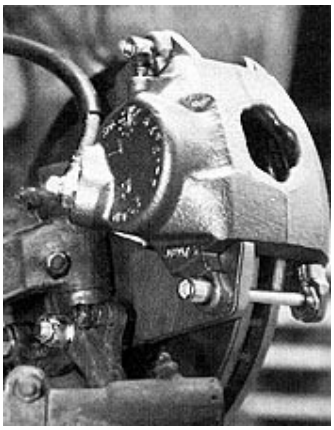
The wheel lugs are installed using a ball peen hammer and a lot of concentration. The lugs need to be completely seated.



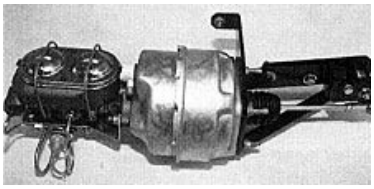
A socket is used to tap the cap home.



Caliper grease is used on the back of the pads before placing them in the caliper. The caliper is aligned to the bracket and the bolts are installed.



The new brake line is now installed. When installing the new line, be sure it is routed out of the way so it will not snag on anything when the wheels are turned side to side. With that, the kit is installed. Well, at least on this side



While it is possible to use the stock master cylinder with the new brakes, it is strongly recommended that you replace it with a new power booster from Classic Performance Products to get the full stopping power that the new disc brakes can provide. Classic Trucks ran an article in the July 1997 issue on the installation of that unit and can testify to the importance of the switch.