

Simple CRX Dash Repair
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We got a spare black dash in addition to the stock blue dash when we bought the 88 CRX-HF shell we decided to restore. The black dash was in pretty good shape with the exception of having two broken mounting tabs, the front center mounting tab and a tab on the back under a metal brace. This how-to explains how we figured out how to make simple repairs such as fixing broken tabs.

The first exception was that the top center mounting tab was nearly completely gone:

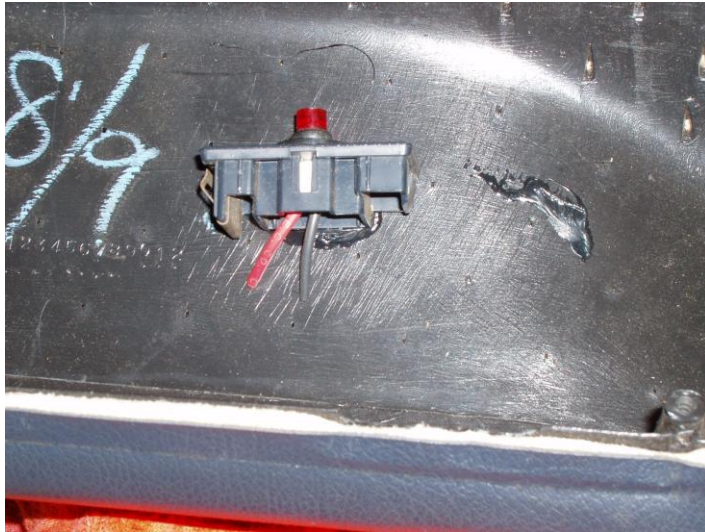


The second exception was the fact that one of the tabs that holds a metal brace on the back was also gone. That tab also holds one of the dash wiring harness mounts in place:



We searched the internet to see if we could find definitive information about what plastic material the CRX dash is made from and we found nothing. We found a lot of information about what glues and epoxies work, but nothing about the dash material itself. We then started researching hard plastic repair material and read that many automotive plastic parts are made of ABS plastic, so we decided to run an experiment with a piece of the old HF dash we took out of the car.

We got a can of ABS cement from the hardware store plumbing department. We put a dab of ABS cement on the inside of a piece of the padded part of the blue HF dash and then used the ABS cement to cement a dash switch blank to the dash part as well. After leaving it to cure overnight, we discovered that the dash is, in fact, made of ABS plastic. The cement fused the switch blank to the inside of the dash part completely:

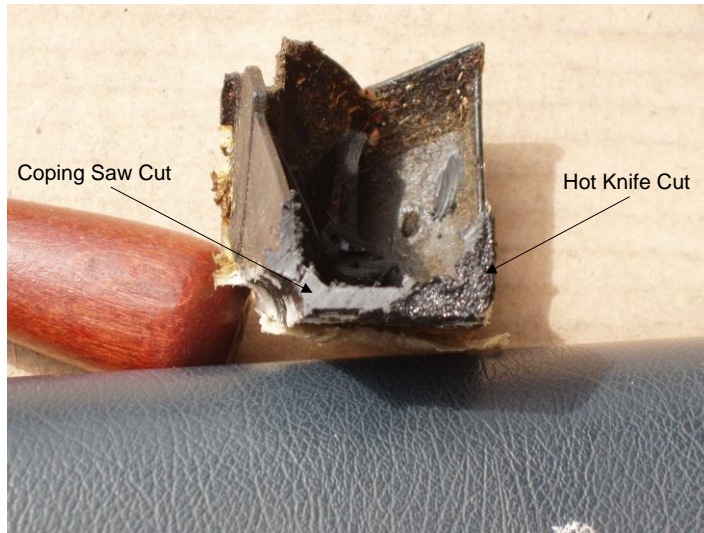


So we now know that the CRX dash is made of ABS plastic. The next question is what is the best way to cut the ABS plastic to make repair pieces and to make things such as bezels. We bought a hot knife from Harbor Freight to see if we could get it to do a clean cut of the ABS dash plastic. We tried it on the padding of the padded part of the dash first:



The hot knife, at its hottest setting, cut the vinyl and the underlying foam padding quite easily. But it was not easy to cut the ABS plastic with the hot knife, even at its hottest setting.

We were able to cut the underlying ABS plastic with the hot knife, but it was extremely slow and made a very messy cut. So we only cut the scrap piece half way and then quickly cut the rest of the way with a coping saw. Here is the comparison of the two cutting techniques:



We decided to try cutting the ABS plastic with a Dremel Tool with a carbide cut-off wheel (on a plastic tray to try to catch ABS cuttings):

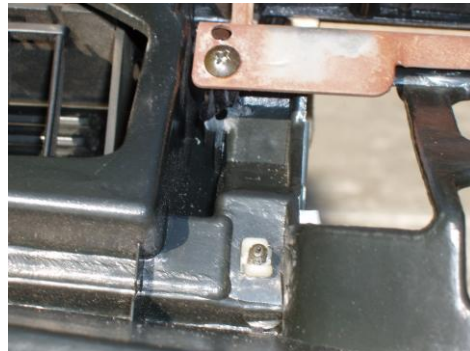


If you look carefully, you can see how the ABS melts at the cut. But with the Dremel running at a very low setting, the melting problem is not too bad, and the melted plastic is very easy to break off of the cut. The cut is relatively clean after the melted bits are removed. You will see a lot of melting if you run the Dremel at full speed. You will want to save these melted bits of plastic in a small bag or container. You will need plenty of small bits of ABS plastic to use to thicken the ABS cement when you are fusing your repair pieces into place.

Here is a picture of the broken mounting tab on the back of the dash. It helps hold the metal brace in place and is one of the two tabs the dash harness is connected to:



We cut a similar sized mounting tab from a scrap piece of dash (using the Dremel tool) and screwed it to the metal brace:



We made sure that the tab had a small gap to make room for the new ABS plastic that will fill between the broken tab on the dash and the new tab fastened to the metal brace.

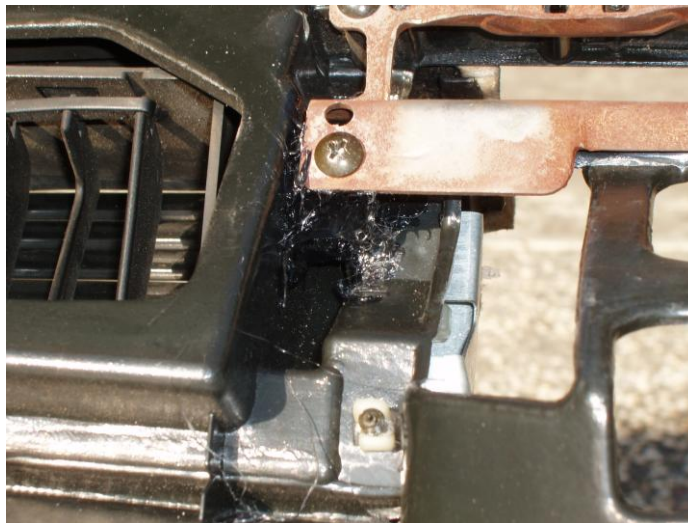
Here are the plastic bits collected from the cuts:



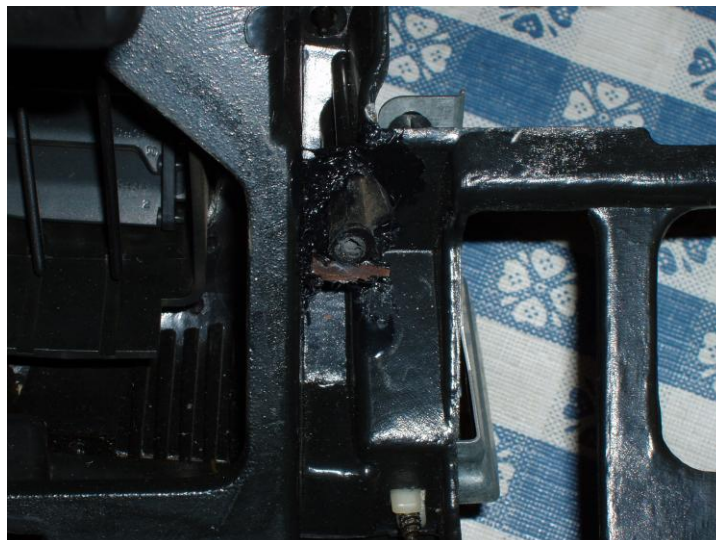
We put some ABS cement into a tuna can, and add a bunch of the plastic bits to it to thicken it. Make sure the plastic bits are as tiny as possible or it will take a long time for the plastic to dissolve into the cement. The bits of ABS plastic that come off a drill bit when drilling it works perfectly. We used a wooden stir stick from McDonalds to mix the plastic into the cement:



We used the wooden stir stick to press the thick ABS cement into the crack between the broken tab base on the dash and the new tab screwed to the metal brace. Then we pressed more thick ABS cement all around the repair to strengthen it and attach it to the adjacent ABS material:



After we let the plastic cure for 24 hours, we took the metal brace off to see the now very strong repair:



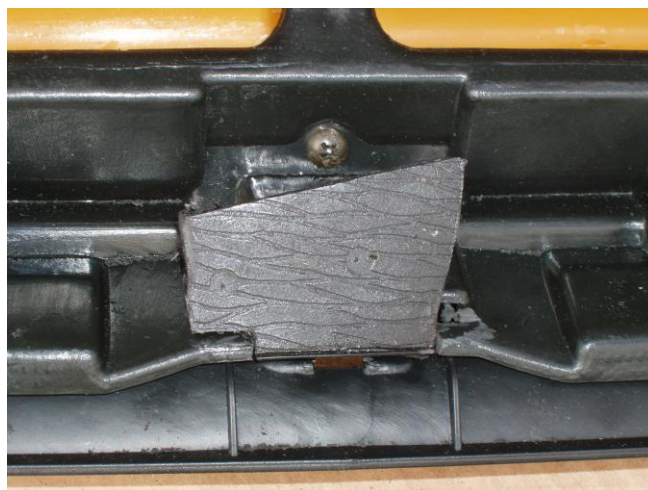
We then moved to the front center mounting tab repair. We could see part of the hole in the remnants of the old mounting tab, so we measured and made a note of it so we could drill the hole in the right place when the new tab is in place. Then we used the Dremel tool to cut away the remainder of the broken tab in order to have a flat place to install the repaired tab:



We cut a flat piece of scrap dash material a bit larger than we needed (saving the little melted bits):



Here is the start of the rough fitting of the scrap piece:



Here is the repair piece cut to fit:



We used the wooden stir stick to smear the thick ABS cement to the mating surfaces and then pressed them together:



We added more thickened ABS cement around all three sides of the joint to reinforce the joint:



We then painted the outside of the repair with un-thickened ABS cement to make it look a little nicer and to fill in all of the little gaps:



After letting the bond cure for 24 hours, we drilled the bolt hole in the mounting tab:



And here is the view from the other side. We are done with the simple dash repairs and the new parts are stronger than original:

