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When I bought my 2012 Dodge Ram 1500, I was stepping down from a GM dually diesel. We had moved to the city and driving a crew cab diesel long box with training wheels on the back was way too much hassle. So I bought the Ram with the 5.7 and tow package. The ride was excellent but I was disappointed with its towing ability immediately. But thankfully there was a fix!!!! Air bags.

Towing safer with your 1/2 ton truck

Having a light truck in the family fleet is very common these days. Vehicle manufacturers have made the 1/2 ton class very attractive to active families. Single, quad and crew cab trucks can haul up to 6 people in some cab designs, haul your toys in the box and tow your trailer or RV to your favorite camping spot come summer and still offer a very comfortable commuting vehicle for work. A wide array of engine choices also make these trucks far more fuel efficient than ever before. I come from a line of diesel trucks in the past 10 years but even I couldn't justify the inflated cost of the diesel power train

for the 4-5 times per year I want to tow my Jeep on an extended trip.

Last year I purchased a 2012 Ram 1500 crew cab to replace a very city unfriendly 3500 series dually diesel. Like most 1500 series trucks, when properly equipped, are rated to tow up to 10,000lbs – plenty for the average Rv'er or someone who tows only for pleasure. My Jeep on an open deck car trailer, tips in above 7000lbs not unlike many of today's larger tow behind RVs. While the 400HP Hemi in my Dodge combined with 3.73 differential gears and factory trailer brake controller has plenty of power to tow, the suspension that makes it so nice to drive on the highway feels soft and despite sway and traction control. There tends to develop a tail wag from the trailer above 100KMH on the



The Air Lift air bags go inside of the coil springs on the back of the Ram 1500. To insert the bags into the coils they need to be flattened. A cap on the air inlet is there so you can squash the air out of the bag then cap it to keep the bag flat.





The trick here is to be patient and put the truck on jack stands (not the axle) and let the suspension droop as much as possible to spread the coils. Take your time - don't use anything to pry the bag into the coil. Also better if the bags are warm and pliable - leave them out on the sun for a while. The air inlet goes to the top and the plastic spacer goes on the top as well to stop the bag chaffing on any metal.



The air bag kit is quite inexpensive if you stick with the manual fill connector, but I wanted to be able to adjust anywhere and not search for an air supply so I ordered my air bags with the inflation system. It comes with a compressor in its own box and a wireless controller so you don't need to run any wiring inside the cab. A clip goes into the fuse panel under the hood around one of the fuses. Make sure you pick a keyed 12-volt fuse. Compression fittings on the pressure sensor attach the air lines to the compressor and to the air bags.

Both air bags will inflate together and the controller goes to 90 psi. The compressor and control module were attached to the driver's side frame rail under the cab.





Air line and compression fittings come with the kit whether you use the manual fill or the on-board compressor.



The wireless controller needs to have a couple batteries install and the arrows increase and decrease pressure to the air bags.



The wiring harness and fuse block needs to be run to a keyed 12-volt source. The main fuse panel for the Dodge is under the hood. A small hole needs to be drilled into the side of the fuse box and a suitable fuse that turns off with the key needs to be found. These types of fuses have an exposed pin on top of each spade so you can just touch the top of the fuse with a test light to find a fuse that turns off when the key is turned off. Keep in mind many trucks today have parking courtesy light that stay on for a few seconds after the key gets turned off. The connector hooks around the fuse and it gets plugged back into the fuse panel and a spade connector is used to attach the compressor.



I've been using these air bags for close to 4 years and it really made a huge improvement to the Dodge when it came to hauling my Jeep around. When combined with some good E rated tires its more than comfortable towing at 70mph down the interstate pulling 7000lb + loads on the trailer. I don't miss my dually quite so much.

highway when towing a heavy load, which can be very dangerous if it gets out of control.

The first step in happy towing is to get the sway under control by installing a set of Air Lift air springs to the rear coil spring suspension. The Air Lift 1000 helper air springs can add up to 1000lbs of weight management to the rear coil springs. This will help stiffen the rear suspension under load without sacrificing the smooth daily driving characteristics of the quad coil sus-

pension in the Ram. Another advantage of air springs is the ability to level the truck with a large bed load or heavier tongue weight. A compressed rear suspension interferes with proper braking by making the front end lighter and points your headlights higher making night vision difficult and irritating to oncoming vehicles (they will think your high beams are on when on low beam – get ready to get flashed from on coming cars).

The Air Lift system can be installed as a manually inflatable system from any compressed air supply via the supplied manual schrader valve system. The simple air bag kit can be installed with minimal tools and a very low buy in cost. You can also add an automatic inflation system like the Wire-lessONE system that adds a small compact compressor and unique wireless controller that clips to your trucks sun visor for a super clean and easy install. If you like me, the added compressor is also a perfect travel tool for inflating bicycle tires and vehicle tire repairs, and those ever present camping air mattresses! Simply add a air line fitting to the system and set your Wire-lessONE pressure to 100 or more, or set it at perfect tire pressure for your toy and it will auto turn off as well. As soon as you start to inflate, the compressor will turn on and provide up to 120PSI of tire inflating pressure.



A trip this winter resulted in near max capacity on my 10,000lbs trailer. Those bins are filled with HD truck diffs and I had a 6.0L LS in the box of the truck. The 5.7 Hemi is more than capable of towing the load but the coil suspension is a little soft for comfort. About 70lbs in the air bags not only leveled the truck but also made towing a breeze and the front brakes more effective for stopping.



For a starting investment for most light trucks at 135.00 (MSRP) for a manual system – there is no reason you don't add air lift springs to your coil sprung of leaf sprung pick up for load carrying confidence and safety. The Wireless one compressor system with wireless controller has a MSRP of \$482.00.

Project Suppliers

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