

Fender Flare Installation

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After installing wider than stock tires on your truck, you end up with some of the tire protruding out of the wheel well. They tend to throw debris (mud, dirt, rocks, etc) all over the side of the truck. To prevent this, a set of fender flares are commonly utilized. The flares protrude out around the wheel well to help cover any of the tires that stick out. In some areas, these are required by law because it's illegal to have the tires protruding out of the fender well.

I'm not required by law in this area to have fender flares installed, but I quickly got tired of the tires throwing crap (mainly rocks) on the side of my truck. For this reason, I decided to get a set of flares. The look of a truck with flares was not my primary reason, but they do look really good on the truck. I looked at many different sets and decided that I wanted to get a set of Bushwacker Pocket Style flares. I chose this style for two reasons. First, I like the look of the pocket style flares with the simulated bolts. And second (the primary reason,) I got a really sweet deal on a set of new, already painted, never installed flares.

New flares come unpainted and I believe you have to drill the mounting holes in them. I would suggest drilling the mounting holes prior to having them painted so you don't risk scratching the paint when you drill. Mine were already drilled and painted when I got them, so this article will start from there.

I started the installation process by installing the screws that give the flares the “bolt-on” look. The flares come with a hardware kit that contains enough screws, washers, and nuts required for installation. Install all the screws with a washer and nut into the flares. The screws are extremely soft and will break very easily. I ended up breaking a screw because one of the threads half way up was messed up and it jammed the nut. It broke when trying to back off the nut. I had to use a little JB Weld to secure the broken screw in the hole because it wasn't long enough to put another nut on. I put all the JB Weld on the back side of the flare so you can't tell that it was done that way.



After all the hardware was installed in the flares, it was time to move on to the rubber molding. The rubber molding is to keep the plastic part of the flare from touching the paint of your truck. It's simply a U-shaped rubber strip with some adhesive tape on the inside. Slide it over the edge of the flare from one side to the other, and then cut off the excess. Grab the red plastic cover over the adhesive tape and pull it out. Firmly press on the molding to adhere it to the plastic flare.



While installing the rubber molding, I discovered that I only had enough to cover 3 1/4 flares. Trying to think outside of the box, I decided that I would attempt to install the front two flares using some 3M double sided tape to see how it held up. I figured I'd see if I liked the tape or the rubber molding better and then I would switch all 4 flares over to my preferred method. So I acquired some tape from the local auto parts store and attached it to the front two flares.



Installing the flares is very straight forward with only 1 major hang up. The front flares will overlap the Cummins badges. Therefore, the badges must be removed. You can leave them off if you want or reinstall them in a different location. I chose to move them about 3/4 inch up and 3/4 inch aft from where they were and reinstall them with 3M double sided tape. I used the same fishing line/eraser wheel method that I mentioned in my "Badge Removal" article. Give it a read if you want to see the process in detail.

Installing the front flares is really easy. You must remove the three screws holding the inner fender liner to the sheet metal and install the flares utilizing those same three screws. Since I chose to attempt these two with the double sided tape, I had to pull out the red backing material on the tape and firmly press them to the fender.



Just a heads up, the double sided tape didn't work out at all. First, it was fairly noticeable that it was on there. Second, after driving around with it on there for a few weeks, it bubbled up and rolled a little under the flare from the flexing of the truck. I ended up pulling it all off and reinstalling the flares with the rubber molding. Since I didn't have enough molding, I got in contact with Bushwacker and they agreed to send me some extra molding. About a week later I got a box in the mail that contained a complete hardware kit. I had all the molding and all the hardware to install the flares. If I knew I was going to get new screws I wouldn't have had to JB Weld the broken one in the flare, but it's already done so I just left it there.

Rear flare installation is slightly more difficult, but still extremely simple. Start by removing the two screws holding the rear partial fender liner to the fender.



Since the truck doesn't have full inner fender liners installed from the factory, there aren't enough mounting points on the truck to attach the flares. For this reason, the kit includes several clip-on nut plates that you have to install. Install the two smaller nut plates on the forward edge of the fender where the two factory holes are.

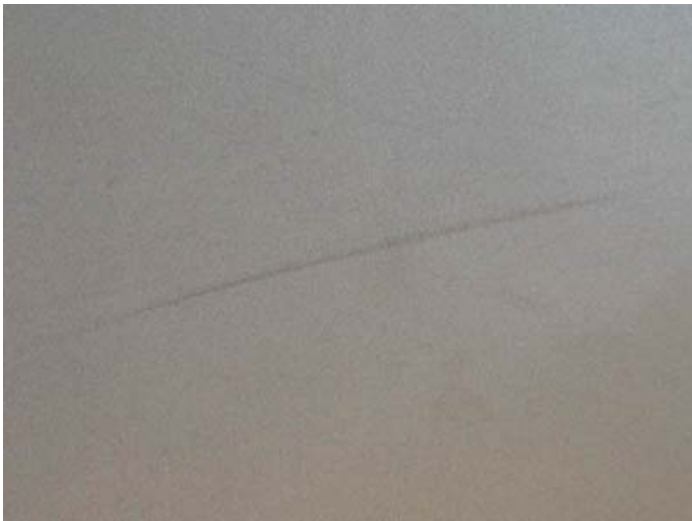


After you install the first two nut plates, hold the flare on the truck and mark the location of the three upper holes and then remove the flare. Apply the supplied tape in the three locations you marked and then slide the three "S" shaped nut plates over the tape. These provide the upper mounting locations without forcing you to drill holes in the truck. The picture below is of a test fit of the nut plate before I put the tape on, then again with the tape.



Install the rear flares by simply bolting them to the nut plates you just installed and the two in the rear that hold the partial inner fender piece. I had to adjust the flares by filing out the holes a little bit to make them sit flush against the body. I think they weren't drilled in the correct location by the person I bought them from. It was quick work because they're plastic. Adjust until you're happy with the fit and tighten all the screws.

The flares look great on the truck, but I did notice a fairly major problem after they were on for about two weeks. I got in a little mud working out in the fields, so I decided to take the flares off and clean under them when I washed the truck. After the flares were removed, I cleaned the truck and noticed a nice pretty rub line around the fender where the flares were touching. Apparently I got some dirt in between the flare molding and the truck and it created a sandpaper effect scratching the clear coat. This simply wasn't acceptable, especially after only two weeks. After doing some research on the best way to prevent this from happening, I decided to get some 3M VentureShield installed where the flares contact the paint to keep them from rubbing the clear coat. There's an article on CarboniteCummins.com detailing the entire process if you wish to do the same thing to your truck.



And finally, here are a couple pictures of everything installed on the truck. I think they turned out nice. There are some more pictures from different angles on the website.

