

STRAIGHT AXLE SAFETY

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Safety is a boring subject. Yet it's important; so much so that we would all suffer without proper safety.

I've been on a number of safety committees at work. There, workers are forced to utilize programs designed to help them prevent accidents. I know the contempt and distaste for safety programs and those who suggest them. We have several helpful safety tips for early Corvette owners; some quite serious. The thoughtful straight-axle owner would be well-advised to heed the warnings contained in this article.

1. There is a possibility of the hood falling and bopping a head or crushing a finger. To prevent this, holes were drilled on the sides of the hood prop. By installing a bolt in the hole, you can be safer.

I know that I have seen this in a Chevrolet publication. Yet, I have been unable to locate it. Jim Dawson found it in the 1967 service manual:

HOOD PROP SAFETY RETENTION FEATURE

"When extended under hood service operations are anticipated, the hood prop track and slide should be secured by placing a 1/4" bolt and nut through the existing holes. This will prevent accidental closing of the hood that could result in a serious injury."

In an emergency, just about anything will work. A ball point pen, a stick, lots of makeshift items. Just don't get hurt.

Fire Safety Applies Here...

2. Fire is a problem with older cars; Corvettes are no exception. wiring becomes worn and frayed. Fuel leaks are much more common. These, along with backfires, are the common causes of fires. Worse, if the fire gets hot enough, the fiberglass body itself may support combustion and burn all by itself.

Preparation is the key, for not all fires are a "common" type. Like most emergencies, they begin at the worst possible time, so be ready for anything. Let's examine one such unexpected fire.

Several years ago in California, a 1961 was under restoration. The car was in good condition, so it got a "frame on" restoration. The body was repaired and primed, and the rebuilt instruments were replaced. All that remained was to paint the body and install the interior trim and exterior chrome.

Then someone noticed that the gas tank was leaking. At that point, it was an easy task to remove the tank and get it repaired. The car was parked in the driveway beside the house. A drop light was brought out to assist locating the bolts on the tank hold down straps. The owner and a friend soon had the leaking tank loose, and it was lifted out

of the body. However, in the process, the drop cord was knocked loose. As the light hit the driveway, the bulb broke, and a small fire started.

Now, the owner is holding the partially full tank, but he has a big problem. Does he replace the tank — just above the fire — or does he move it away and come back to fight the fire? He decided to move the tank to a safe spot, then return.

In the meantime, the other guy is running around looking for some way to put out the fire. The only thing he can find is a faucet - but no hose. Now, he is looking for a hose, as the fire grows quickly. Finally, a hose is located and connected. But wait... don't turn on the water yet; there's live electrical wires in the broken light bulb. More delay, as the drop cord is unplugged. Finally, they turn on the hose and put out the fire.

The repaired and ready-to-paint body was ruined: a real disaster. It was burned from the windshield area back to the rear of the top lid cover. All the rebuilt instruments and the main part of the body were badly burned beyond recovery.

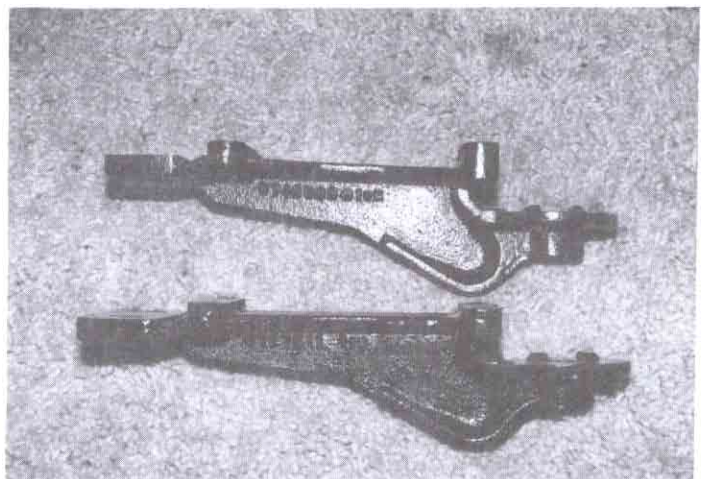
These guys were lucky; they located a complete '61 body. After a lot of time and money, the body was replaced, and the Corvette was saved to again be enjoyed someday.

If they had just had the garden hose connected to the faucet and ready to go, this disaster could have been prevented. Every Corvette should carry a fire extinguisher, period!

In addition, being ready for such disaster is just good sense. For one thing, complete Corvette bodies are really getting hard to locate, so be careful.

Cracks DO Occur In Steering and Frame Brackets...

3. Last summer, Laurie Ames backed his 1954 Corvette



IDLER ARM BRACKETS: The rear boss is thicker on later versions.

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