



START STOPPING!

CPP's Six-Lug Disc Brake Upgrade for '55-59 Chevy Trucks

BY GRANT PETERSON

One of the least attractive things about old trucks is their brakes—or lack thereof. It's no secret either, but most of these trucks weren't designed to blast down the freeway with little Hondas piloted by clueless drivers stopping at will on a dime in front of them. They were made to haul stuff around the farm or jobsite, and they did that just fine for many years ... but it's time for a bit of evolution!

Many of us classic truckers don't have the big budgets the street rod and muscle car folks have, and we'd bet there are more than a few '55-59 Chevy truck owners out there with



Here's the brunt of CPP's six-lug disc brake kit for '55-59 Chevy trucks using 1/2-ton spindles. The kit comes complete with 12-inch rotors, GM C-10 calipers, brackets, hoses, hardware, and even cotter pins! You can also order it with a dual chamber master cylinder if you need one (which is a smart upgrade). CPP also makes a kit for '47-54 trucks.



First things first, we gotta get the old brakes off starting with the drum/hub assembly. If you have a hard time pulling the drum off, make sure the brake shoes are adjusted all the way "in."



Now the backing plate can come off. There's no sense in dismantling the brakes before doing this since they're not going to be reused. Don't forget to disconnect the rubber brake hose at the hard line at the frame and set out a drain pan for the brake fluid.



Once the drum is removed from the hub, there are a few rivets that hold basically a dust/grease cover/shell to the backside of the hub. These rivets need to be hit with a rubber-backed sanding disc to help show their position before driving them out.



Using a round punch and a heavy hammer (or a hydraulic press), drive out the rivets. Make sure you properly support the hub, and wear appropriate safety gear when you do this!



The wheel lug studs also need to come out since they are holding the inner shell on, too. Same rules apply here as with the rivet removal.



Separating the two parts reveals the backside of the hub, which will later be mated to the new disc brake rotor. We can also get a good look at the inner wheel bearing and the ancient grease seal that's made from felt. We obviously have better seals these days than the ones the big automakers used over 50 years ago, so this seal will be changed to a modern rubber lip seal (a CPP exclusive) upon reassembly.



Most often, the pressed-in tin felt seal retainer will need to be pried out of the hub and is usually rendered useless in doing so. Sometimes a sharp punch driven into it at an angle is a good way to get a stubborn one out. With that out of the way, the inner wheel bearing can come out and the hub can be degreased and cleaned up.



With the hub now clean and void of wheel bearings, the bearing races need to come out. I believe there are tools to do this, but most of us don't have them, so we do it the old-fashioned/precarious way—with a hammer and punch. From the backside of each race, CAREFULLY drive out the races while taping around the circumference of it as you go.

stock brakes and an I-beam under the nose of their favorite truck. Last month we showed you how to lower your '55-59 Chevy the budget-minded "low-tech" way with a dropped axle and without cutting your frame. This month we are following that up with a six-lug, 12-inch disc brake upgrade from Classic Performance Products (CPP) using your stock 1/2-ton "beam spindles. This can be done with or without the dropped axle, but it should be done in conjunction with the installation of a dual-reservoir master cylinder that CPP can also provide—we just don't have enough space to outline that here.

To help keep costs down for you do-it-yourselfers, CPP's kit uses the stock hubs, which get some refurbishing before accepting the new 12-inch disc brake rotor. This would also be an ideal time to upgrade the antique wheel bearings in your hubs while they're apart, but why, you ask? The OEM wheel



Once the old wheel bearing races are out, the hub needs to be thoroughly cleaned before the new races are pressed in. This should be done with as close to the right tools as possible and slowly to avoid cocking the race in the hub. If you don't have the tools or know-how to remove and replace the races, a good automotive machine shop should be able to do it for you.



The reason we are replacing the OE wheel bearings (in addition to the fact that they are over 50 years old and not in the best shape anymore) is that CPP offers a modern tapered roller bearing upgrade designed to handle the increased stress that radial tires put on wheel bearings versus bias-ply tires. Plus, most trucks with upgraded drivetrains and/or suspensions are driven harder and faster than they were originally designed for—a smart choice indeed.



Here is the new rubber lip seal going on after the new inner wheel bearing was greased and installed. The new seal gets tapped into place. CPP saw the need for this modern seal and had it made to include in the wheel bearing upgrade kit. Make sure to put a small amount of grease on the seal lip before installing it on the spindle.

bearings were designed for bias-ply tires and lower speeds than we deal with today, plus we have the technology to build better bearings and seals. CPP had a new rubber lip seal made to include with the wheel bearing upgrade kit to replace the old-fashioned felt grease seal for the inner wheel bearing, which just makes sense. Replacing the wheel bearing races takes a bit of work and patience, but is well worth it.

The GM C-10-style full floating calipers provided in the kit are well suited for stopping any old Chevy, but they might interfere with early riveted steel wheels. Later-model 15- and 16-inch steel wheels with welded centers should be fine, but double-check with CPP when ordering. The kit also comes with all necessary hardware, rubber brake lines, caliper brackets, wheel lug studs, and 12-inch rotors that can also be ordered cross-drilled and slotted.

CPP also offers a similar six-lug kit for '47-'54 Chevy trucks, and of course they have a knowledgeable staff and tech line should you need any additional help. Call CPP today and get set up to start stopping!

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Next, carefully open up the rivet holes with a drill. This will allow the rotor mounting hardware to pass through the hub.

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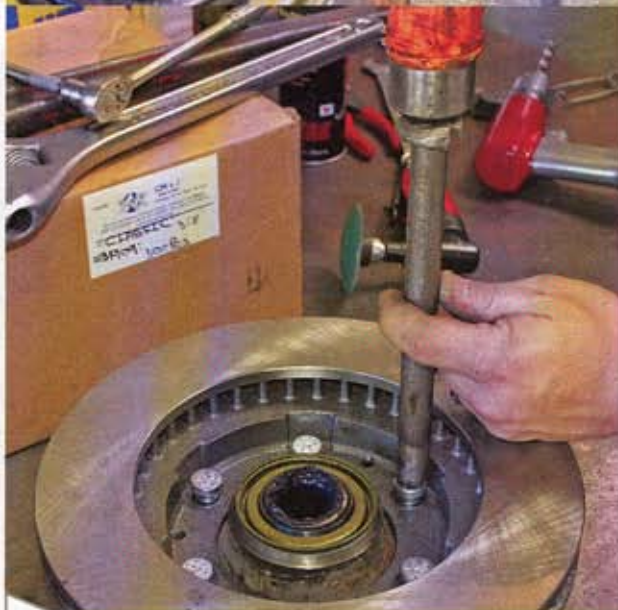
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After double-checking that both sides of the flange on the hub were free of dirt, dings, burrs, rust, or anything else that would make it not flat, it gets sandwiched between the new CPP 12-inch rotor and the outside retainer plate. The tapered Allen bolts will hold it all together along with the new wheel lug studs.



Bada bing! This is the 12-inch rotor/hub assembly complete with the upgraded tapered roller wheel bearings. One of the things that helps CPP keep costs down on the kit is using the stock hub, which is more than capable once these modifications are made.



The new wheel lug studs are installed in the reverse manner in which they were removed. Don't forget to support the rotor/hub assembly when driving them home!



With nice, clean spindles, CPP's caliper bracket gets bolted to it using the provided Grade 8 hardware. Make sure the bracket goes over the top of the spindle as shown and not from the bottom.



Installing the rotor onto the spindle is just like any other. Put in the outer wheel bearing, large washer, spindle nut, and cotter pin once the nut is tightened down appropriately, and finally place the grease cap.



Now heft the new caliper in place and install the two special caliper bolts. Make sure the bleeder screws are pointing up; this will tell you which side they go on.



There you have it. Hook up the new rubber brake lines, add fluid, bleed, and bed the pads and rotors as per the instructions. If you don't already have a dual-reservoir master cylinder in your truck, now would be a great time to upgrade since you'll most likely need a proportioning valve anyway. CPP can set you up with all of this too, as well as a helpful tech line should you have any questions. What are you waiting for, start stopping!