

Yes, it's going to be a long day. But if you need heat, and want to change that leaking or broken heater core yourself, now is the time. Don't wait until it is in the single digits outside to do it. This view may look intimidating, but don't worry, we'll show you how to get there.

BY VINNIE KUNG
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Y.T. GUY

STANG BANGER

B A S I C S

How can you possibly allow yourself and your friends to suffer this winter because you don't have heat in your ride? Inoperative air conditioning is forgivable, but without heat it is just plain cruel to be in a car when it's in the single digits. Many late model Mustang enthusiasts bypass the heater core during the summer months because it leaks coolant into the car and replacement is a tough (or expensive) job. But now that it's getting cold again, that broken heater core is causing more trouble than its \$50 worth. So

while it's still warm out, now's the time to replace that faulty heater core, so that this year, icicles won't hang off your nose.

You must be forewarned that this is considered a pretty serious task. If you aren't familiar with basic levels of mechanics, perhaps you should let a professional do your heater core. You will save yourself a lot of time, frustration, and possibly, money. But if you do have rudimentary skills needed, break out the tools and get moving because we have quite a few screws and bolts to turn. Your 1979-93

Fox Mustang is about to be disassembled.

The HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) system is housed in one fiberglass box that resides behind the dashboard. Inside of this sits the heater core. On cars with air conditioning, it sits flat, facing forward, at the very top of this box. To access the heater core,

you must pull the HVAC box away from the firewall. But to do that, you're going to have to remove a few things from the front half of the interior. Basically, you need to drop the steering column, remove the cen-

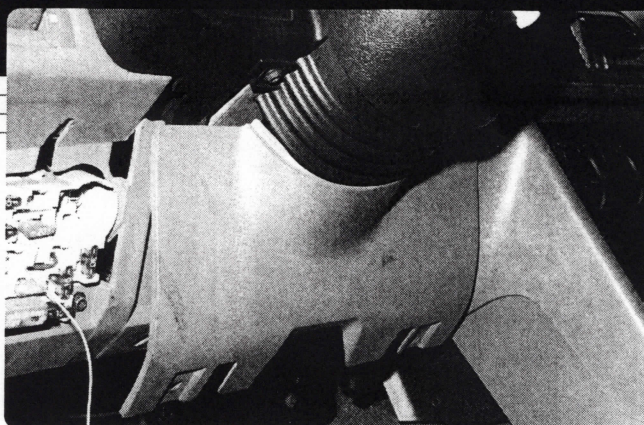
PART TWO

Just Add Heat

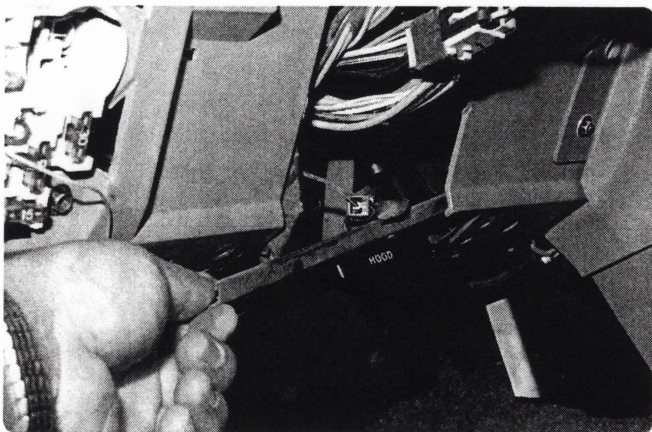
But you'll need to change that leaking heater core first. We show you how, step-by-step.



Here are the basic tools you will need. A complete set of metric and standard sockets, Phillips- and flat-head screwdrivers, a Torx wrench set, and 7mm and 8mm nutdrivers. Air tools would be a plus, and a technical service manual would be beneficial too.

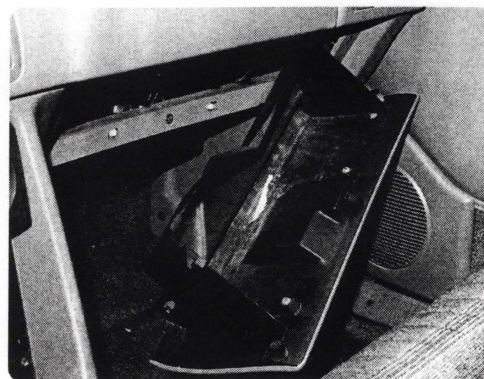


Start on the driver's side by removing the fuse panel cover and the lower dashboard cover. Underneath the steering column is a black, semi-circular trim piece with four ribs in it. Remove this as well. Next, take out the two screws that hold the center console to the dashboard adjacent to the HVAC controls. Behind the radio are two screws that go through the steel black plate. Take them out also.



Right above the hood release handle is a steel crossbar. Remove the four screws that secure it with the 7mm nutdriver or the Torx driver.

On the passenger's side, detach the glovebox assembly. Two small screws fasten it at the bottom on the hinges. Disconnect the glovebox light, and the two push-button switches (if applicable) that actuate the power decklid release and the power fuel door release. While you're there, remove the two screws that secure the center console to the dash, and the two other screws that are down behind the radio that go through the steel black plate.



Time to take the center console out. Don't forget to properly disconnect all the electrical items such as the radio, power sideview remote control and cigarette lighter. It is easiest if you tilt the console upward at the back, place the shifter into fourth gear, and leave the emergency brake handle down.



With a 9/16-inch deep socket, remove the two nuts that hold the hood release handle and the four nuts that hold the steering column in place. Slowly lower the column to prevent accidental damage to the electrical system.

ter console, and all the miscellaneous trim pieces that go onto the dashboard. No major electrical connections will need to be disconnected or moved around significantly, but keep in

mind that after all these years, some frayed wiring may find its way loose. You must then take into consideration that the engine's cooling and electrical system will be tampered with, so the coolant must

be drained and the battery disconnected.

AND THEY'RE OFF!

Of all the things to look for, be careful of the speedometer cable. It must be prop-

JUST ADD HEAT



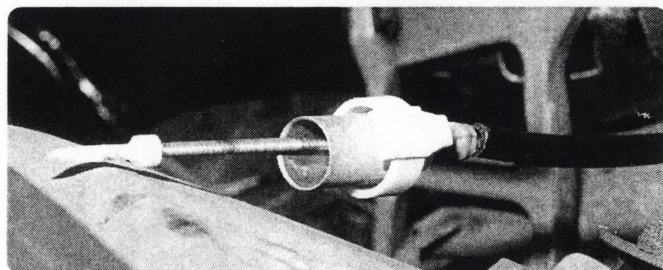
With a 90-degree screwdriver, remove the screw on the side of the speaker grill. Carefully pop the grille up and pull on it. Repeat this procedure for the other side.



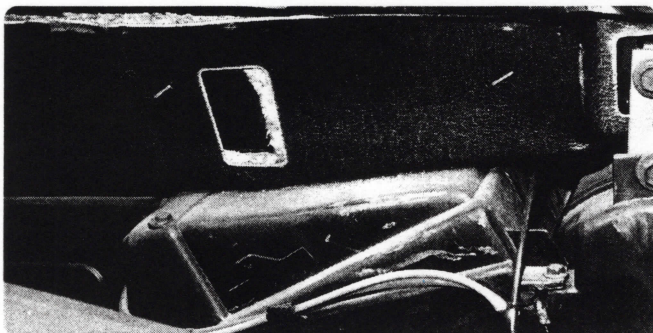
Carefully pry up the defroster vent trim cover and place it aside. Along the top of the dash, there will be five screws that hold it to the base of the windshield. Use the 7mm nutdriver to take them out.



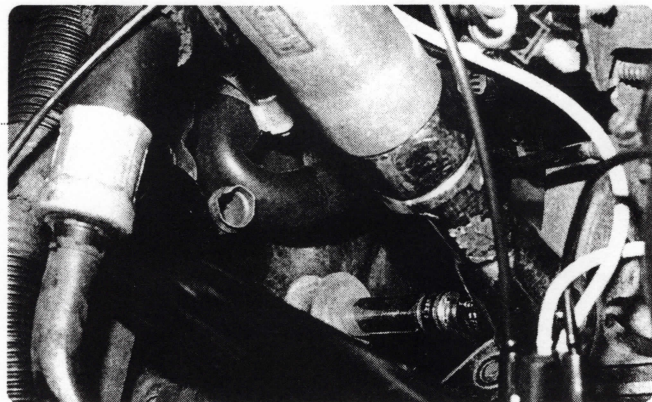
At each lower corner, there will be one bolt that has to come off. Depending on the year, you'll need an 8mm, a 7/16-, or a 1/2-inch socket to do it. There is one more nut to take off before the dash falls into your lap. It is situated above the steering column, faces downward, and uses a 10mm socket to come off. You don't have to take this nut completely off, but loosen it enough so the dash will slide rearward.



The speedometer cable must also be disconnected from behind before the dash comes off. Simply squeeze the two tabs on the white nylon retainer and pull it off.



So close, yet so far. The heater core sits right under this cover. Be patient because there are plenty more screws and bolts to loosen before we can get to it.

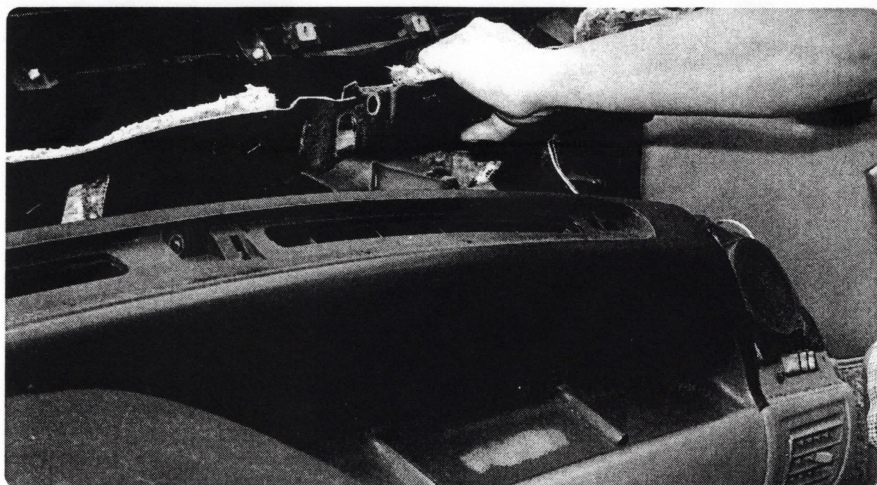


From inside the engine compartment, unbolt the accumulator's mounting brackets and bend them out of the way. We don't want to disconnect the A/C system because recharging it will only add serious expense to this project. Then, two 7/16-inch nuts come off. We used an air ratchet to make it a little easier. If you don't have the luxury of air tools, a conventional ratchet will suffice.

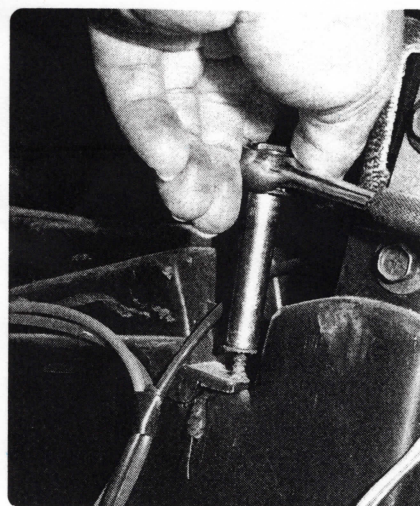
erly disconnected from the rear of the gauge cluster; otherwise, you'll be yanking on the dashboard all day and be wondering what is keeping it in place. A broken

speedometer cable usually results. Another thing you should know is that there is one annoying little nut that holds the dashboard's frame assembly to the vehicle's

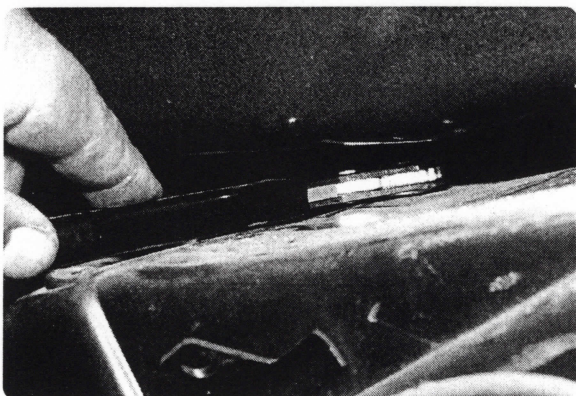
pedal assembly. This little nut caused us to cuss and yell for about an hour until we discovered its existence. The only way to get at it is when the steering column is



Pull the upper insulation mat out of the way. Flop it over to the driver's side so it does not interfere with your work area.



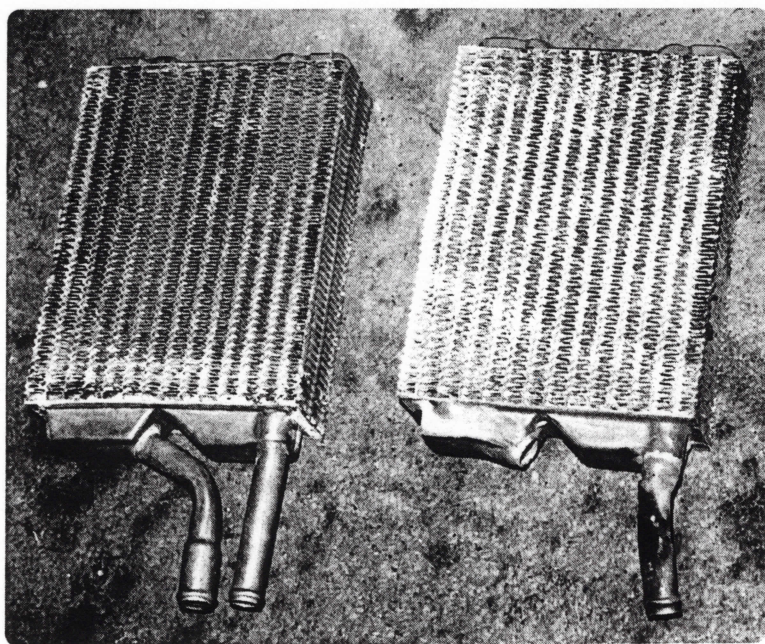
Three screws hold on the top of the heater core box. Use a 5/16-inch socket to take the two front ones off.



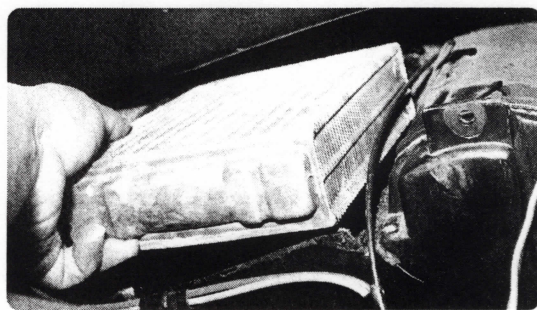
The last screw sits all the way in the back, toward the driver's side. To loosen it, we used a GM battery terminal ratcheting wrench.



Pry down on the heater box assembly and use a magnet to retrieve that blasted screw.

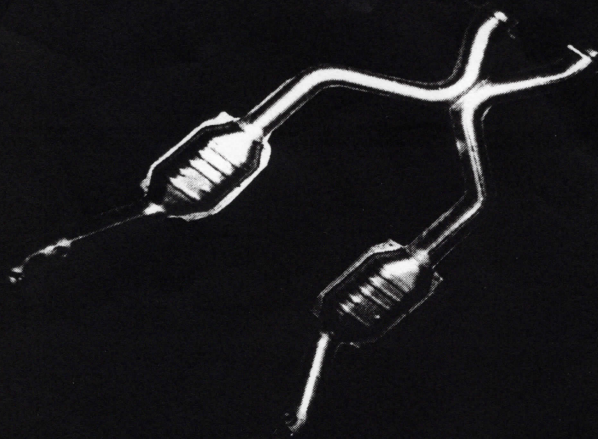


The heater core on the right came out of our car. It was leaking very badly and we found out why—one of the tubes came right off of the core. The new unit on the left was found for \$45 at our local auto parts store. If you haven't broken anything this far, it's still cheaper than paying \$400 or more for a shop to do it.



Insert the new heater core and carefully line up the two pipes so that they go through the rubber/foam firewall bulkhead. Install the cover (it's a real pain; be careful not to damage your new heater core when you do it) and start putting everything back together. It took us a total of four hours from start to finish.

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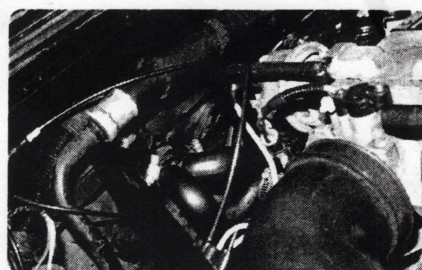


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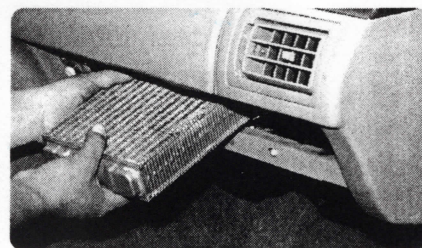
JUST ADD HEAT

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At this time, it's a good idea to change the two rear heater hoses. New ones are cheap and will prevent leaks and prevent panic attacks on your behalf.



If your car was never originally equipped with air conditioning, skip everything you just read. Remove the glovebox door, pull off the rectangular panel that sits behind, disconnect the two heater hoses, and slip out the old one. Owners of non-A/C cars have it easy.

dropped, with a 10mm socket, going straight up. Other than that, the photos will demonstrate exactly what is required in order to replace a heater core.

Total time required to perform this task will vary. If you know your way around a car, you can realistically do a heater core swap in about three hours. If you break something, add another hour for the glue to dry. If you are doing this swap in January, in the cold, with no help, and are using a droplight to keep your hands warm while your bandaged fingers are turning the wrenches, count on a two-day ordeal.

Although it is by no means any fun, at least you won't be freezing your buns off this winter. Keep warm and drive in comfort.

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