

Money-Saving Repairs & Maintenance Shortcuts



Cary Urka rebuilt this 1974 Chevy truck to hold everything he needs for welding work.



He uses this knuckle boom straight truck to pick up pallets, cultivators, even tractors.

Service Trucks Make Fieldwork Easier

Working fields as far as 35 miles from home is less of a hassle than it used to be for Cary Urka, thanks to a couple of service trucks he customized for farm work.

His knuckle boom straight truck is handy for transporting and repairing field equipment, while his home-built service truck gives him a shop on wheels.

"The knuckle boom truck eliminates the need to find a place to load and unload trailers," says Urka. "It will easily handle about 2 1/2 tons, so I can pick up pallets, cultivators, fertilizer tanks and even small tractors. The boom is out of the way, so I have full use of the bed."

Urka bought the snub-nosed 1984 Mack truck cheap, complete with the boom on back. It was operable, but not well maintained. He

fixed it up with new brake lines, a valve job and a new cab, put a new axle under the front end and got it back in shape. He also put a heavy-duty under-ride bumper on the back to prevent a car from sliding under if it hit him from the rear. He added a full set of slings and straps to use instead of tie downs, and put a toolbox on either side. When finished, he had a state inspector check it out and got a clean bill of health.

"It's extremely easy to drive, which is important with workers who are not trained truck drivers," says Urka. "I've hauled logs with it and even hauled a couple of pieces of a train engine. When I need to sharpen my Bushhog blade, I just lift it up on edge and grind down the blade. It's the ultimate utility truck."

Urka's other service truck may be the ultimate shop on wheels. The '74 Chevy truck was in good shape when he bought it, needing only a brake job. Though it had toolboxes on it, Urka stripped it down and rebuilt it to hold a 20 hp air compressor engine, welding generator and bottle racks, and even its own chop saw. Everything is enclosed with doors and drawers for easy access. It even has a couple of outlets for electrical hook ups.

"Everything is out of the weather and out of eyesight," he says. "The tailgate folds down with a couple of vises on it for field repairs."

The old bed had wheel wells sticking up into it, so he narrowed the new box down and covered it above the wheel wells. The new higher floor created storage space be-

tween the wheels for steel supplies. In the drawers is a full selection of nuts and bolts and pipefittings. When he changed steel cultivator shovels recently, he had the 50 nuts he needed right there.

Urka estimates that he has put about \$6,000 into the truck after buying it for \$3,500. He says the heavy truck beats worrying about constantly overloading.

"I wanted something to carry tools, stock and other supplies so I didn't have to go hunting," he explains. "It weighs about 17,000 to 18,000 lbs. fully loaded."

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Mobile Workshop Travels The Country

Lester Rose and his wife, Audrea, live on the road doing volunteer construction work, made possible by their fully equipped workshop.

The Roses have put on over 100,000 miles in the last 13 years, driving their 1987 1 1/2-ton cargo van that Lester outfitted for on-site wood and metal work. The unit has a 175 hp, 6-cyl. diesel engine and a 14 by 8 by 7-ft. box on it that's jam-packed with tools and features.

The 17,000-lb. rig also pulls a 30-ft. travel trailer that has been the Roses' only home for 13 years.

The interior of the truck box is lined with workbenches made from 3/4-in. square tubing, with drawers below and cabinets above, all full of hand tools. There's a steel bench with a bench grinder, a mechanical vice, an acetylene torch, planer, a 6 by 48-in. belt sander, a 12-in. band saw, an 18-in. metal turning lathe, a drill press, and a wood turning lathe that requires setting up. And that's just one side!

On the other side, there's a 10-in. radial arm saw, a chain saw, an air compressor, and sticking up through the table, there is a router.

The workshop has a 5,000-watt generator built into the side of the truck box. Five 4-ft. fluorescent lights provide excellent lighting.

"Everything can run off either the generator or regular AC power, if we can plug in," Rose says. "I made steel steps that slide under the truck bed when travelling, and they can also fold down into a ramp. There's a little adjusting rod on each side of them so they're always level."

Rose says his rig is extremely compact, but it works great.

"I can cut down the middle of a 4 by 8-ft. sheet of plywood and walk past it. It's hard to believe but there's enough room," he says. "It took me a month to build this rig. We've been volunteering at state parks, national wildlife refuges, and national historical parks,



Lester Rose and his wife, Audrea, live on the road doing volunteer construction work. They outfitted their 1987 1 1/2-ton cargo van for on-site wood and metal work.



Interior of truck box is lined with workbenches, with drawers below and cabinets above.

where I work at construction of buildings, bridges and other miscellaneous smaller jobs. At one location, I built an entire RV park."

Both Lester and his wife are on Social Security. State parks and wildlife refuges often provide them with free RV sites to park in, and some will pay stipends (\$7 to \$15 per day) for Lester's work.

"We don't have too much expense," he explains.

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Pump Eliminates Need To Idle Semi-Tractor Engines

If you drive a semi-tractor, you probably keep the engine running whenever you drive to a location and are waiting to load or unload a shipment. That keeps the cab warm in winter and avoids difficult restarts of a hot engine.

Over-the-road trucker Robert Jordan of Juneau, Wis., says his new Orbit engine heat transfer system provides two to four hours of free heat after the engine has been shut down, or can be used to cool off a hot engine in summer.

The system uses a 12-volt pump to circulate hot engine coolant into both the cab and bunk heater cores, just as if the engine and water pump were still running. Two thermostats are used, one in the cab and one in the bunk, to control interior blower fan use. The system shuts down automatically once engine coolant temperature falls to 80 degrees.

"It provides up to four hours of heat depending on the temperature outside," says Jordan. "It takes advantage of the fact that a semi tractor's engine typically weighs more than three tons, so there's a lot of heat available in it. I use it on my own truck and never idle the engine at all. The only time the engine runs is when the wheels are turning."

"The average truck on the road today spends as much time idling as it does driving. It uses 1 1/2 gal. of fuel for every hour the engine is idling. In a year, that amounts to about 2,000 gallons."

"Another benefit is that you aren't using any fossil fuels to keep the cab or bunk comfortable. I believe the time is coming when truckers will be allowed to run their engine only when their truck is moving."

The magnetically-driven pump installs in line with the engine cooling system. As you



System uses a 12-volt pump to circulate hot engine coolant into both the cab and bunk heater cores.



drive down the road the pump is free wheeling. "The only time the pump motor and pump drive are magnetically connected is when the pump is electrified," says Jordan.

The system has the added benefit of engine cool down during hot months, he says. "I have a summer switch connected to a 150-degree engine temperature switch that will shut off the pump automatically once the engine block cools to 150 degrees," he notes.

The basic system, which includes the pump, toggle switch, fuse, and instructions, sells for \$300 plus S&H. Also available are optional 80 and 160-degree temperature switches which sell for \$60 apiece.

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