

Wheel Bearings

Last month, we talked about lubricating often overlooked components that are important to the ease of operation and longevity of your Model A Ford. This month, let's look into some other maintenance items that are just as important.

Front Wheel Bearings

Often the front wheel bearings are cleaned and packed with grease as part of the restoration process or when the brakes are rebuilt. When properly done, the Model A will go many miles before they once again need attention but as with most of the other mechanical components, the front wheel bearings do require periodic service. The "Instruction Book" suggests the front wheel bearings be cleaned and re-packed with lubricant every 5000 miles but because of the way most of us use our Model A with little driving on unpaved roads and in the mud and snow, this interval can be extended some. Servicing the front wheel bearings is covered in Les Andrews "Model A Mechanics Handbook" Vol. #1.

The best grease to use? The front wheel hubs of modern automobiles are designed with a lip seal that keeps the dirt out of the bearings and the grease inside the hub with the bearings where it belongs. Synthetic high temperature grease that is used in our modern cars will last many tens of thousands of miles. Our Model A's however do not have sealed front hub assemblies and require a fibrous grease that will stay in the bearings and not liquefy and run out of the hub assembly. Heavy duty "Drum Brake" wheel bearing grease, available from "Sta-Lube", will meet the requirements of the Model A. This is a fibrous grease that will not liquefy and will stay in the bearing assemblies.

If the bearings themselves are worn and need replacement, they can be either purchased from one of the Model A parts suppliers, a local auto parts store or industrial bearing supplier.

The Timken part numbers for the tapered roller front wheel bearings and races are as follows:

Font outer bearing - Timken # 09074

Front outer race - Timken # 09196

Front inner bearing - Timken # 05118

Front inner race - Timken # 15250X



Rear Wheel Bearings

Rear wheel bearings are a little different than the front wheel bearings. The rear wheel bearings are a straight roller design with the inner race being the hardened ground diameter on the end of the axle housing and the outer race, the hardened and ground diameter inside the rear hub. The rear wheel bearings are designed with an outer seal that keeps grease from entering the rear brake assembly and an inner seal that keeps differential lubricant separated from the rear wheel bearing grease. Because of this, modern synthetic wheel bearing greases or even a good quality chassis lube can be used. The rear wheel bearings are equipped with a grease fitting but grease should be added very sparingly or the rear wheel bearing cavity can be overfilled forcing grease past the outer seal and into the brake assembly.

Like other mechanical components of your Model A, the wheel bearings need a little periodic maintenance to keep them in good condition.



Rear Wheel Bearings



Short Fiber Wheel Bearing Grease

Tech Tip

When using compressed air to dry ball or tapered roller bearings after washing in solvent, do not allow the bearing to spin. Just hold the bearing race so when you use the blow gun the bearing will not rotate. Spinning the bearing at high speeds with compressed air can cause wear and premature failure.