

OUTFITTING UPGRADE GUIDE

by Larry Walton

30+ WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TOW VEHICLE'S PERFORMANCE

The perfect tow vehicle has not been built. In fact, I could never convince you if it had, because your idea of the perfect machine is quite different from mine. Let's take front-row seating as an example. Many would have nothing but bucket seats with a console for their laptop or music collection. My wife and I, however, would never consider a vehicle where our dog couldn't sit between us on some type of bench seat configuration.

Some consider a camping trip with the kids or grandkids a perfect chance to interact away from our electronic

world. Others would not hit the road without the kids plugged into their own entertainment systems, especially if the route includes long miles of flat, featureless interstate.

Building the ultimate tow vehicle is a challenge even the manufacturers don't pretend to master. The best they can do is check some items off our collective wish list from what companies know about its customers. They vary options and target different drivers with a variety of models. Additionally, compromises are made to keep the vehicles affordable for more buyers. Suspension

systems that can haul lots of weight are not so comfy when the machine is empty, unless an expensive computer-controlled system adjusts for the conditions. All of these factors and trade-offs add up to plenty of room for aftermarket upgrades of the vehicles available.

For some, the upgrades will be all about comfort, sound quality and shine. Others will boost power, handling and cargo storage. Some can be customized exclusively for an RVing lifestyle, while other rigs must work all week, then transform into weekend toy haulers.

Here are some upgrades we found to help make your truck all that it can be, for you and your recreational lifestyle. If you don't find what you're looking for here, let us know, we're going to round up more performance-enhancing parts for you in future issues.



E-CON Power Programmer ▲

The Max Energy E-CON Economy Power Programmer from Hypertech is designed to offer better fuel mileage and more power, without the added cost of other high-performance features, which may not be utilized. The E-CON is programmed with Hypertech's Max Energy Tuning, optimizing fuel and spark curves to increase horsepower and torque at wide-open throttle and more miles at part-throttle. Hypertech customers report 2-to-6 MPG gain and a substantial increase in horsepower and torque. For an additional charge the E-CON can be upgraded to a Max Energy Power Programmer, via an online download, to include all Max Energy features for that vehicle. Hypertech: (901) 382-8888, www.hypertech.com

Brake Helper ▶

The PRXB (pressure regulated exhaust brake) from Pacbrake is its flagship product, which provides performance, safety and savings. The PRXB delivers constant exhaust pressure (braking) as early as 1200 RPM all the way to maximum RPM. It provides safety by increasing vehicle stability and reducing the amount of brake fade. Controlled by a master ON/OFF switch, the exhaust brake provides whisper quiet supplemental brak-



Steering Box Replacement ▲

Borgeson's newest steering offering for Dodge truck owners replaces the '60s-style Saginaw technology used in many Dodge models with a modern Delphi integral power steering gearbox. The "Dodge Box" for your 1994-2002 second generation Dodge Ram pickup offers more power assist, quicker ratio for easier parking and less turns lock-to-lock. A modern variable valve means stable highway driving. The "Dodge Box" bolts directly in the stock location and works with the original pitman arm, hoses and pump. Kit includes an adapter to work with all Borgeson replacement steering shafts. Borgeson: (800) 482-8283, www.borgeson.com (continued on pg. 38)

Air Intake System ▼

Banks Ram-Air intake system for the 2011 Ford 6.7-liter Power Stroke features an enclosed housing, which helps it inhale cooler, denser outside air and improves flow up to 26 percent for increased power and improved mileage. It also helps the engine run cooler and cleaner. Banks Power: (800) 601-8072, www.bankspower.com

