

Headlight switch

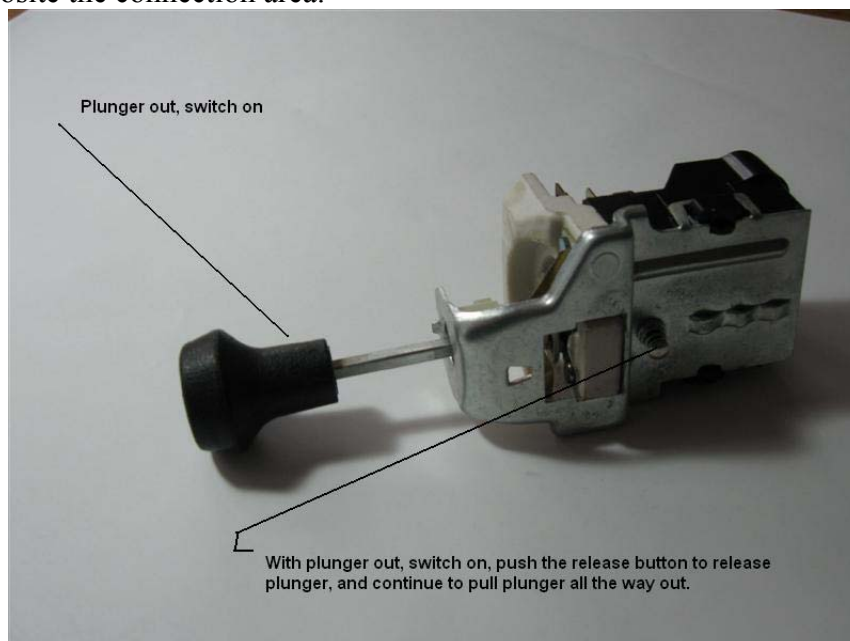
I had noticed that the dash lamps would not light unless the headlight switch was turned virtually full bright and even then required some “fiddling” to get them on. There was no dimming action at all. During my latest dash reconstruction, I decided to look into this and try to fix the problem.

The first step is to remove the headlamp switch, yes it can be removed without taking out the dash panel but is a bit difficult. Remove the ground from the chassis battery(s), insure that everything in the dash area does not have power. (might be a good idea to remove the ground from the hours battery(s) to be sure.

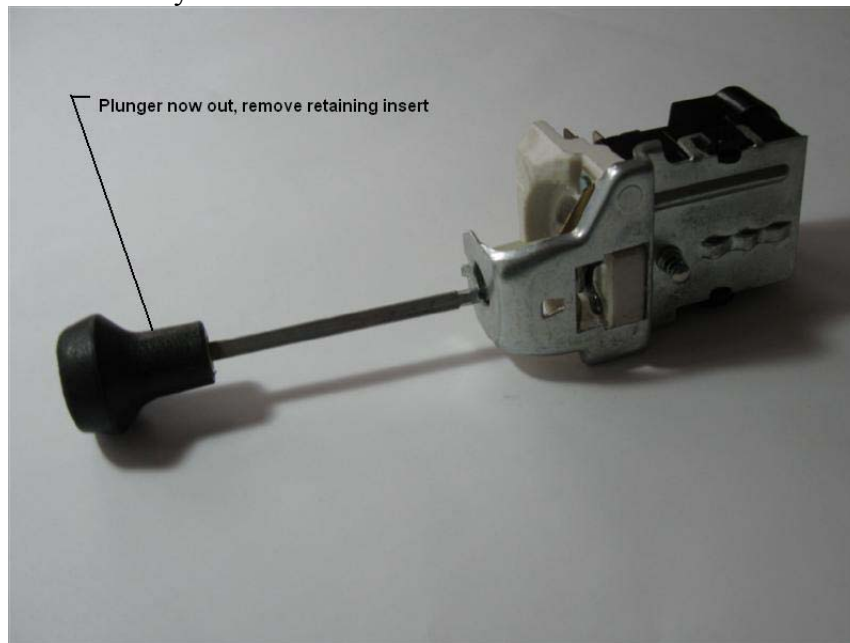
Pull the head lamp switch to the full on position:



Reach way in to the switch and depress the small button on the back of the switch. I call the back of the switch the side opposite the connection area.

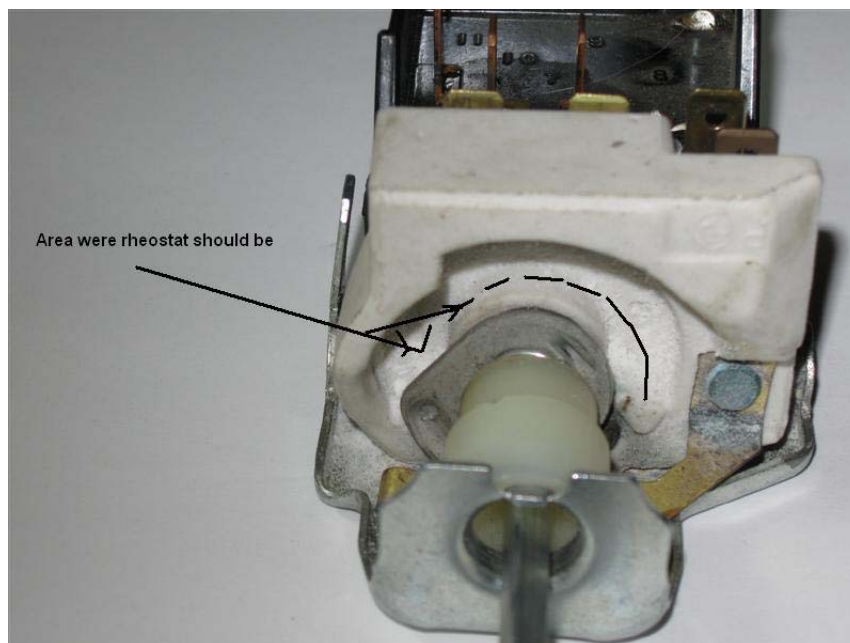


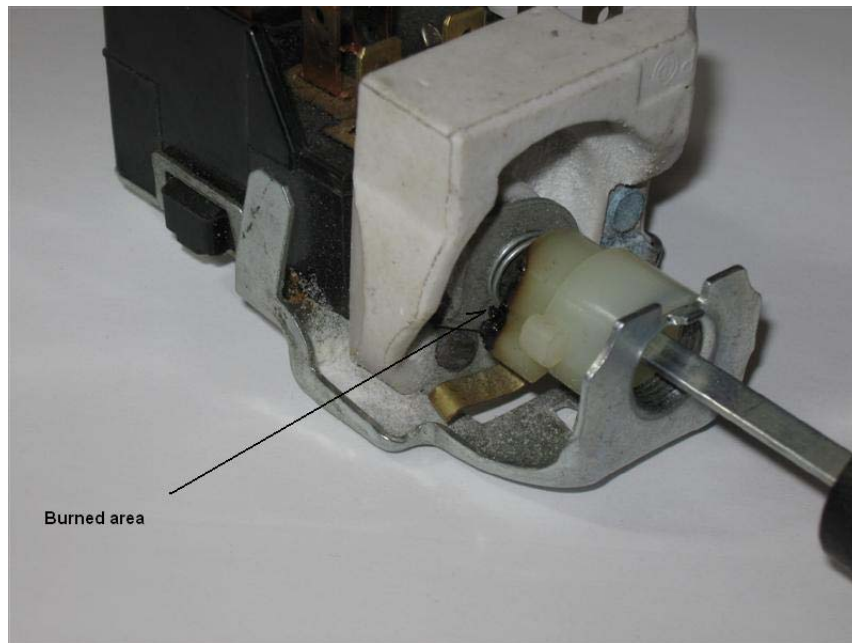
Pull the plunger while holding the small release button in, with a little force the plunger should come completely out of the switch body.



After the plunger is out, the retaining nut may be removed so that the switch may be removed, on my Breakaway, the wires to the switch have a connector some 12 inches away from the switch that connects to the body wiring harness.

Looking at the old switch, I found that the rheostat (variable resistor) that is used to dim the dash lamps, was gone, melted away, there was a white powdery residue of the overheated ceramic retainer. Only when the switch was rotated to the full bright position, where the rheostat is completely bypassed, would the dash lamps light.





I transferred the wires, one by one from the old switch to the new switch and reconnected the main switch connector back to the body harness connector. I applied battery power to check the new switch prior to re-installing the new switch.

Everything came back on as it should, now the dash lamps would dim properly, or so I thought! Within a matter of a minute or so I noticed a smell and saw the rheostat starting to glow, I had set the dash lamps in a dimming position, WOW, this isn't going to last long. The lights would dim, from bright to off OK but after I moved the wiper off the full bright position, the rheostat would start to over heat. HMMMMM—

Slowing down and thinking a bit, the original switch is designed for an OEM dash in a truck, probably not as many lights as I have in the Breakaway panel! Counting the lights that are in the dash circuit, I came up with 25 lights, (I have 3 extra lamps because of the three gauges I have added) measuring the current, over 2.9 amps at full bright, no wonder the rheostat is overheating.

I have remove the dash lamp power from the headlight switch and wired it directly into the headlight circuit. The dash lamps will be full on (where I normally have them anyway) and until I come up with a solid stat dash lamp drive circuit, that is where it will stay. Will be the subject for another report in the future.

I may even consider removing the existing headlight switch and replace it with 2 rocker switches, one for clearance lights and the other for headlights, always thought that push/pull headlight switch was out of place on the switch panel. I just need to find the right rocker switches!!

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