

3M *Holding Fast*

High Performance Acrylic Foam Tapes for the Automotive Aftermarket

A Publication of 3M Automotive Division - St. Paul, Minnesota

Vol. 1 No. 13

Save Time Now, Lose Money Later

Manufacturers of decorative dashboard trim continue to enjoy great success as consumers increasingly pursue vehicle customization. However, this growth in popularity has brought with it a considerable challenge for these manufacturers – that of communicating the importance of thorough surface cleaning and priming prior to kit installation.

The reputation of both the dash kit supplier and installer are on the line when an application fails. On the other hand, both benefit when a properly installed dash kit stays put over the long haul – customers appreciate reliability and will keep coming back.

“Today’s busy installers need to complete a project as quickly as possible, and we understand why. The faster a job is done, the sooner another can be started and the more revenue the installer can generate,” said Celeste Hrycaj, vice president at Accu Laser Technologies in Swansea, Massachusetts.

“We find that on occasion installers fail to properly prepare automotive dashboard surfaces before trim is installed, which can compromise the adhesive bond and may eventually cause the trim to release from the dashboard.”

Accu Laser Technologies, established in 1972, manufactures wood veneer interior trim kits for automobiles, sport utilities and trucks. The company sells to distributors, dealers and installers and provides a five-year warranty on all parts.

“When installing a dashboard trim kit, it may save time to eliminate or hurry through a surface preparation step. But in the end, time, money and customers may be lost. Our challenge is to spread the word about the importance of taking all the steps necessary to ensure a permanent bond. To that end, we include a detailed surface preparation instruction sheet with every kit we sell,” said Hrycaj.

A crucial, often missed, surface preparation procedure is removing contaminants such as Armor All® or other petroleum-based products from dash surfaces that will be



Interior wood dashboard kit from Accu Laser Technologies installed in a 1997 Ford Econoline Club Wagon XLT. When attached with 3M™ Acrylic Foam Tape to properly cleaned and primed dash surfaces, wood trim lends a look of class that lasts the vehicle’s lifetime.

covered with taped trim. This first step is critical to the long-term adhesive bond. When trim is tape-applied to a dashboard that has been treated with a petroleum-based product, the taped pieces may initially appear to bond well with the surface. Over time, however, especially in warm climates, the bond between the dashboard substrate and the adhesive can weaken and may eventually cause the trim to lift, slide or peel away from the dash.

To remove these contaminants, most dash kit manufacturers recommend using a degreaser designed for such applications. “We encourage installers to clean dash surfaces with 3M™ General Purpose Adhesive Cleaner a minimum of three times, always using a clean spot on the cloth. Taking the time for this step will ensure that every trace of oily residue is removed from the dash,” said Hrycaj.

The next surface preparation step is priming. This step is more crucial now than ever before because today’s dashboard surfaces are often constructed of plastics with low surface energy, making them very slippery and

presenting a special challenge to adhesives. 3M™ Adhesion Promoter chemically modifies the surface of the plastic dashboard and actually bonds with it, making it better suited to permanent tape attachment.

“For dashboard trim applications, we recommend using 3M™ Adhesion Promoter 4298, which has been specially designed for use with 3M™ Acrylic Foam Tape,” explained Hrycaj. Accu Laser sells this promoter in both sponge applicator packets and pen dispensers.

“Though it may take more time initially, proper surface cleaning and priming – along with the highest-quality dashboard trim and attachment tape – will provide the best possible results: a classy dash that satisfies the vehicle owner and stands the test of time,” Hrycaj concluded.

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Ordering is Easy

3M adhesion promoters are available in three convenient packages and can be easily ordered from the following sources:

To order primer pens, contact:
St. Croix Diversified Products*
Hudson, WI
Phone 800-728-6206 Fax 715-386-1462

To order primer in bottled form, contact:
Courtaulds Aerospace*
Indianapolis, IN
Phone 317-290-1600 Fax 317-290-1300

To order primer in sponge applicator packets or to order 3M™ Acrylic Foam Tape, contact:
3M Automotive Division, Customer Service
Phone 800-328-3081 Fax 800-435-3082

* St. Croix Diversified and Courtaulds are not equipped to make primer-to-surface recommendations. Please contact a 3M technical service representative at 800-535-8613 for this information prior to ordering.

Tips from 3M Tech Service

Dale Stewart,
3M Technical Service Specialist,
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Each 3M™ Adhesion Promoter is uniquely designed for specific applications, and some primers work better with certain surfaces than others. Because of this, we strongly suggest that when a person believes primer may be necessary for an application, they contact 3M technical service for a primer recommendation (800-535-8613).

It is also important to be aware that priming the surface will never take the place of cleaning it. It is crucial to do both. Prior to priming, be certain to remove oily residue from dash surfaces by using an appropriate cleaner such as 3M™ General Purpose Adhesive Cleaner or 3M™ Prep Solvent 70 and a clean, lint-free cloth.

When priming, apply one even coat and avoid building layers of primer, which can compromise the bond. Always follow the directions and safety instructions on the data sheet, which can be obtained from 3M customer service (800-362-7183).

The average dash kit takes approximately 40-60 minutes to install if all surface preparation steps are correctly observed. Cleaning takes about 10 minutes and priming about 15 minutes depending upon the size and complexity of the kit. However, reinstallation time for a failed application can take anywhere from 60-90+ minutes depending on the size and location of the failed part, and how well it had been primed initially. It is time-consuming to remove the wood trim and clean and prime the interior dash surfaces for re-installation. 3M encourages installers to plan ahead and invest their time in the initial preparation for best long-term results.



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