

REFINISHING YOUR DASHBOARD

by Dave Semler

One of the disadvantages of the thick lacquer finish on Lotus dashes is that it tends to crack. Some members have found that keeping their cars out of the weather as much as possible helps preserve the finish, however even this is not always successful. This tech article describes how to refinish the dashboard.

Removing the dashboard is a rather straight-forward operation. To give maximum of working space remove the glove box and the seven retaining bolts, then lower the steering wheel. While removing the instruments, be sure to label both the wire and the terminal you took it from--this greatly facilitates the re-assembly.

Once you have removed the board, you have two options: 1) you can take it to a good refinishers and have the job done professionally (I was given a quote of \$30.00 from Accredited Furniture Refinishers in Glendale) or 2) for Lotus enthusiasts and other masochists, stripping the finish is easy if you use a remover like TM-4 (available at hardware stores). Just follow the directions on the can: paint on the stripper, allow it to dry, then wipe it off. The finish is thick so it will take time, but eventually the lacquer will be removed. TM-4 won't affect the wood or the stain. If any sanding is necessary, sand very carefully--the veneer is thin.

A variety of finishes can be used to refinish the dashboard. I used Varathane because I have found it to provide a tough, durable finish. It is available in spray cans or it can be brushed on. Between each coat, sand down the previous coat with #400 sand paper. Lynn Garrison has suggested finishing resin as an alternative. In this case, make dams around the edges of the board with masking tape, then pour a layer of resin and let it harden. Sand the surface flat, then buff it to a shine. A draw back with the resin technique is that it tends to chip; when working with it, care must be taken. Lacquer is a third option, but it is liable to crack in the future.

Once the board is refinished, the re-assembly is just the opposite of the removal.

Good luck on the job, if you mess it up, I have the address of a good wood-worker who will cut out a new board.