

Creating Your Own A/C Hoses

The most common cause of air conditioning failure is refrigerant loss. The most common cause of refrigerant loss is hose failure. Unfortunately, replacement hose assemblies aren't always readily available. Of course, hoses always fail when it's blistering hot. The perspiring customer expects you to fix the air immediately—if not sooner. When it's 98 in the shade, though, there is a bright side. The desire for cold air always turns tightwad customers into willing spenders!

CRIMPING YOUR STYLE

There are two alternatives to ordering new hose assemblies from car dealers. First, you can have a local supplier or air conditioning specialist make hoses for you. Second, you can make them yourself. In either case, we urge you to crimp instead of clamp. A properly crimped hose connection looks a heckuva lot more professional than a clamp job does. And because it looks like OE and performs like OE, you can sell and install the crimped hose with more confidence. When it's crimped, you never have to worry about hose clamps loosening up.

If you talk to anyone who's done it, he'll tell you that it's a lot easier to get your price when you install a hose with crimped-on fittings.

HAVE ONE MADE

If you make some calls, you'll probably find a jobber or air conditioning specialist near you who repairs or makes up hoses. If he's making hoses, he can usually do the job for you the same day or do it while you wait.

Experienced hose-makers we interviewed said they prefer to have the damaged hose in hand before they try to repair it or duplicate it. Why? Because there are too many variations in import air-conditioners for one

guy to remember or for one company to catalog. Remember, the car could be equipped with one of several different systems:

- 1) true installed-at-the-factory air;
- 2) port-installed air;
- 3) dealer-installed air;
- 4) aftermarket specialist-installed air.

Each of these systems could actually be different from the other!

Some jobbers use a bench-mounted hydraulic crimper, others use the manual kind of crimper shown in the accompanying photographs. Properly used, either crimper will give you an OE-equivalent crimp.

MAKING YOUR OWN

The second alternative to ordering hose assemblies from the car dealer is to make your own hoses. The decision to make your own hoses will depend upon:

- 1) the amount of air conditioning work you do;
- 2) the number of shops or suppliers already making hoses in your area;
- 3) the opportunities you have to market this service to other local shops;
- 4) the availability of fittings.

Obviously, you'll need a crimper. The most practical choice is a manually operated tool such as the one shown here. You can use this type of crimper on the car or on the bench.

All air conditioning fittings aren't reusable. Therefore, you either have to inventory some fittings yourself or locate a good local source of them. Your fittings supplier can set you straight on what fittings you can or cannot use again. Some manufacturers don't recommend reusing original hose fittings because the fittings weren't designed to be reused. The teeth on the barbed portion of the original fittings are often too shallow to get a good bite on the new hose. And the new crimping collar that you install may not

grip as much of the hose over the barbed part of the original fitting as it should. If you reuse a fitting, the connection could begin leaking or the hose could blow off the fitting.

Besides fittings, you'll have to keep a supply of



Most hoses fail right here, near the fitting. If there's enough slack in the hose and enough working room around the hose, just cut off the damaged hose end and crimp on a new fitting right on the car.

hose and crimping collars on hand. The four common hose sizes (size 6, 8, 10, and 12) cover the range of import and domestic systems. Of these four sizes, 8 and 10 are the most popular. Depending upon the manufacturer, you can get OE-quality hose in 15-, 25-, and



We'll reuse this fitting just for photography's sake, okay? If it were reusable, you'd cut off the old crimping collar and remove the hose. Then lube the fitting and push on the new hose and collar.

50-foot rolls.

The crimping collars are usually sold in boxes of 10.

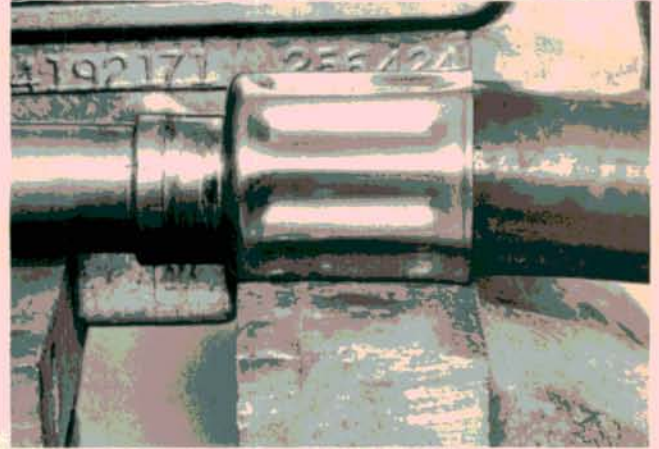
Some shop owners like the pure speed and convenience of making their own hoses. But they also en-



The crimping tool, which can be vise-held or bench-mounted, has interchangeable dies to fit the different hose sizes. To make the perfect crimp, just tighten until the crimping dies meet each other.

joy making *all* the profit on the hose. And profit's the reason we're doing it, right?

Hand-operated hose crimping tools available from:
Everco Four Seasons Murray
Circle No. 300 Circle No. 301 Circle No. 302



The finished crimp looks very professional and looks like it belongs. The problem with a quickie clamp repair is that some customers will say to themselves "Looks like anybody can do that!"