Assault and Battery? – Grumpy Old Mechanic

Published: November 16, 2015

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/assault-and-battery-grumpy-old-mechanic/



No way in? With many modern cars it's almost impossible to reach the securing clamp, when the time comes to fit a new battery.

In our workshop, we often ask ourselves, 'Why?' when considering the reasons for manufacturers to make what should be a simple operation, far more complicated, time-consuming and annoying than it needs to be. The amount of time we waste, and for which

we feel that we cannot reasonably charge our customers, due to such difficulties beyond our control, is quite staggering.

Going back to our original question, we've decided that the answer is, quite simply, 'Because they can!'.

Not that our moaning will change anything in this respect, but at least it makes us feel a bit better.

Let's take the example of the car brought in today to have a new battery fitted.

IN THEORY, on this particular vehicle this simply means the following steps:Connect up/plug in a 'memory saver' device to maintain voltage while the car's actual battery is renewed (so that, on completion of the job the car's security codes will still be stored and the radio, etc. will still operate without any more work being required).

1. Disconnect the original battery.
2. Release the single bolt securing the battery's steel clamp plate.
3. Remove the old battery and in its place fit the new one.
4. Connect up the battery and disconnect the memory saver device.
   Alltold, this should take about 10 minutes maximum, even including cleaning the battery tray, checking/cleaning all the connectors etc. and lubricating the clamp plate's securing bolt.

Well, today we had another 'awkward' one with which to deal.

The particular make and model of vehicle is not important, since so many cars these days present difficulties in this respect…

It took one of our mechanics two hours to change the battery. Why? Well when the engine bay was designed, instead of situating the battery's securing clamp bolt in an accessible position (which would have been quite possible), it was buried in the depths of the engine

compartment, amidst a maze of hoses and electrical wiring. Indeed it was almost impossible to see, let alone reach.

Our chap, who is diligent and knowledgeable, took great care to release and unscrew the bolt so that it would remain within the clamp ready for easy re-assembly. Unfortunately, due to the poor access and the bolt being too short for the job (it was an original bolt that had been in the car from new!), the bolt was disturbed as the battery was lifted out. Said bolt then disappeared into the depths of the engine bay, and, despite the best efforts of three of us, has not been seen since, so tightly packed is the engine within the bay.

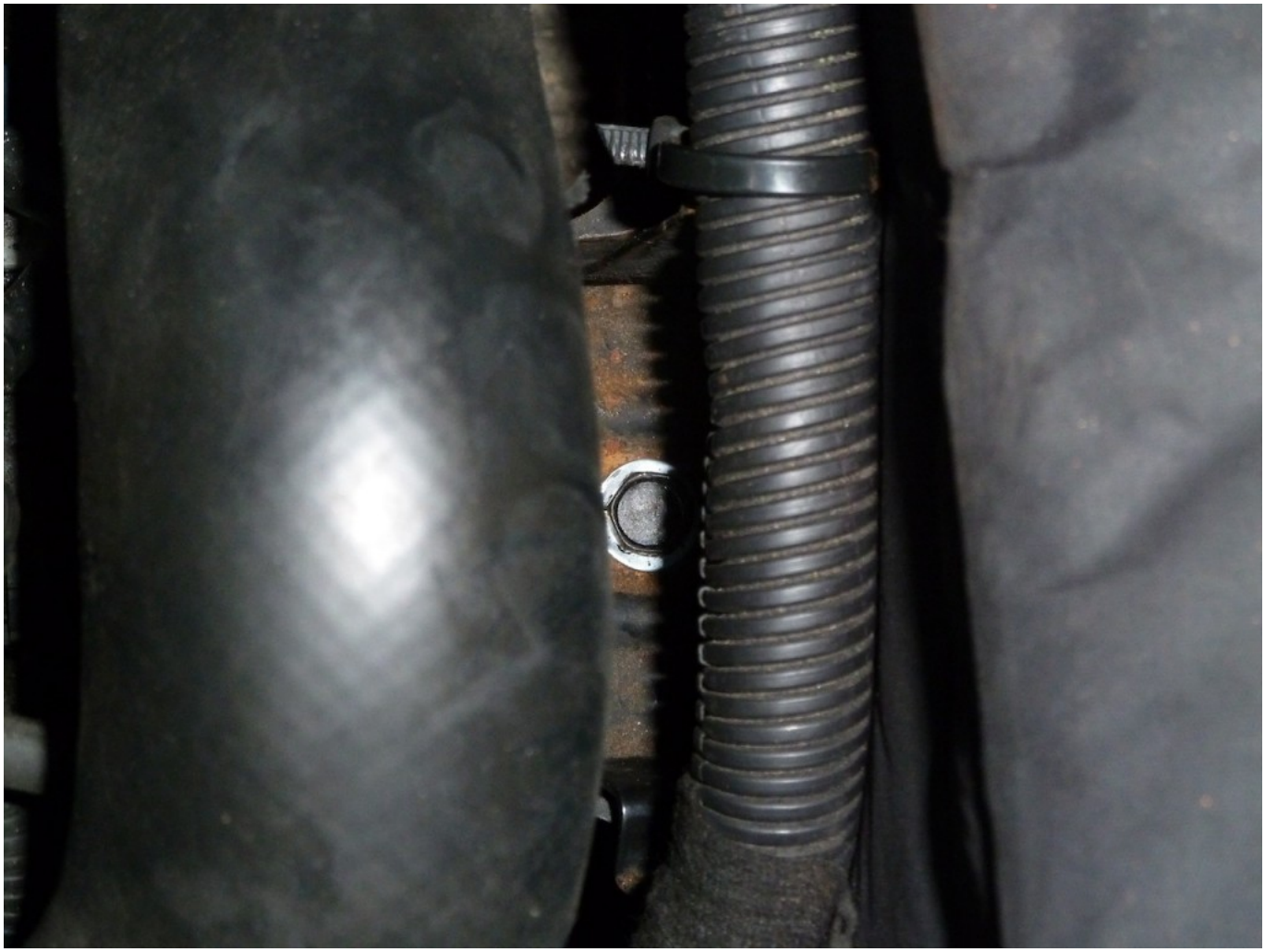
We found a new metric bolt, of the same thread dimensions but a little longer than the original (to make it a bit easier to install) and then attempted to fit this, together with new lock and plain washers.

This took a very long time, even after we had moved cables and hoses (such operations also being fraught with potential problems, especially as a vehicle ages and rubber/plastic components can become brittle).

Eventually we ‘won’ and the battery was installed, complete with its new bolt – but what a performance for a job that should have been quick and easy… How much easier it would have been if the clamp had been mounted in a slightly different position, where it could more easily have been reached.

We often wish that when a car is designed, the manufacturers would asked their dealership mechanics to have a look at the various aspects of routine maintenance required, before the vehicle is signed off for production.

Are we just being too grumpy?



Spot the bolt for the clamp securing this battery… It’s only just visible, let alone reachable, even after moving hoses, wiring, etc!