

Installing Generic Headlight Protection Kit to a Sprinter

I have noted in the Sprinter group my problems with paint chipping. The issue of damage also exists with the plastic lens covers to the headlights. There are pre-cut kits available at the link below for about \$70 plus shipping, and looks like the picture below.



http://www.clear-guard.com/Semiheadlight_catalog_page.asp?make=Freightliner&submitButtonName=Search

In addition there are generic kits. Of the two kits below, the H9905 would be easier to apply; but for some reason when I was shopping, only the 12"x12" was advertised.

<http://www.xpel.com/products/universal.htm>

Universal Cut-to-fit Headlamp Protection Kit (2 Pieces 19" X 8") H9905
\$44 plus shipping

Universal Cut-to-fit Headlamp Protection Kit (Piece 12" X 12") H9906
\$15x2 = \$30 plus shipping

So here is my experience with applying the 12"x12" kit to my van:

First, I had to make a pattern. I found lifting the hood was essential, and the pattern paper goes under the fender a bit. Making this pattern also makes you

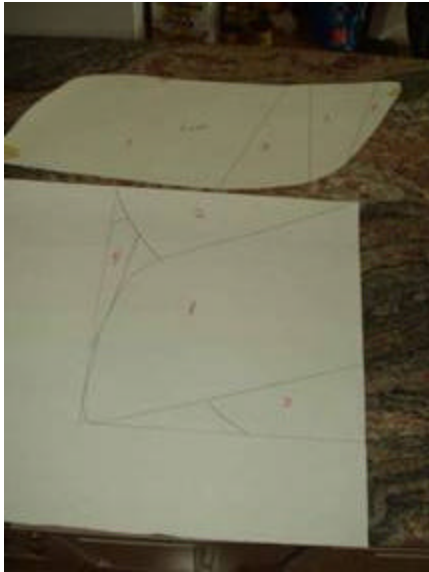


aware of the compound curve of the headlights: there is the obvious wrap-around curve from front to side, plus a curve



from the vertical to the horizontal. The headlight protection kits are made of very

thick vinyl, so utilizing a preformed kit must involve a lot of stretching. So the multiple piece method may have some advantages.



Once I had the pattern, I had to work it into the 12"x12" piece of generic material. I used another piece of paper to pattern the 12"x12", then played around with the pattern from the headlight to cut up the generic piece into its biggest possible pieces. Piece #2 on the generic pattern is long and must be trimmed later. Piece #3 is short and will require a scrap to fill in taken from either the scrap visible near Piece #3, or from the scrap to come off of Piece # 2.

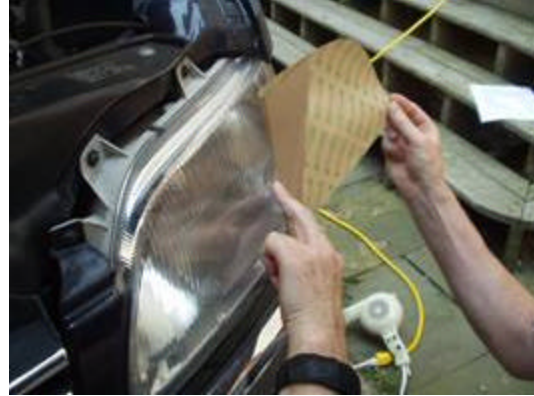
Use the cut pattern pieces to mark up the back of headlight kits. The adhesive is some type of waxed or vinylated paper, so a permanent marking pen is useful. Mark the back of the generic material. Use a straight edge to guide the cuts. Be careful to mark and to cut all the pieces from the pattern pieces facing first on one side, then flip the patterns to the other side and cut the other headlight. As the headlight lens are mirror images (see the first picture above), you don't have to worry about which side of the van's lights are cut first.



The installation instructions provide two options: a dry installation and a wet installation. The XPEL web site has an excellent set of instructions for both techniques at <http://www.xpel.com/support/installation/pics.htm>. I chose the dry method.

The first piece was the largest. After tacking an edge on, the adhesive protection came off easily from the backside.

Note the distortion in the vinyl upon removing the paper. The haze appears to be the adhesive. Once attached to the lens, the haze disappears.



Next comes the LOTS of force with the squeegee to adhere the vinyl to the lens. The dry method actually makes this step more difficult, as the adhesive is very strong and does not let air bubbles out. Start the pressure from the middle of the vinyl and work out with overlapping strokes. Use a pin to release trapped air.



Next come pieces 2-4. Carefully butt the pieces together before laying down the rest of the piece on the lens – the adhesive

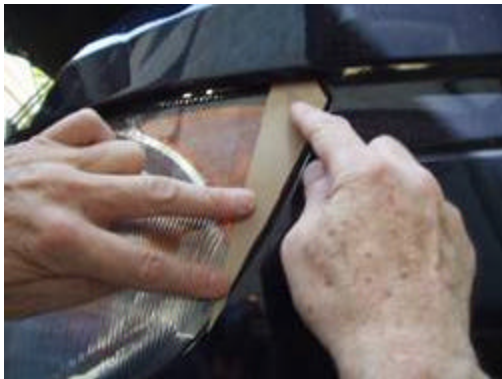


really sticks well, and the vinyl can stretch. Of all the pieces, Piece #3 required



the most attention to force out the excess material due to the curve of the lens.

Notwithstanding the thickness of the vinyl, the material adjusted without the need



to resort to the hair dryer that is visible in some of the pictures. I found working the butt edges with the squeegee first (which locks in the seam), then squeegeeing out through the middle of the piece and then to the far edges kept the air from getting trapped under these pieces.



At the top of Piece #3 is a triangle piece that needs to be filled with scrap. There is also about 3/8 inch exposed on the trailing edge of piece 4, which can also be covered with a piece of scrap. This last picture shows the visibility of the lines between the pieces. This line is visible because of the orange signal light behind it. In the clear part of the lens, the seams between the pieces disappear in the background of the lens' ribs.



After all the pieces are attached and squeegeed on, trim off any excess at the lip of the lens where it dives into the recesses of the hood.



This is the finished product.

Note the paint chip circled in red. That project is next.

My 10 year old son was the photographer.