



Fire Engineering



Tricks of the Trade: Another Use for The Halligan Bar

By Bruce Vander Voort

You use the halligan to gain entry into the trunk, so why not the hood?

Photos by author.

Firefighters are all too familiar with the following: You arrive at the scene of a car fire and find the engine or passenger compartment involved. Your training has taught you that the engine company's objective is to extinguish the fire in a safe manner and eliminate any associated hazards. To complete these tasks, you have to gain access to the engine compartment. All too often, when you try to release the hood lock located in the passenger compartment, you find that the hood release handle has melted. You are resigned to the fact that you will have to force open the hood locking mechanism or cut the hood.

Anyone who has had to do this knows the time and effort involved in getting the hood open. After running into this problem at several car fires, I realized there had to be a better way to gain access to the engine compartment if there was damage to the hood release handle. After experimenting with different methods and tools, I came to the conclusion that the halligan bar would be the ideal tool for this purpose. After all, you use the halligan to gain entry into the trunk, so why not the hood?

PROCEDURE FOR USING HALLIGAN TO UNLOCK HOOD

First, knock down as much fire as possible with your hoseline. To extinguish fire in the engine compartment, direct the hose stream through the headlight opening, or use the halligan to make a small purchase point on the corner of the hood and raise the hood a few inches so the stream can bounce off the hood's underside. Once you have extinguished the main body of fire, you can try to unlock the hood using the hood release handle in the passenger compartment. If you are unable to unlock the hood using the handle, proceed with the following steps:

Step 1. Remove all or part of the plastic front grill. Try to locate the hood locking mechanism cable, normally found running along the driver's side fender to the hood locking mechanism. Some cables run under the radiator support; others run on top of it. As long as you remove the grill, you should be able to locate it. (See photo 1.)



There are different types of hood locking mechanisms. Most are located on the front radiator support near the grill. Others are located near the windshield. This procedure is recommended for front hood locking mechanisms.

Step 2. With the cable in sight, slide the hood locking mechanism cable between the forks of the halligan bar. Rotate the halligan bar clockwise until there is tension on the cable. (See photos 2, 3.)

Step 3. With your gloved hands, grab the adz and the point of the halligan bar. Rotate the halligan bar quickly in a clockwise motion. This should release the hood lock, enabling the hood to pop up about an inch. (See photo 4.)

Step 4. Locate the hood release normally located on the underside of the hood.

With a hoseline present, lift up the hood, using the halligan to push it up and prop it open. (See photo 5.)



Always be aware of the potential for fire to roll out from under the hood.

I have found that this procedure has shortened the length of time it takes to operate at a car fire and limits the amount of damage to the vehicle. It also allows the company to perform a safe, efficient, and professional operation.

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