

# *Repairing a Sagging Center Console Armrest*

Contributed By: Bill Kelsey

This is a very simple and effective repair that should be completed in an hour or so (except for the paint drying time).

**Tools needed** : T-40 Torx bit and driver/wrench; electric drill with steel-cutting bit; staple gun (or alternative); tools for the bolts and nuts (match the size of the bolts and the drill bit).

**Hardware needed** : about 10 sets of bolts (1/2" long), nuts, and washers (I had leftover stove bolts from some steel shelving and they fit perfectly).

**Recommended** : spray rust converter/primer and spray anti-rust paint.

Unbolt the armrest from the console (this requires a T-40 torx bit) and remove it.

Pull up the top rear of the armrest cover (it should not be attached).

Remove the staples holding the bottom rear of the armrest cover.

Slip the cover off of the armrest. Save the sheet of material between the foam cushion and the cover. (It makes sliding the cover back on much easier.)

Remove the foam cushion; it is a single piece folded over; it is not attached. Save the foam, either to reuse it or to serve as a pattern if you are going to replace it with medium density (like the original) or high density foam (much better support and more resistant to breakdown).

Remove the two screws holding the piece of wood at the rear of the armrest frame and separate the wood from the metal frame.

The metal of the armrest is two metal pieces, spot welded together. One of these is made of heavy metal, and is where the armrest hinges. The other is a large pressed steel piece that runs down the center of and supports the armrest cushion. The sagging is probably due to the spot welds holding these together having broken. (If you examine the spot welds that broke, you may wonder how the armrest lasted as long as it did!)

If the welds have broken, separate the two metal pieces. If the large pressed steel piece is bent, straighten it with an appropriate hammer. (In the unforgettable phrase that appeared on the IFSJA list some months ago, beat it like a spastic monkey!) If the pressed steel piece is broken or too bent to be straightened, abandon the repair (unless you can get a replacement piece from another armrest).

If the welds have not broken, then the sagging is due to the pressed metal piece having been bent. Straighten it as above. If the welds are strong, once the metal is straightened reassemble the armrest. If the welds appear weak or some are cracked or broken, drill them out and continue.

There is a hole through both pieces of the frame. Insert a 1/2" long bolt and nut here to hold them together, with a washer against the pressed metal piece.

Drill out the broken welds, through both pieces of metal. Insert bolts, nuts, and washers. Add a second row of holes about 2" forward of the drilled out welds, and insert bolts, nuts, and washers. The double row of bolts will secure the two pieces together and be better able to withstand the strain of use than had the single row of spot welds.

Remove the bolts, nuts, and washers, and separate the pieces.

Using a spray rust converter, spray the metal pieces. Let dry according to the instructions with the paint. Once dry, spray the pieces with a rust-inhibiting paint. Let dry.

Reassemble the frame, using the bolts, nuts and washers. Reattach the wooden piece to the back of the frame.

Place the old or new foam cushion around the frame, and place the sheet of material over the foam. Slowly work the cover over the cushion.

Pull the bottom rear of the cover up to the top of the wooden piece. You should be able to see the original staple holes -- more or less align these and restaple (a staple gun is very helpful here) or use some other fastener (carpet tacks, brads, etc).

Pull the top rear of the cover down over the top of the wooden piece. You may have to pull the entire cover towards the back a little to do this, especially if you replaced the foam cushion.

Reattach the armrest to the console.

Go for a drive, and let your arm rest!

Bill Kelsey Aberdeen, South Dakota '79 widetrack Cherokee "S"