

Manual and Electric Tailgates are Different, and How I Discovered This

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Right after buying my 79 Cherokee Chief I determined it could use a new or different tailgate. The rear window was missing, so was the electric motor and the gate was very rusty. I decided to go down the easy path and just replace the entire tailgate.

A day long search of local junk yards produced nothing but tired feet. FSJ's are just not plentiful in Indianapolis. Apparently GM has cornered the 4x4 market in Indy. I then took the search to the Internet and the Info Superhighway blah-blah-blah. I located another 79 Cherokee that was being "being parted-out" at Brian's 4x4 Parts in CT.

NOTE The following problems are not a reflection of Brian's 4x4***

A telephone call to Brian and he told me he indeed had a complete tailgate and it had the manual window (a crank to roll up the window instead of the electric motor) This was fine by me. Sounded like a lot fewer problems down the road.

After receiving the tailgate I was excited about getting it installed asap.(remember I had no rear window!) We took the old gate off the Chief and began installing the new gate. All hinge holes etc. lined up perfectly. When I went to shut the gate it would not latch, matter of fact it was like 2 inches from even closing. Then I noticed the gate "catches" were different. Both on the Cherokee and on the new tailgate. Brian had sent the body mounted "catches" with the gate so a quick swap would solve the problem.....wrong, they were not interchangeable. Sooo, I decided to take the gate mounted "catches" off the old gate and use them on the new one, wrong....all mounting holes are different.

It should be noted that without the gate catches the tailgate would close perfectly, however it had nothing to keep it closed. After further examinations I came to the conclusion that a electric gate and a manual gate are *not* interchangeable. I have no idea why they aren't! The only difference in the Cherokee's were:

Mine is a 79 Cherokee Chief two door with electric window
The other was a 79 Cherokee with four doors and a manual window
Go figure. To visually look at both gates they are identical,
but there are enough differences in bolt locations etc to make
them incompatible.

After much discussion about this on the FSJ list group, no one
was aware of any differences, neither are the service manuals!
Don't even ask how I solved the problem, let's just say I used
some "shade-tree mechanics" to make the darn thing stay shut.
I would also assume you may encounter the same problem on a
Wagoneer tailgate swap as well.

Joe Segó