

EMERGENCY ALLEN WRENCH SUBSTITUTION

By: Mike Bouse

O.K. If you have heard this one, then just call me slow. I was taught, and always teach that if you use the correct tool for the job in the correct manner, you will not get hurt. If you force a tool to do something it was not designed for, or modify it in any way, and you are asking for trouble. So, making a substitution for a tool I do not have does not come easy for me.

The other day, I needed a 13mm allen wrench (hex key). I found that I had a 10mm, and a couple of 12mm, and a 14mm; but no 13mm allen wrenches. No problem, I thought. I'll just buzz down to the store and pick one up. No dice. Every allen wrench set at each store went up to 10mm, and no one sold single wrenches as large as I needed. Determined to finish my project, I seriously thought of going against everything I knew about tools, and modify a 9/16" allen wrench on my bench grinder. I even bought a 9/16" allen wrench with the intent of grinding away on it at home. Fortunately, right before I did, Pete Angel suggested the following substitution. Thanks Pete!

Grab a hex head bolt with the same dimension head as the allen wrench you need. Jamb on two hex nuts, locking them together. In the below example I am using an 8mm x 1.0 bolt and two nuts. They each have a hex size of 13mm. Cram the nuts onto the bolt as tight as you can with your combination wrench, and you are set to go. The assembly makes a great substitute for an expensive, seldom used tool. I used my 13mm socket and ratchet and this assembly as my emergency substitution.



The best thing about this procedure is that it is readily adaptable to any hex size you need, metric SAE, or Whitworth!! And, the assembly can quickly go back into the fastener drawer when you are done. If you can find the correct size fasteners, you can make almost any size allen wrench substitution. Use a longer bolt if you need more reach; just lock the nuts together at the end of the threads, with the bolt head as far away from the nuts as possible.

Thanks again, Pete!

Anyone need a 9/16" allen wrench?