

Fix That Hazard Switch

By: Mike Bouse



There are four basic fixes for your '79 + push button hazard switch. Only the engineers at Fiat will know for sure why they designed a switch that would fail in the "ON" position !! Additionally, the wiring circuits the switch is designed around WILL NOT operate properly by removing the switch from the car. You can't pull the offending mechanism, and still have all other circuits work properly.

Preparation Before you look at fixing or repairing the situation, you are going to want to know how best to access the back of the switch. I found that the easiest way to get to this area is by removing the glove box insert, and reaching to the switch from the side. It is easy enough to remove the center dash panel parts; but, reassembling them by yourself is a pain. The switch is connected to the circuits with a round wiring harness. Merely pull that round plastic harness off the switch. The switch is held into the panel with a threaded round speed nut from the front. Keep that speed nut for future use.

Caution: Disconnect your negative battery cable before working on the electrical circuits of your car!

Fix # 1 is of course, the most costly, and the most reliable. Purchase a new switch and install it. Our standard sources have them available. Don't forget to disable the circuit while you wait a week for your new component to arrive.

Expect to pay about \$70 to make this problem go away. But, don't forget. Your replacement switch is of identical design as the switch that just failed. Even if you choose this method, you should read on, because your new switch is bound to fail in a couple of years. And, I bet that it will do so far away from home and proper tools.

Fix # 2 is in contrast, extremely simple, and very short term. Purchase yourself a good dinner at the local steak house, and grab a toothpick at the check out counter. Peel the wrapper off the toothpick and cram the end of the wooden shaft between the red button and the switch housing while holding the button in the off position.

Fix # 3 is only for the mechanically inclined. Remove the switch from the dash, and carefully take it apart. Yes those plastic tabs bend in, and the switch will come apart in two pieces in your hands. See that dull metal tab? Bend it slightly inward so that the tang connected to the button will again lock into place. Put the switch back together, making sure you have no left over parts on your workbench. Stick the switch back into place.

Fix # 4 is also for the mechanically inclined. Grab a 4" piece of insulated braided wire and stake a couple of male spade connectors to the wire. Remove the switch from the circuit by grabbing the harness and giving a good tug. It is not necessary to remove the switch from the dash. Press one spade connector into the purple wire connection on the harness. Press the other spade connector to the connection 180 degrees opposite the purple wire. This should allow the circuits (except Emergency lights) to function until you perform fix #1 or fix #3 above.

Personally, I have performed both #1 and #3 listed above. My repaired original equipment switch is now part of my spare parts collection, awaiting the day that the new replacement switch fails for the first time.

And, I am never too far away from a good steak dinner!