



Tech Articles

Locking Lug Nut Panic

By Ray Paulk

Many Fiero's came with a Wheel Locking Package (RPO Code PB4) which consists of one special lug nut for each wheel which requires a special adapter or "Key" to remove. This lug nut is round with a few axial grooves on its perimeter. The key has splines which exactly fit these grooves.

I had always been curious what I would do if I couldn't find the lug nut key for my '88 GT. I've come across a few other Fiero owners who have had the problem and have taken various approaches to resolve it. One owner got a piece of pipe with an ID just a bit smaller than the lug nut. A small sledge hammer very nicely convinced the pipe over the lug nut. After a few tries, the nut broke loose and the owner was home free. Another owner took a bit more of a dramatic action. He took it to a garage which flame cut the whole lug nut and stud from the wheel. The owner is still driving with one burned out lug nut hole in his wheel.

Last fall I joined my friends of the Mid-Atlantic Fiero Owners Association at their 2nd annual Fiero Battle of Gettysburg show where a good time was had by all. During the next week I noticed that the lower trim on my car's right front fender was not perfectly lined up, so I decided to remove the wheel liner so I could get to the inner side of the fender and straighten the trim.

I normally keep my wheel lock key in a plastic bag inside the spare tire rim. I checked there ... nothing. I checked everywhere ... nothing. Then I remembered that I had taken it out during the Gettysburg show and must have missed it when I repacked. My lug nut key is probably on the ground near the Distelfink Drive-In in Gettysburg. "A fine mess you've gotten me in this time, Ollie!"

Now what do I do? I sure didn't want to take a sledge hammer to "my baby" and I surely wasn't going to take a torch to it. I figured that Pontiac may have some record of the key so I decided to try Pontiac Customer Service. They told me to check the material with my Owner's Manual. Normally there's a 5x7 tag card with a key code on it. Since I'm at least a third owner, the original manual and documentation for the car disappeared long ago. What now?

Pontiac suggested that I contact either Amcor or McGard as GM buys all of their wheel locks from one or the other company. I discovered that Amcor made all the Fiero wheel lock sets and I was now on my way to a solution. Here's what you do:

1. Call Amcor at (800) 831-9604 or (313) 458-8920. Tell them your problem and they will refer you to a GM dealer who has a master set of wheel lock keys.

2. The dealer will have a master set of wheel lock keys which consists of 3 sets of 6 special keys or lug nut adapters. The sets are identified by number and the keys within the set by color. There's a total of 18 different keys for all the wheel locks made, at least those made by Amcor, which I understand makes most of the ones for GM.

For me the dealer was Metro-West Olds at 1199 Worcester Road (Rt. 9) in Framingham, MA. Fortunately I could drive my car to the dealer. I borrowed the master set of keys (in 3 metal boxes) and sat in the parking lot trying each and every key. Like they always say, the one that works is the last one you try but, in my case, it was the last one I could have tried. I was beginning to sweat a little. Visions of vise-grips were running through my head. The flame cut technique didn't get a second thought.

3. After you find the one that fits, record the set number and color. (Actually the color alone is supposed to work but I found the difference between silver and gray to be too subjective). My key was from set #2, gray. You can then order a replacement key through the dealer or direct through Amcor. I was quoted \$10 per key plus \$1.50 in shipping and handling charges with delivery to my home. The dealer wanted more and I'd have to pick it up. Let's see ... which should I do? I ordered 2 keys direct from Amcor and in 5 business days, I was in business and could finally get my wheels off.

You may want to record the following information in case you ever find yourself without a wheel lock key:

Amcor Wheel Locks
MascoTech Forming Technologies
12955 Inkster
Livonia, MI 48150
Tel: (800) 831-9604
(313) 458-8920

Relief is just a phone call away.