

Downward Drop: Lowering an Avalanche With McGaughys, MHT Wheels and Nexen Tires

Posted on **March 31, 2014** by **Melissa Anderson**



What do you do when you want the comfort and interior capacity of a SUV, but you also want the bed cargo space of a pickup truck? Get yourself a Chevy Avalanche. Like the Chevy Tahoe or GMC Yukon, the Chevy Avalanche offers a plush interior with room for up to six people. Where it differs from SUVs is in its transformative ability. The uniqueness of the Avalanche is that it possesses an enclosed bed area with a length of just longer than 5 feet, which can easily be transformed into a full-length pickup bed by folding down the back seats and the partition between the interior and the cargo space. How do you make the Avalanche even more unique? You bring the height down. Not only does it improve looks, but it also improves handling characteristics.

We went straight to McGaughys for the parts necessary to bring the Avalanche down a few inches. First, we needed to decide how much of a drop we wanted. There were a couple of factors that helped us determine just how far we wanted to go. The first was our wheel and tire size. We knew we wanted to run a 24-inch wheel with a hefty amount of rubber around it. Secondly, the Avalanche is still going to be used as a daily driver, seating four or five people with a boat hanging off the tow hitch occasionally. Since we didn't want to worry about tires rubbing on anything when fully loaded, we opted for the 2-inch front, 3-inch rear kit. Now that we'd decided on the amount of drop we wanted, we had to decide on a kit. McGaughys offers three different kits to bring down the truck, and we opted for the 2/3 Deluxe version, P/N 3008.

When lowering or lifting a truck, stock wheels and tires just won't cut it. A lowered truck offers increased handling and performance, but balloon factory tires hurt that added benefit. A set of performance wheels and tires that offer plenty of style was a must. DUB Wheels has been in the wheel industry for decades and offers a variety of designs to cover your style needs. We opted for one of its latest creations, Skillz is a clean spoke design in 24 x 10 inches all the way around. For the clean, luxury look, we went with Double Dark Tint (DDT) finish as opposed to matte black or traditional chrome. To avoid any rubbing issues, we selected a +35mm offset, which is fairly common on lowered GM trucks.

To complete the package, the MHT Wheels are wrapped in 295/35R24 Nexen Roadian HP tires. The tires are a high-performance design built for light-duty trucks and SUVs for wet and dry traction. Their large shoulder block maximizes cornering grip and stability, while the arrow-type center rib improves handling. Pattern noise is

reduced by a 5 random pitch variation. When wet conditions hit, wide deep grooves provide excellent drainage, braking and anti-hydroplaning. Tre5 Customs out of Peoria, Arizona, was ready and able to complete the task of lowering the Avalanche. Since it's mostly known for doing radical builds, this bolt-on drop kit should be a breeze. Then it's off to Total Auto Pros to mount the wheels and tires and align the Avalanche.

McGaughys Store
Mcgaughystore.com

DUB Wheels
Dubwheels.com

Nexen Tire
Nexentireusa.com

Total Auto Pros
Totalautoproswholesale.com
602.280.7767

Tre5 Customs
Tre5customs.com
602.284.2466



Here's the Avalanche at stock height, ready for its mild transformation.



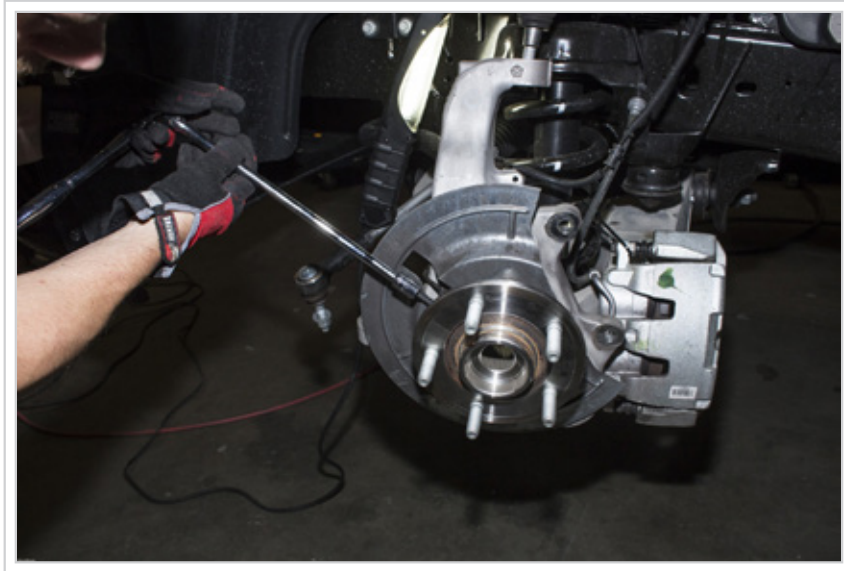
The Mcgaughys 2/3 Deluxe lowering kit comes with 2-inch drop spindles and hardware for the front and 3-inch drop springs with shock relocators and hardware for the rear.



Before anything is done to the truck, a baseline mea

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With the truck supported on jack stands or a lift, begin by removing the wheels. Since we're swapping spindles, the tie rods must be removed.



To get the brakes off, the two bolts on the back must be removed in order to get the calipers off. The rotors will simply slide off the hub. Don't forget to remove the ABS sensor wire using a hex driver bit attached to a ratchet.





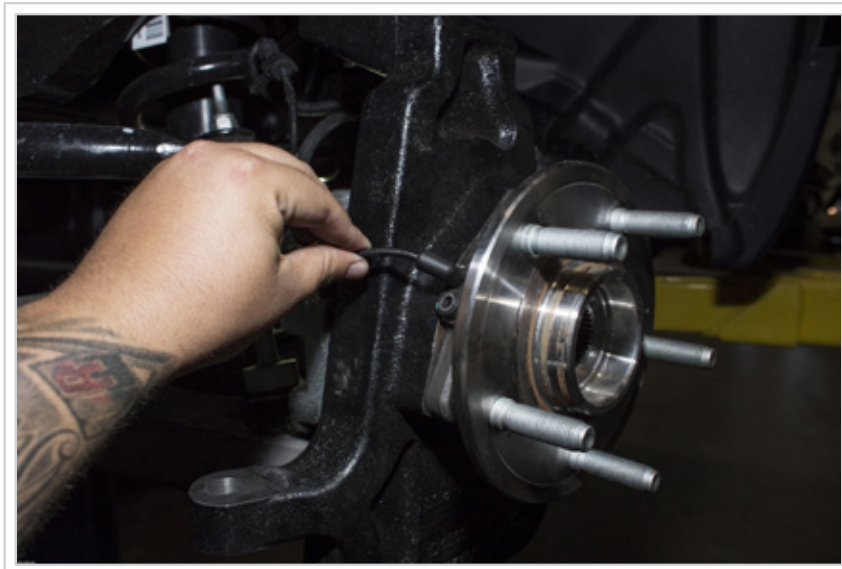
The wheel hub will need to be removed. To get it off, remove these three bolts on the back of the spindle.



The hubs on the McGaughys spindle are attached with the factory bolts. For added security, we applied thread locker before tightening them down.



As you can see, the McGaughys drop spindles are attached to the suspension just like factory.



Before you forget, attach the ABS sensor and tighten it down.





On the lower side, the spindle is secured to the ball joint using the supplied nut. Because the wheels are essentially being raised up in relation to the suspension, the excess threads must be cut off to fit the stock wheels. Even if you're running large wheels, you might want to do this anyway so that you can use your 17-inch spare if you blow a front tire. After the brakes are on, the front is finished and the wheels can be reinstalled.



Moving on to the rear, you'll need to support the rearend and disconnect the shocks.



Before you can remove the rear springs, the track bar will need to be disconnected from this bracket on the rearend.



The rearend can be lowered to remove the factory coil springs.



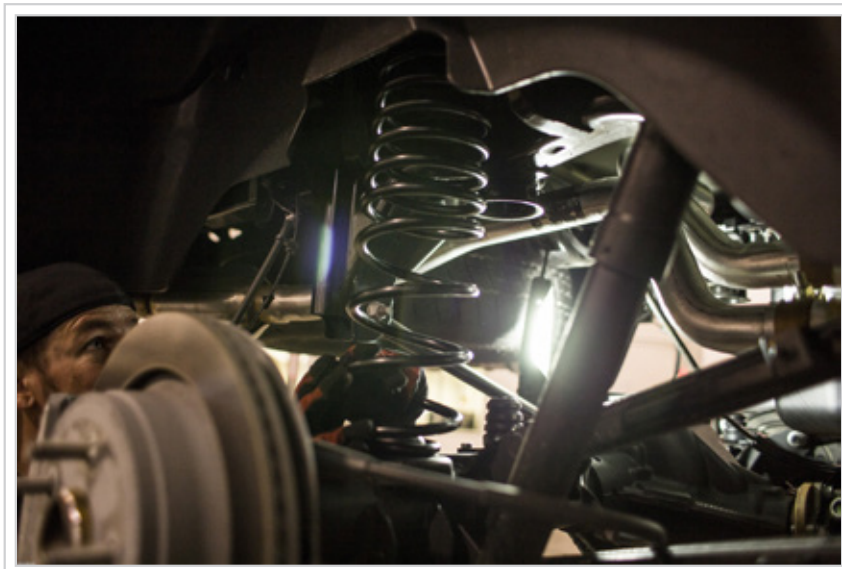
Since the bump stops are too large and won't allow the lowered suspension to travel upwards, they are discarded. For added clearance, the bump stop mount should be removed using a cut-off tool.



The new bump stops bolt directly on the rearend.



As the rearend moves up for the drop, the geometry changes and the track bar needs to be mounted in a corrected new position. To fix the problem, the McGaughys kit includes the relocating bracket that bolts to the old mounting holes for the track bar.



The new rear coils have a different spring rate that allows them to compress more to lower the truck. They are placed in easily just like the stock versions and lock into place by raising the rearend.



Once the rearend is raised up enough the track bar can be bolted to the relocating bracket. Then the factory shocks can be reattached to complete the drop.

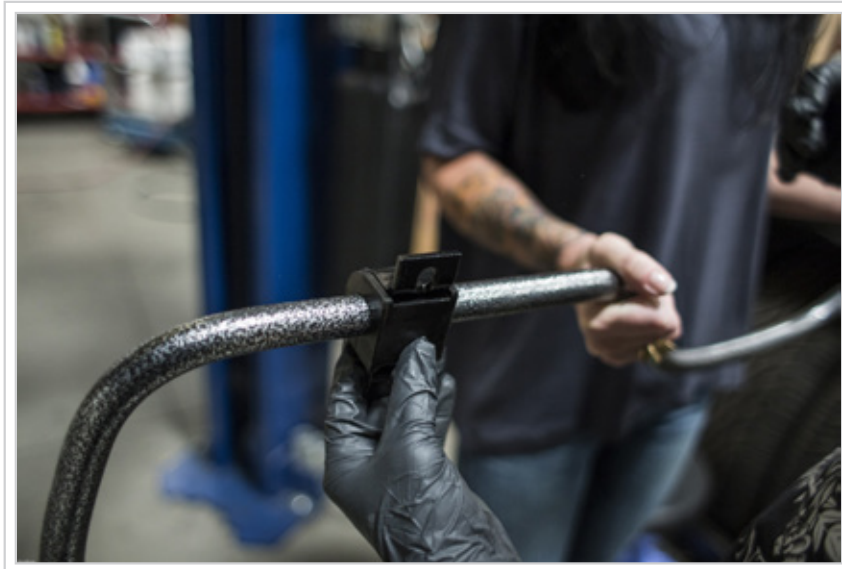


To further improve this Ram's handling, we decided to upgrade the sway bars with better quality versions from Hellwig Products. Remove the stock version by first taking off a few bolts.

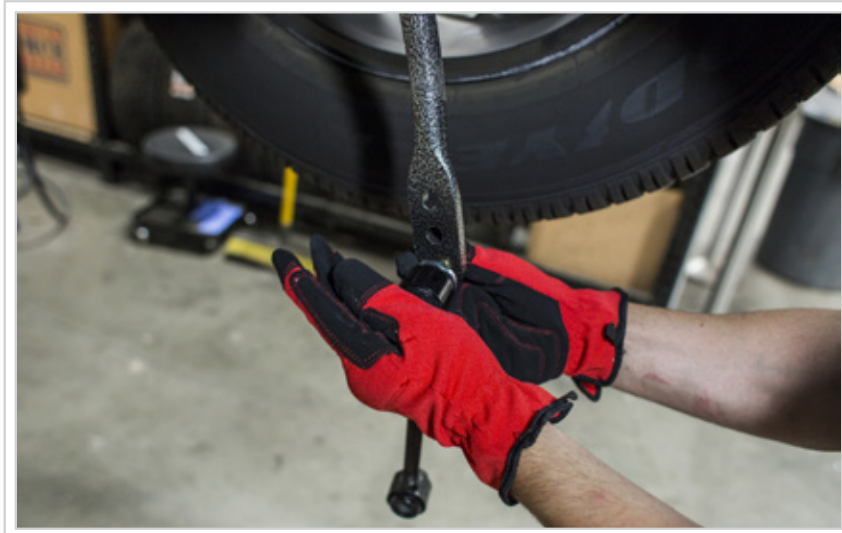




The heavy-duty Hellwig sway bar can be attached the same way as the factory version.



Though our Ram didn't come with a rear sway bar, the rearend already had the necessary holes to attach one. With the mounting brackets in place, the Hellwig sway bar can be placed on.



The Hellwig rear sway bar also comes with a few different mounting holes and adjustable end links so you can tailor it to your vehicle's specific height. The bushings are lubricated and slipped in the holes on the end links before they are bolted between the sway bar and the frame.



With the sway bar installed, the rear suspension should look like this.



Another important place to look for more traction is with tires. Most stock tires aren't very wide, which doesn't really do much for those who want to drive more aggressively. We decided to go with Falken Ziex S/TZ05 for many reasons, including the fact that they come in lower profile sizes while still being weight rated to support a 1/5-ton truck. This 305/35R24 size fits a giant 24-inch wheel and the 10.6-inch tread width is about 2 inches wider than the factory rubber. Also, the state-of-the-art design is stylish and engineered for wet and dry performance, as well as noise reduction. Another good thing about this design is that it's non-directional, meaning they can be rotated easily to maximize wear.





We stepped it up just a little bit more by accenting the Ram's lowered height with a new set of large rollers. With the 2/4-drop complete, you're easily able to fit a 24 x 10-inch wheel. Knowing this, we took a peek at the many stylish wheels of Lexani and locked eyes on the R-Four design. Once the tires were mounted, the wheels were bolted in place and the truck was lowered back on the ground. After doing any height altering suspension modification like this one, you need to get the front suspension aligned for maximum traction and even tire wear. After doing so we hit the streets and could feel a noticeable difference in the overall performance of this truck.

Text by Kevin Aguilar and Photos by Jason Mulligan

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