

Project Dark Horse, Part 3 - Lowering Kit

Our Ford Gets a Mild Drop From McGaughy's and GO-EZ

Dick DeLoach - Apr 5, 2006

Photographers: Dick DeLoach



Thus far, our Project Dark Horse '04 two-wheel-drive Ford F-150 has received a big boost in the horsepower department by adding a Powerdyne blower, JBA headers, and a Bassani exhaust system. Now, it's time to give the truck a little altitude adjustment by installing a high-quality lowering kit from McGaughy's Suspension, in Fresno, California.

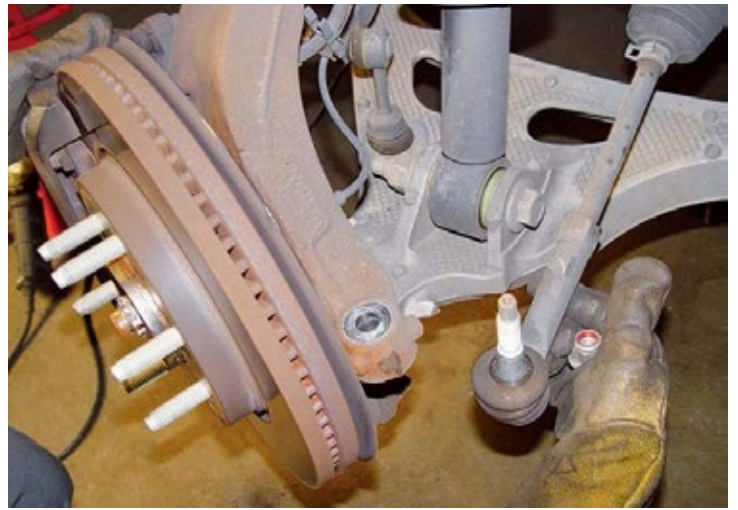
For more than 20 years, McGaughy's has been a leader in the lowering suspension market. "We are always challenging ourselves with producing lowering suspension parts that haven't been done before in the world and doing it right the first time," says Mike McGaughy. "We ride on our reputation for our parts being a bolt-on installation and making sure the entire lowering kit works hand-in-hand with necessary factory components."

The '04 Ford 2WD F-150 kit includes complete instructions, which you should read thoroughly before beginning, new lowering coil springs for the front, and a flip kit for the rear, consisting of longer U-bolts, plates, shackles, shock extenders, and bumpstops. It will give our truck a nice 2-inch front drop and a 4 1/2-inch rear drop. We'll be 'baggin' our baby later, so this takes care of the first step in that process as well. You'll need a floor jack, a set of heavy-duty wide-base jackstands, and a good set of handtools with long-handle ratchets for the job. The only special tool needed is a spring/strut compressor, which is available at most tool rentals.

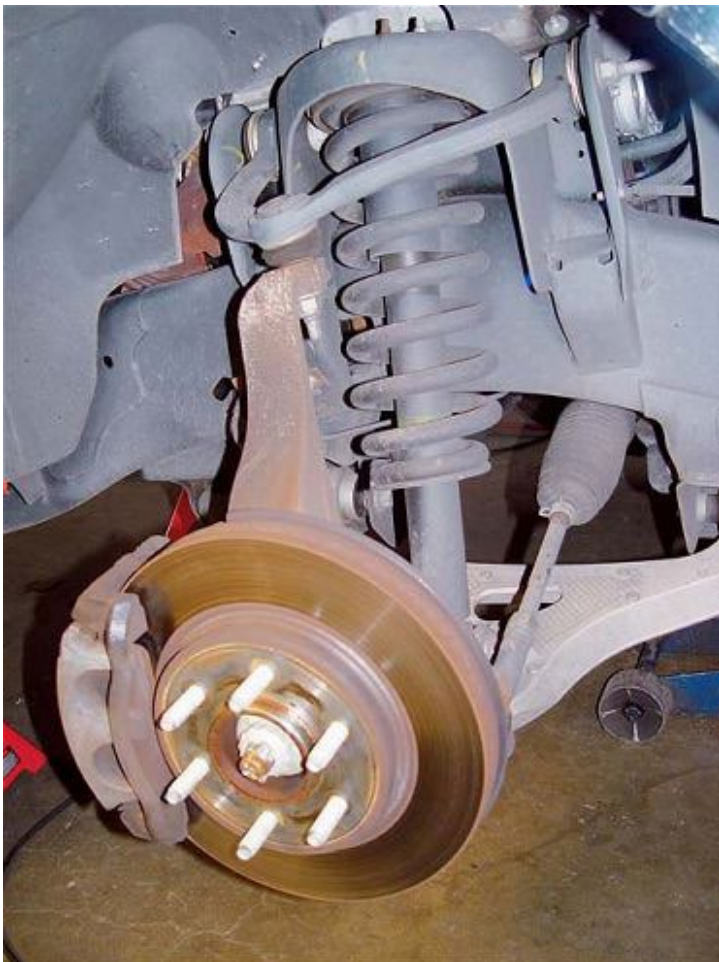
The installation was done at GO-EZ Customs, in Placentia, California, by suspension specialist Scott. GO-EZ is owned and operated by a group of custom automotive enthusiasts and master fabricators with 25 years of experience, who have built the suspensions and twisted the metal of many award-winning show vehicles and at least 30 cover vehicles. Note: Normally, we'd have the truck aligned immediately after lowering it, but we decided to wait until the next day, after we had the new tires and wheels installed, which will be covered next month. The lower stance looks great, and there's plenty of clearance for the 23-inch Tezen wheels and Nitto tires. So, follow the photos, and you'll see how simple it was to get Dark Horse down with a drop kit from McGaughy's.



The 2-inch front, 4 1/2-inch rear drop kit for 04 Ford 2WDs includes drop front coil springs and a rear flip kit with shackles, longer U-bolts, plates, shock extenders, and bumpstops.



Begin by unbolting the tie rod end from the front hub assembly.



With the truck in Park, the emergency brake on, and the rear tires chocked, the front end is raised and secured on jackstands. Then, the tires and wheels are removed, revealing the stock coil-over strut assembly.



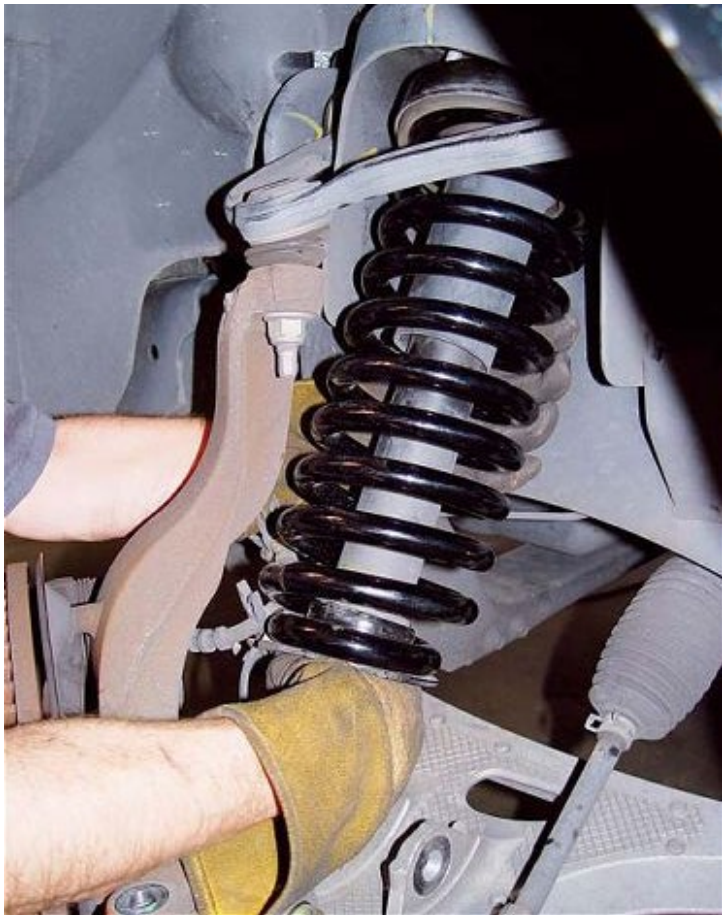
Then, unbolt the top of the strut from the tower.



Next, unbolt the bottom of the strut and remove it. Since the suspension is at full droop, the strut assembly should slide right out.



A spring compressor must be used to remove the spring from the strut. Note: After removing the spring, remove the plastic cap on the top of the strut, cut the foam bumpstop in half, and replace the cap.



With the new lowering spring in place, the strut assembly is reinstalled into the truck and the suspension bolted up.



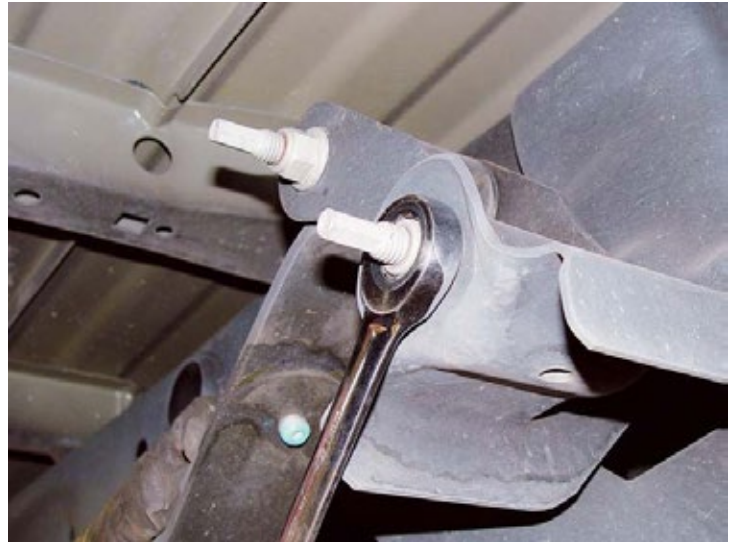
A spring compressor must be used to remove the spring from the strut. Note: After removing the spring, remove the plastic cap on the top of the strut, cut the foam bumpstop in half, and replace the cap.



The front end will be 2 inches lower, once the weight of the truck is on the spring and strut.



For the rear drop, chock the front tires, position the floor jack under the differential, lift the rear of the truck enough to relieve the pressure on the shackles, and position the jackstands forward of the rear axle on the framerrails.



Unbolt the rear leaf spring shackle.



The Hotchkis-designed rear leaf suspension features wider leaves and shocks outboard of the frame.



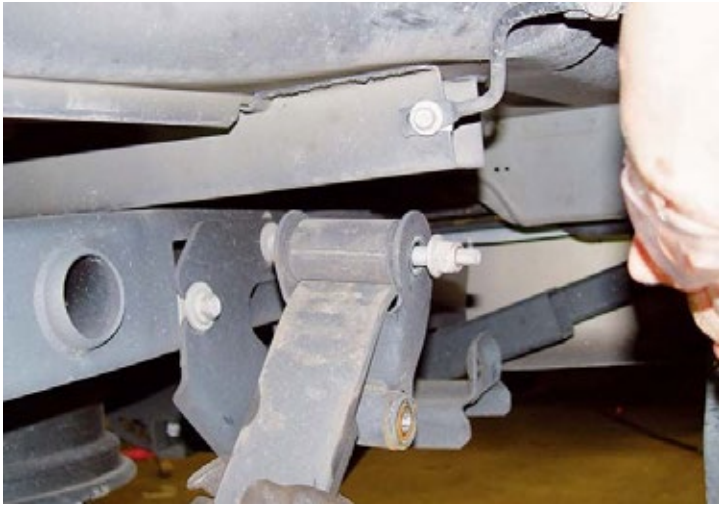
Unbolt and remove the stock U-bolts that attach the leaf springs to the axle, one side at a time.



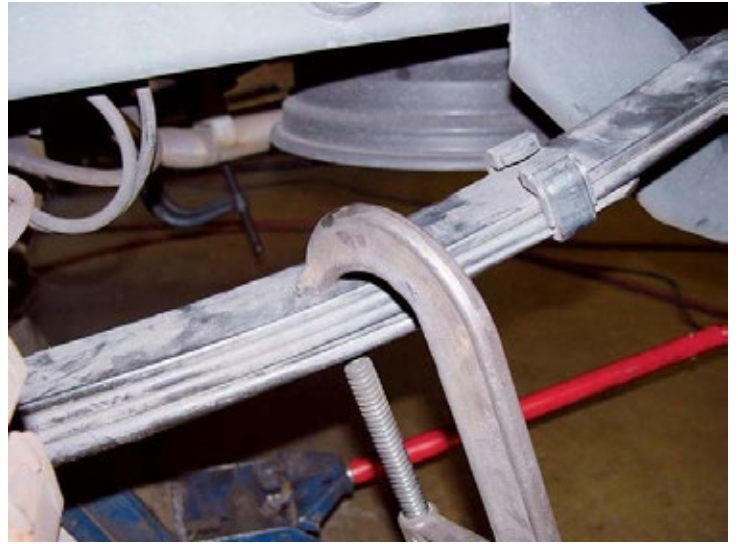
Remove the brake hose bolt that goes through the front of the leaf spring pack.



The longer McGaughy's U-bolt (left) will allow us to mount the springs under the axle



With the leaf springs loose, move them underneath the axle, one side at a time, and reinstall the leaf springs. Don't attach the new U-bolts yet.



Using a C-clamp on each end of the leaf springs, clamp the overload leaf to the leaf spring pack, collapsing the two ends of the overload springs and flattening the spring assembly so that the stock shackle bolts can be installed.



Install the flip kits between the leaf springs and the axle, making sure the side with the 45-degree angle faces toward the front of the truck.



Bolt in the new McGaughys shackles the same way the stock ones came out, using the original bolts and nuts.



With the new spring plates under the axle, install the new U-bolts over the axle, through the holes in the plates, and attach them with the hardware provided. Torque the bolts equally to 90 pounds.



Remove the factory bumpstops, and install the new ones in the same holes.



Unbolt the bottom of the rear shocks, install the McGaughys shock extenders over the stock shock mount, and attach the shock to the bottom of the extender. Torque bolts to 60 pounds and youre done. The rear of the truck will now sit 4 1/2 inches lower than stock.