

Spare Tire Or No Spare Tire

Well, we again have more of the *“my truck came that way from the factory”* syndrome.

I was recently asked the question, was a spare tire an optional item that could be ordered from the factory on the Li'l Red Express Truck.

The definitive answer is **“NO”**.

There were some reasons that Dodge decided not to include a spare tire and wheel on the 1978 Dodge Li'l Red Express Truck.

First, **“COST”** the cost of a wheel and tire assembly, plus the underslung wheel carrier and hardware, was something that Dodge decided not to do, since cost was a factor on a truck that was already going to be over \$7,000 with just the standard equipment. My guess is this is also why they didn't include Sure-Grip rear ends as standard equipment in the trucks. Costs means everything to the “Bean Counters”!

Second, **“WEIGHT”**, As any racer knows, less weight means more speed and since Tom Hoover oversaw Chryslers Race Teams, the word weight was taboo. Every pound you can reduce, raises your quarter mile and top end speed. Of course, this was Hoover's, “Last American Hot Rod”, so it was made as light as possible.

Third, **“Size”**, Since the 1978 Li'l Red has 15' X 7" rims, with GR60 X 15 tires on the front, and the rear had 15" X 8" rims, with LR60 X 15 tires, on the rear, they would have had to decide which one they were going to use. Taking into consideration the earlier mentioned “Cost” and “Weight” factors, they just decided to eliminate the spare tire and carrier altogether.

Now this was on the 1978 Li'l Red Express Trucks "**ONLY**". The 1979 came standard with both the carrier and spare tire and wheel, at no extra cost. (see Equipment ID labels below)

The Equipment options were as follows:

NT3 - TIRE CARRIER UNDERSLUNG

RX2 – SPARE WHEEL

WMHR – LR60-15B RW LET (raised white letter tire)

These options can be found listed on the 1979 Li'l Red Express Equipment ID labels, under the hood. In all my years of studying these trucks, I have never seen an Equipment ID label on a '78 Li'l Red that listed any of the above items, because they weren't available, from the factory, even if you wanted to pay extra for the option. It had to be dealer installed, not factory!

Now comes the "***I bought my truck brand new, and it came from the factory with a spare tire and wheel***", comments. Well, guess what folks---it didn't!

Having worked at car dealers, the better part of my adult life, I know how they operate. I've been a Parts Manager, Service Manager and Salesman and I can tell you; a dealer will do whatever it takes to close a sale. If a customer stated that he wanted a spare tire and wheel or he wouldn't purchase the truck, he got the tire and wheel. They just put one on the truck when it arrived at the dealership from the factory. The didn't order it that way, in fact, no dealer could order a 1978 Li'l Red. They could put in a request, to get one or more of the trucks, but the 1978 Li'l Reds were shipped out randomly, to dealers. You couldn't set down with a salesperson and order your truck or equipment of the truck. So, that means if someone tells you they ordered the truck that way, they are blowing smoke! They may have told the dealer

to let them know if, and when a Li'l Red arrived at the dealer, but they did not sit down and order it, period!!

By the time the 1979 Li'l Reds were ready to be released, yes, you could have the salesperson get out the order book and pick out the options that you wanted on the truck, i.e., Air Conditioning, Cruise, Sunroof, Sure-Grip Rear End, AM/FM/8 track or AM/FM/CB radios, Black interior with either bench or bucket seats, Sliding rear window, Tilt steering column, & Dual horns, or even the Special Edition (SE) option.

The main point here is, even if you were the first person to own your Li'l Red, you weren't the first. The dealer is the first person to own the truck. Dealers must pay for vehicles, the minute they arrive at the dealership, either with a check or from a "floor plan" that they have worked out with the manufacturer or a bank. So, once they were paid for, Dodge had no say in what was or was not done to the trucks, they now belonged to that dealer.

A lot of this information can pertain to other areas of the Li'l Red, I just picked the spare tire option, because it seems to be brought up the most.



Tire carrier mounted on the truck



Wheel & Tire



Underslung spare tire carrier assembly



Threaded J- Hook



Retainer nut

EQUIPMENT IDENTIFICATION			
D136		115	
MODEL		WHEEL BASE	
D138S8J512536		AE491102	
V.I.N.		T.O.N.	
CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION	CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION
D150	CUSTOM UTILINE PICKUP 115	EH1	360-4BBL SPECIAL ENGINE
FA3	LOADFLITE TRANSMISSION	HF7	59 AMP BATTERY
LM2	AM/FM MULTIPLEX RADIO	ME0	OMISSION OF EXTERIOR MOULDING
PY3442	MONOTONE OR MAIN COLOUR	RA7	
WMGF		WMHR	
WN9F	HIGHWAY TREAD PASS.CAR-RADIAL	WN9R	HIGHWAY TREAD PASS.CAR-RADIAL
YA1	ADVENTURER PACKAGE	YF1	CONVENIENCE PACKAGE
YH6	LITTLE RED TRUCK PKG	YW4	GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING
ZA5	ANTI-FREEZE-35 DEGREES	ZF2	BUILD TO CANADA SPECS
ZK2	ADD 4.2 IMP/5 US GALS OF GAS		PAGE 1 OF 1

IF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT (DENOTED BY 6 DIGIT CODE NO.) AFFECTS REPLACEMENT PARTS, INCLUDE V.I.N., EQUIPMENT GROUP AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT CODE NO. ON PARTS ORDER

IMPORTANT - RETAIN THIS PLATE AS A PERMANENT RECORD

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1978 Equipment label, note* no mention of tire carrier

EQUIPMENT IDENTIFICATION			
D100	115	D13JS9S224206	0451R027
MODEL	WHEEL BASE	VIN	T.O.N.
CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION	CODE NO.	DESCRIPTION
GH3	CAB & OUTLINE	AV2	RVA CHRY 9 1/4 3500 3.55
CU1	FRT AXLE 33004	DF1	10X2.5 HYD RR BRAKES
DS5	POWER DISC BRAKES	EH1	ENG 8 CYL 350-1 HI PER
PA3	TRANS A727 AUTO	HCC	CATALYTIC CONVERTER
HE2	ALTERNATOR 41 AMP	HE7	BATTERY 59 AMP
HX4	SOUND CONTROL LABEL	HLC	LIGHT DUTY CYCLE
HL7	18 GAL F/TNK FRM MTD	LB2	OIL PRESSURE GAUGE
LE6	STRG WHL 15 IN SPORT	LU2	GLOVE BOX LOCK
LT1	CIGAR LIGHTER	LK3	GLOVE BOX LIGHT
LK4	ASH RECEIVER LAMP	LM2	RADIO AM FM STEREO
NE1	EXTERIOR CARGO LITE	NE5	HEADLAMPS QUAD RECT
NG1	IN CAB HOOD RELEASE	NT3	TIRE CARR UNDERSLUNG
RA6	WHLS 15X8 CHROME ROAD	RX2	SPARE WHEEL
SA7	SA7 FRT SPRG 3497931	SJ5	1650 REAR SPRING
ST1	POWER STEERING	SW1	SWAY BAR
MMHF	LR60-15B RW LET	WNHR	LR60-15B RW LET
WNEF	HIWAY P/C POLY ARAMID RAD	WNER	HIWAY P/C POLY ARAMID RAD

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CHRYSLER CORPORATION

1979 Equipment ID label, note* lists carrier, wheel & tire

John C. Roberts (Lil Red Dad)
Co-Founder, President & Senior Judge, NALRETO

