

VIN numbers compared to Build Dates

Over the past 30 years, I have been collecting VIN numbers and Build Dates for the Dodge Li'l Red Express Trucks. All this information is going in the National Registry.

I have been trying to figure out why the VIN numbers are sequential, but the build dates weren't following the same sequence.

For instance, I'll use the 1979 Li'l Red as an example. I have found this information to be true on the 1978 Li'l Red also.

VIN – D13JS9S200268

MDH – 022018XX (February 20, 1979, between 6 & 7 PM)

VIN – D13JS9S200270

MDH – 022013XX (February 20, 1979, between 1 & 2 PM)

As you can see, truck #200268 would have been built 2 trucks before #200270, however, the build date on #200268 is 5 hours after the #200270? What is going on??

After a lot of research, I finally was able to talk to the retired 1979 Plant Manager of the Warren Truck Plant

#1, in Detroit, MI. He finally explained how and why this phenomenon was happening.

As the assembly line of trucks was progressing, certain trucks, I will call “specialty trucks”, were pulled out of line and put into a “holding area”, to receive the installation of items, by special crews, that were not normal production line items. In the case of the Li'l Red, Oak Sideboards, External Exhaust Stacks, Door, Tailgate and Fender pinstripes and decals, along with other specialty items such as the Sunroof, etc. The production line continued to move along, so trucks that were being built after that Li'l Red, that was pulled off the line, had VIN numbers that were after the VIN on the pulled Li'l Red.

Sometimes there would be several Li'l Reds coming down the line together and of course the first one pulled off went in the holding area first, followed by any later VIN numbered Li'l Reds. What then happened was, as the crews arrived to do the “specialty trucks”, they would start with the closest one to the assembly line, which of course was the last one put in the “holding area” and had a later VIN number than the first one in the “holding area”. As soon as it was completed, it was moved back to the assembly line to finish building the truck. So,

depending on how many trucks were stacked up in the holding area, would determine how soon they were placed back on the assembly line. The first “specialty truck” to be put in the “holding area”, was the last one out of the “holding area”.

Where the confusion begins is, the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) and the TON (Truck Order Number), were assigned to a truck at the “**beginning**” of production. Those numbers would stay with the truck all through and after completion.

The build date, MDH (Month, Day & Hour), was assigned to the truck when it was “**completed**” and ready to leave the factory.

After checking over 2000+ Li'l Reds, I have seen the build dates as much as a week apart from trucks built after those trucks.

It does make sense now, how this phenomenon happened. It just took a lot of investigation to get to the correct answer. Just a little more trivia about the Li'l Reds.

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