

RIDING ON AIR



A stock air bag is removed and replaced with a smoother-riding bag.

SOURCE ENGINEERING'S RIDE ENHANCEMENT KIT SMOOTHES OUT THE BUMPS, IMPROVES HANDLING ON MONACO R4R AND R4RR CHASSIS

by CHRIS HEMER

In the January issue of *MotorHome*, we presented an article about Source Engineering's TRA-1003 trailing arm kit, which effectively solves the problem of cracking factory trailing arms on Roadmaster R4R and R4RR chassis manufactured by the former Monaco Coach Corp. (MCC) and equipped with a "Monaco Gold" suspension. During the course of that installation, we learned about another product that should be of interest to owners of these coaches: the REK-202 Ride Enhancement Kit.

Consisting of new proprietary Firestone air bags and custom Bilstein shocks engineered specifically for this kit, the REK-202 also incorporates a reserve ping tank and 5/8-inch air lines in the front suspension. According to the company, the Firestone air bags have more travel than the original bags, while the larger air lines

and ping tank provide more air volume for the front suspension. This in turn softens the ride without compromising handling.

It should be noted here that, while you can install the Source Engineering TRA-1003 trailing arms and retain the stock air bag suspension, Source Engineering will not sell the Ride Enhancement Kit unless the original defective trailing arms have been replaced with the TRA-1003 trailing arms; this is because of concerns over liability.

As with the TRA-1003 trailing arm kit installation, we photographed the Ride Enhancement Kit installation at Redlands Truck and RV in Redlands, Calif., an authorized Source Engineering dealer. We were given the opportunity to drive the coach with the stock suspension in place first, then give it another try after the kit was installed so we could

experience the difference.

The stock coach's suspension felt pretty good to us — that is until we compared it with the modified coach. The stock front suspension felt like it would drop out from underneath going over bumps, would "crash" over larger bumps and potholes, and would sway from side to side several times when driving into/out of driveways. With the Source Engineering Ride Enhancement Kit installed, the coach rode much smoother and handled more securely than before, and definitely felt like it was easier to drive.

With a suggested retail price of \$2,195 plus \$100 freight and labor costs (an installation time of four to five hours is typical), the Ride Enhancement Kit is indeed a significant investment, but one that should go a long way to improving ride comfort and handling. ♦



1. The stock front shock absorbers are removed and discarded, as they will be replaced with new Bilstein shock absorbers designed specifically for the REK-202 Ride Enhancement Kit.



6. A front cross member on the R4R and R4RR chassis is an ideal spot for the Source Engineering ping tank.



10. The owner of this coach had already had the Source Engineering trailing arms installed, but wanted to upgrade to the Ride Enhancement Kit.

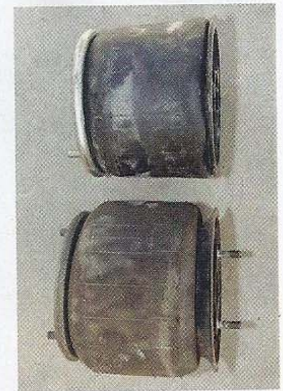


2, 3. The lower air bag mounting nuts are removed first, followed by the upper mounting nuts. Then the bag is removed.

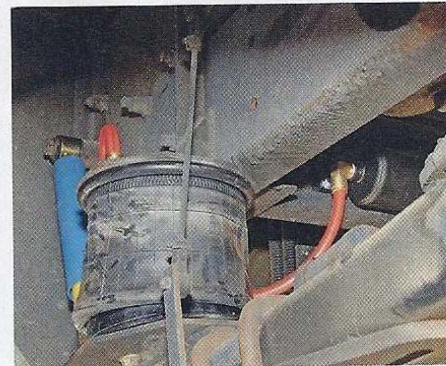


7. To mount the ping tank, a bracket is placed behind the cross member, and the fastener placed through mounting tabs on the ping tank. No drilling is required.

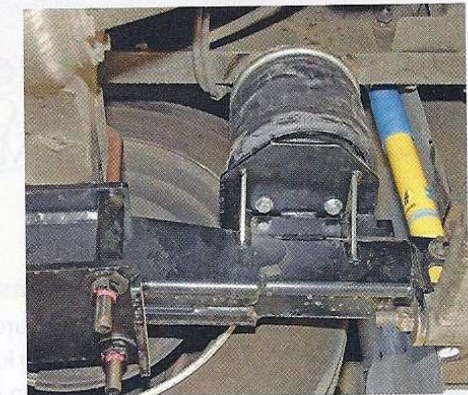
11. As with the front air bags, the Source Engineering rear bag, top, looks similar to the stock part, but internal modifications and longer travel make a big difference.



4. The Source Engineering air bag, bottom, may look similar to the original air bags, but a different internal design and increased travel results in a smoother ride.



8. The passenger-side air bag is shown with the new 3/8-inch air line installed.



12. Replacing the rear bags is a fairly straightforward procedure. The shocks are removed first, followed by the lower air bag mounting nuts, then the upper nuts. The stock air lines are left in place as the Source Engineering air bag has a much lower spring rate than the stock parts. The finished installation is shown here.



5. The new air bag and Bilstein shock absorber are shown in place on the



9. Here's the completed front suspension upgrade. As the air bag compresses, the air escapes through the larger line and into the ping tank, resulting in softer compression characteristics and a smoother ride. Air line routing from the compressor to the tank depends on the particular motorhome, but is usually handled with

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REDLANDS TRUCK AND RV
888-249-0124,
www.redlandstruckservice.com.
SOURCE ENGINEERING INC.
541-935-0308,
www.rv-chassis.com.