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PRIMEDIA

BATTERING RAM



Fabtech's new 6-inch performance suspension system for Ram 1500

By Ken Brubaker *Photography: Ken Brubaker*

A lower base price and a smoother ride are a couple of the attractive benefits that the new breed of ½-ton pickup trucks have over their ¾- and 1-ton cousins. Unfortunately, these lighter-duty trucks often sport less four-wheel-friendly stats. For instance, the '05 Dodge Ram 1500 Quad Cab shortbox 4x4 has 5.4 degrees less approach angle, 2.2 degrees

less departure angle, and 6.1 degrees less ramp breakover angle than the same-model Ram 2500. Further, the Ram 1500 is equipped with IFS and the Ram 2500 has a solid front axle, so this is one of the reasons why the Ram 1500 has 3.3 inches less front ground clearance.

This is where a good aftermarket suspension kit comes in. It allows you to improve your ½-ton's vital four-wheeling specs,

while still retaining the smooth ride of your IFS rig. To illustrate this, we trucked on over to Attitude Performance in Arlington Heights, Illinois, and installed Fabtech Motorsports' new 6-inch performance suspension system under an '05 Ram 1500. The result of our seven hours of labor is a Ram that's ready for the trail with better approach, departure, and breakover angles than a comparable stock Ram 2500.



BATTERING RAM

1 These are the contents of the Fabtech 6-inch performance suspension system. Fabtech says that this kit will allow you to fit a minimum of 315/70R17 tires on a 17x8 wheel with 4.5-inch backsparing.

2 New differential-mount bracketry extends the differential assembly from the stock location.

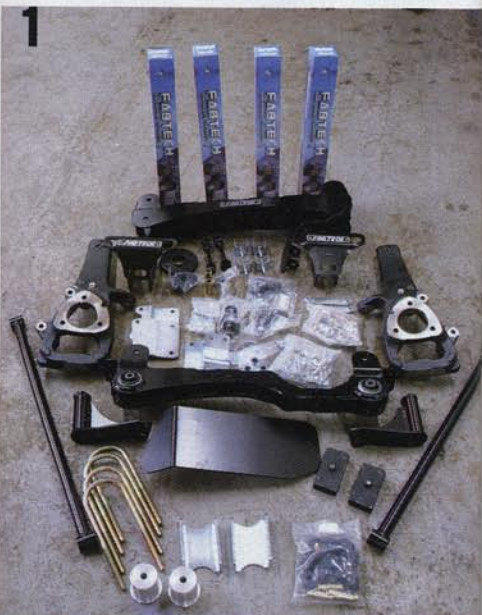
3 A special tool is required to press the two factory lower control-arm bushings out of the frame. This tool (shown) is available from Miller Tool Company and costs approximately \$180. These bushings can be removed without the tool, but it can add a significant amount of time to the installation. These factory bushings are replaced with aluminum frame inserts, which allow the new rear Fabtech crossmember to attach to the stock mounting locations.

4 The kit requires some cutting of the frame and some grinding of the front lower control-arm pockets. Directions for these steps are outlined in the instructions. Here you can see the new front crossmember installed in the vehicle. Immediately below it you can see the new rear crossmember with its pre-installed vulcanized rubber lower control-arm bushings.

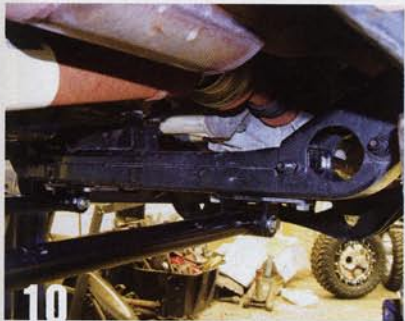
5 Extended-length cast-iron steering knuckles are standard with the kit, and they're offset to allow use of the stock tires and wheels. The stock hub bearings are simply transferred from the stock aluminum steering knuckles to the Fabtech units before installation. The long Fabtech knuckle design means that only the lower control arms are relocated—the upper control arms remain in the factory location in the factory mounts.

6 The kit comes with new tie-rod ends to compensate for the change in steering knuckles. The Fabtech kit requires no rack-and-pinion relocation.

7 A front driveshaft spacer is used to lengthen the shaft to compensate for the increased distance between the front differential and the transfer case.



BATTERING RAM



8 New sway-bar frame mounts lower the entire bar. New sway-bar brackets are also included with the kit, and they attach to the frame using the factory hardware. The sway-bar ends mount to the new brackets using Fabtech-supplied hardware.

9 A pair of impact strut tubes help to strengthen the new front bracketry. These tubes attach to the new rear crossmember and the factory transmission crossmember.

10 This is the torsion-bar crossmember after installing the torsion-bar drop brackets.

11 The rear-suspension modifications are quite simple and include installing a pair of new shocks and a pair of lift blocks. These blocks are positioned between the axletube and the spring. New U-bolts, nuts, and washers are included with the kit.

SOURCE

Attitude Performance
847/593-0505, www.attitudeperformance.com

Fabtech Motorsports
909/597-7800, www.fabtechmotorsports.com

Miller Tool Company
800/801-5420, www.miller.spx.com

Pro Comp Wheels
800/248-9426, www.procomp tire.com

Toyo Tire Corp.
800/678-3250, www.toyo.com

Results

After completing the mods to the Ram, we wheeled it around Badlands Off Road Park in Attica, Indiana. The overall ride was expectedly stiffer than stock, but still much more comfortable than the ride generated by our Ram 2500 long-term vehicle. That's one of the nice things about IFS. Handling remained excellent, and there was no aggravating bumpsteer or other weird steering behavior. The shocks did a great job of reining in the big 35-inch Toyo mud-terrain tires whether we were traversing sand moguls or rocky quarry bottom. Before we installed the kit, the stock Ram climbed 60 inches up a 20-degree RTI ramp (right), earning a score of 882. After the install, the Ram crawled 65 inches up the ramp, which improved its score to 956 (below, right). Up front, ground clearance improved dramatically. Before the lift, there was 14.25 inches between the bottom of the valance (the lowest point at the front of the vehicle) and the ground. After, that distance increased to 21.5 inches. The rear also improved, netting an increase of 2.25 inches over stock. Naturally, these numbers significantly improved the Ram's off-highway capability.

We're big fans of Toyo's Open Country Mud-Terrain tires, and the 35x12.50R20 tires we installed didn't disappoint. As usual, they were amazingly quiet for a mud-terrain tire on-road, and on the trail they provided an impressive bite, no matter what the surface. They seemed to be ideally suited to our IFS application. The Pro Comp Xtreme 6079 20x9 alloy wheels look great, especially with the optional rugged-looking black Pro Comp Xtreme bead-lock rings. **FW**

