

Number Eight!

by Tom Endy

The #8 head stud on a Model A Ford head has some unique features designed around it that can cause some grief if not given proper consideration. Henry designed an anti-theft system that involves the #8 stud that is still fool proof in the modern day. His arrangement makes it very difficult to hot-wire a Model A Ford ignition circuit.

An armored cable that runs from the ignition key pop-out assembly to the distributor protects the integrity of the battery voltage to the ignition points, and prevents insertion of a hotwire. The ignition key assembly also when switched off puts a ground on the arm of the points further protecting the system. The armored cable is secured to the head by a clamp attached to the #8 stud. In order to remove the distributor for repair (or to hot wire the ignition) it is necessary to unscrew the nut from the #8 stud, to release the cable.

All 14 head bolt nuts should have been previously torqued down evenly to the proper torque specification. It is not a good idea to break the torque on any one head stud as it can allow the head to warp and start leaking water. Many a Model A owner has discovered this during a roadside seminar when the #8 stud nut was unbolted and removed in order to replace the distributor.

Some Model A owners do not clamp the armored cable down to the #8 stud so they will have the ability to remove the distributor without having to break the torque on the #8 stud. However, this creates another problem. The #8 stud is slightly longer than the other studs to allow room for the clamp. With the clamp not in place the nut can bottom out on the end of the threads of the stud and give a false indication of a proper torque.

The #8 stud sits right next the narrow area between the #3 and #4 cylinders where the head gasket is very narrow and susceptible to blowing. The area between #3 and #4 cylinders is the most common area for a head gasket to blow even when there is proper torque on the stud. Removing the nut at #8, or running without the spacing of the clamp only adds to the possibility of blowing a head gasket and warping the head.

The best solution is to remove the clamp completely from the armored cable and install a spacer under the nut at the #8 stud to properly space it. Torque all the head bolts down to the proper specification in sequence, and don't fool with them when out on the road. The #8 stud can also be replaced with a standard length stud as used in the other stud positions.



The #8 stud sits right next to the narrow area between #3 and #4 cylinder.



The area between #3 and #4 cylinder is a common place for a blown head gasket. The #8 stud sits right next to the area.