

Silly Sockets!

Attention late model Corvair owners! Do you find yourself replacing tail light bulbs, only to have your friends and neighbors tell you your bulb burnt out again?

Well, maybe your problem isn't the bulb. It could be your tail light sockets.

The black plastic GM sockets are known to have grounding problems. In addition, the steel shell that grips the bulb often backs out of the plastic body of the socket. It's just a friction fit and there is nothing else that secures the shell in place.

When the shell backs out, the bulb goes with it. So, the electrical contacts on the bottom of the bulb no longer touch their counterpart contacts in the base of the socket.

When you install a new bulb, you need to push it in and give it a turn, and in doing so, you push the steel shell back into place. Voila! The bulb works perfectly. But then, over time, the electrical contacts the bottom of the socket, (which are like little leaf springs), push the shell back out. And so, the bulb stops working again.

The solution is to replace the plastic sockets with metal ones. Many people recommend NAPA LS6469 for the tail / brake / turn signals and NAPA LS6465 for the back-up lights. But you don't have to buy the sockets from NAPA. Here is what you really need:

For tail / brake / turn signal lights:

Description: 2-wire double-contact snap-in metal socket for 1 1/8 inch diameter hole. These are after-market replacement parts for a number of Ford, GM and Chrysler cars made from 1965 to 1993. Here are the cross-references:

Replaces Ford #D0AZ-13410-B, D1AZ-13410-B, D2AZ-13410-B, D2OZ-13410-B.

Replaces GM #88860560.

Replaces Chrysler #2926370.

Replaces AC/Delco #LS166.

Uses bulb #1157 and several others.

Several companies manufacture them. Some are poorly made, but NAPA and JT&T offer nice versions of this socket. Both have a tab which you can use for attaching a ground lead, if you like. I did. The JT&T number is 2578F.

For backup lights:

Description: 1-wire single-contact snap-in metal socket for 1 1/8 inch diameter hole. Just like the tail light sockets, these are after-market replacement parts for a number of Ford, GM and Chrysler cars made from 1965 to 1993.

Replaces GM #2978302, 88860430.

Replaces Ford #D00Z-15536A.

Replaces Chrysler #3513162, 3780745.

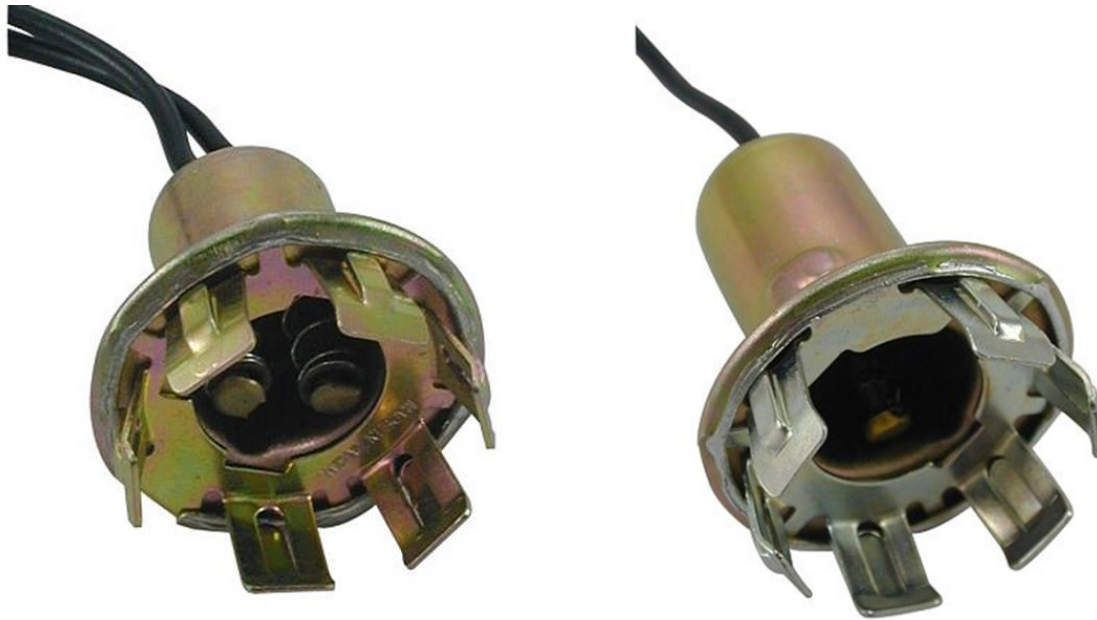
Replaces AMC #4486949, 4489412.
Replaces AC/Delco #LS128.
Uses bulb #1156 and several others.

The NAPA version of this 1-wire socket includes a ground wire, but its not securely connected to the metal shell of the socket, so I soldered a ground wire directly to the shell itself. The JT&T version does not appear to have any provision at all for a separate ground wire, but again, you can solder one directly to the metal shell, just like I did with the NAPA unit. By the way, the JT&T number for the 1-wire socket is 2579F.

Speaking of solder, I soldered all my connections and used shrink tubing to insulate the hot leads. I recommend you do the same, rather than rely on crimp fittings. (Ground leads, of course, do not need to be insulated from ground!)

Now, before you run out and buy new sockets, check to make sure the old sockets are getting 12 volts. If they are, then go ahead and replace the sockets. But if they are not getting power, you may have a different problem.

Maybe it's just a bad fuse, which is easy to replace. On the other hand, perhaps the electrical contacts in the turn signal switch are worn out. The switch is buried in the steering column, and that's a topic for a different day.



Here are photos of the 2-wire and 1-wire JT&T sockets.

Allan Lacki