

Check those drainage holes!

■ Words: Murray Finlay ■ Photos: Will Campbell

Is it just me ... ? (I bet it's not!)

In all the recent heavy rain, I discovered that I had neglected checking my car's drainage holes during the recent drought years, when car leaks have been the furthest thing from my mind.

How did I discover this? My daughter put a cardigan up on the shelf behind the passenger seat ... when she came to remove it, the cardigan was wringing wet, and it hadn't been raining during the drive ...

When I reached into the corner behind the seat (where the soft top pivots, beside the seatbelt tower), there was a puddle about 10mm deep!

So, what's the cause ... and how do I fix it?

In the MX-5, water from the roof makes its way down through two channels *inside the car* to get to the ground. It is essential to make sure that these channels are free from any blockages if you want to avoid getting wet or listening to the water slosh up and down the sills and causing them to rust. It is a very simple task – the whole procedure should take no more than a few minutes.

In the NA and NB, the top of the drainage tube is a circular hole about the diameter of a bloke's index finger, situated in the "nook" where the soft top roof hinges on the body. It's right between the seatbelt tower and the car's side bodywork.



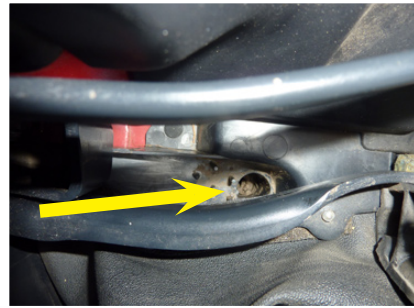
However, it's hidden under a small flap of rear sill carpet. To access it easily, you need to fold back this carpet flap.

With the seats tilted forward, unclip the soft top and tilt it back slightly ... enough to allow you to get your hand in behind and around the seatbelt tower so you can lift and fold back this carpet flap.



Once this is done on both sides, fold the soft top down flat so that it will hold both carpet flaps back out of the way.

You should then be able to see the drainage holes.



In the NC, the arrangement is much more civilised, and the rectangular draining hole can be seen clearly behind the seatbelt tower, and accessed very easily.



Once I've found the drainage hole, how do I clean it? There are different opinions ... some suggest using a wire coathanger (straightened of course!), a length of that springy plastic-coated wire used for hanging light curtains, some 10mm poly garden irrigation pipe ... Some even claim that the original metal NA aerial with the knob at the top was designed for exactly this purpose! I used a thin (about 6mm diameter) piece of dowel.

Whatever you use, *be gentle!* The drainage tube has a flap towards the bottom which is designed to let water drain out beneath the car, but stop dirt (and noise?) getting back up into the car, and you don't want to damage that.

There may be quite a lot of resistance initially as dirt can really clog up the hole, but repeated prodding will break it up. Repeat the procedure on the other side.

Some owners also clean these drainage tubes from the bottom. The tubes can be seen under the car, protruding from just in front of the rear wheels. Again, be wary of damaging that flap.

At the front of the car ... in my old NA I had to make sure I regularly cleared leaves and sludge from inside the panel at the rear of the front wheel arch. Leaves and debris washed down inside there from the front windscreen drainage channel collected between the metal of the front guard and the plastic lining. I discovered that all this vegetation, dust and dirt began to compost, and was concerned that the wet gunge sitting against the metal would rust the panel.

I admit I haven't yet addressed this in my NB; the plastic wheel arch lining is attached a bit more securely!

Other leaks:

- » **side windows:** if water is leaking in near the soft top weather-stripping, try closing the door *after* closing the window. This forces the window to contact the weather-strip differently from when the window is closed after the door is closed.
- » **where the soft top meets the windshield frame:** usually caused by dirty or damaged moldings or the latches not being tight enough. Usually you will notice the top will squeak and rattle if it isn't latched down tight. The NA/NB latches may be adjusted: open the latch and examine the inside. There is a small plastic 'cover' that keeps the latch adjustment screw from moving. Pop the cover off and adjust the screw as needed to get the latches to close smoothly, yet tight enough to keep the top from rattling or leaking. If the latches become difficult to open or close, a small amount of oil on the moving parts should help. Don't over-tighten, as this will make the top difficult to close.
- » **water in the boot:** can be caused by one of several factors – dried out weather-stripping around the boot, a cracked rain rail on the convertible top, or dried out weather-stripping around the tail lights (especially on older vehicles).

Sources:

- » bitter experience!
- » www.mx5ireland.com
- » www.pistonheads.co.uk
- » http://ox.mx5oc.co.uk/hints_tips.htm
- » www.miata.net/faq/faq3.html