Daytime running lights for Dummies ...

■ Words & photos: **Bob de Bont**

After seeing some MX-5s blend into the road on dim and dreary days, I decided we needed some Daytime Running Lights (DRLs) on our NC to improve its visibility to other road users.

There is not a lot of information available about fitting DRLs to NCs other than converting the fog lights to DRLs.

How hard can it be to install into a MX-5 and how much will it cost? Turns out it's fairly easy and really cheap other than your own time.

First stop on *eBay* is a search for "DRL LED" and pick your lights. For early NCs a pair of *Eagle Eyes* work very well, but for a later NC, I chose a more rectangular style for the princely sum of $5.00 delivered.

❮ *"Eagle Eyes", suitable for early NCs*

Rectangular running lights, better suited to later NCs ❯

Next part of the puzzle was something to control them, preferably automtically. Another search on *eBay* for DRL Controller turnd up a neat little harness with a total of five wires. This little beauty also cost $5.00 delivered and took all the angst out of wiring in the light.

This module will turn the lights on once the engine starts, dim the lights when park lights are on and turn the lights off when the engine stops after about 15-20 seconds' delay. The large red wire is connected to a positive power feed and the black wire is connected to a convenient earth point. The smaller red and black wires feed the lights and the white wire is connected to the park lights. Removing the fuse will disable the system if desired.

Finally some water proof connectors (right), again from *eBay* for $5.00 delivered.

Some heat shrink, a quick splice wire connector (vampire clip) and some zip-ties ... and we are ready to go.

Tools required:

»   Spanners, sockets, pliers and a screw driver as required
»   Wire strippers
»   A soldering iron to make some neat and reliable wiring joints
»   A test light (or multimeter) to find the park light wire
»   A drill for mounting the lights plus nuts and bolts to fix them to the bumper.

This is a fairly easy DIY, but requires some skill at joining wires and insulating the joints.

Step 1.   Start with a down-and-dirty wire-up to make sure everything works. Strip some insulation from the wires to the lights and test they work. Roughly wire in the module and give it a try with and without the engine running. Lights should work with the engine running; touching the white wire to the battery power should dim the lights. Note that LEDs are polar, therefore the red wire must be positive and the black is negative.

Step 2.   I found it much easier to remove the bumper to allow access for running the wires and accessing the park light wire behind the headlight. There are a number of instructions on the web on how to remove the bumper. It should take about an hour to carefully remove and about 30 minutes to reinstall the first time; practice makes the job much faster.

Step 3. Remove the air cleaner housing completely to gain access for fitting up the module.

Step 4. Solder on the waterproof connector, and wire in the module. Connect the red wire to the power wire feeding the fuse farm as indicated in the above photo. Connect the black wire to the earth connection under the air cleaner housing.

earth
park trigger
power
to lights
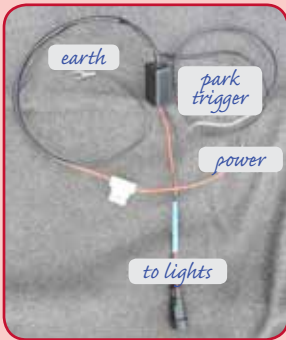
Bob says the same basic principle would easily allow fitment of DRLs to an NA or NB.

Bob is also happy to fit up the lights to members' cars (with their help) for minimal payment and as time permits.

Step 5. Remove the left-hand headlight carefully by removing the four bolts, one push fastener and three connectors. This allows access to the park light wire to trigger the module. The park light wire is in a block of four wires, and is green with a black trace. When splicing into the wire, ensure you have a good connection before replacing the headlight. Route the wires and zip-tie everything in place then refit the headlight.

Hint: if you struggle to unclip a connector, apply pressure to the release tang and push the connector together and then try to separate it.

Step 6. Test fit the DRLs to the bumper until you are satisfied with a location. Drill and bolt them on, then wire them together, fit the waterproof connector and securing the wires to the back of the bumper with more zip-ties.

Step 7. Refit the bumper and air cleaner housing, reconnect the various connectors ... and don't forget the fog lights.

Step 8. Test the system.

Step 9. *Sit back and admire your handy work with a nice cold beverage of your choice.*

Total time, including removing and refitting wheels and bumper, was about four hours. ■

Finished!

Running lights on ...!

... and with low beam

■ Please note: All "Tech Talk" information is provided as a guide only. All work is carried out at the owner's risk.