

# GIVE A DINGHY A BRAKE

**LAWS ASIDE, IT JUST MAKES GOOD SENSE TO USE SUPPLEMENTAL BRAKES ON TOWED VEHICLES TO PROVIDE BETTER CONTROL AND LESS WEAR AND TEAR ON YOUR COACH'S SERVICE BRAKES.**

Traveling along America's highways and byways is the preferred pastime of most coach owners. Facilitating our mobility upon destination, most tow another vehicle, often referred to as a "dinghy." Pulling these dinghies poses no problem. What with the gobs of torque developed by the Cummins engines, pulling a full-sized car, SUV or pickup is a seemingly effortless task. (Check your coach's weight ratings.) However, most states now have laws for towing another vehicle without supplemental brakes. While the majority of states require the towed vehicle to have its own braking system if its weight is 3,000 pounds or greater, many require supplemental brakes on the towed vehicle with as little as 1,000 pounds. (Check your state and the states you may travel as the laws vary.)

Monaco Coach Corporation recommends the use of supplemental brakes on towed vehicles weighing over 1,000 pounds to provide better control and less wear and tear on the service brakes of the coach.

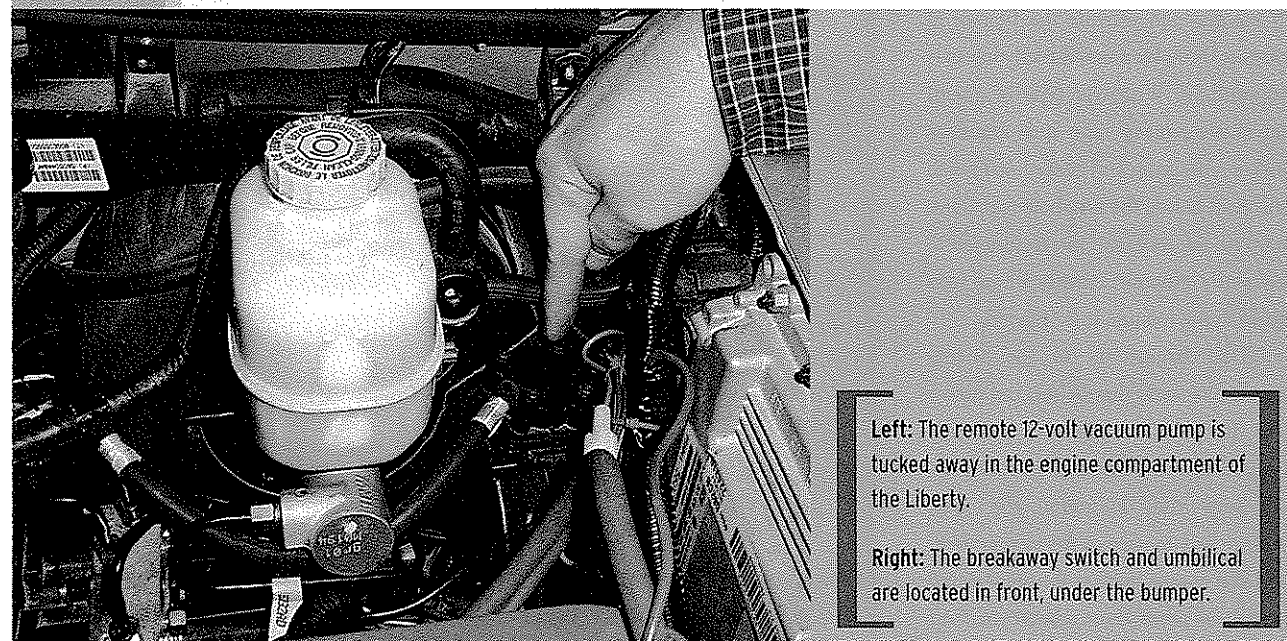
On September 15, 2005, Mike Snell, vice president of sales, announced "...In keeping with Monaco Coach Corporation's unprecedented commitment to safety, all model year 2006 Monaco, Holiday Rambler, Beaver, and Safari class A motorhomes built after July 1, 2005 will come prewired for supplemental braking systems for towed vehicles..."

Did you read correctly? Yes that's right, every Monaco Coach Corporation class A motorhome built after July 1, 2005 comes prewired for a supplemental braking system.

You agree, that's a great feature for new coach owners, but what about the owner of an older model? No problem. Monaco Coach Corporation now offers installation of U.S. Gear's Unified Tow Brake in most of its products and you can have the installation performed right at your local Monaco Coach Corporation Service Center. So if you own a Monaco Coach Corporation class A motorhome built before model year 2006, you too can enjoy the same benefits.

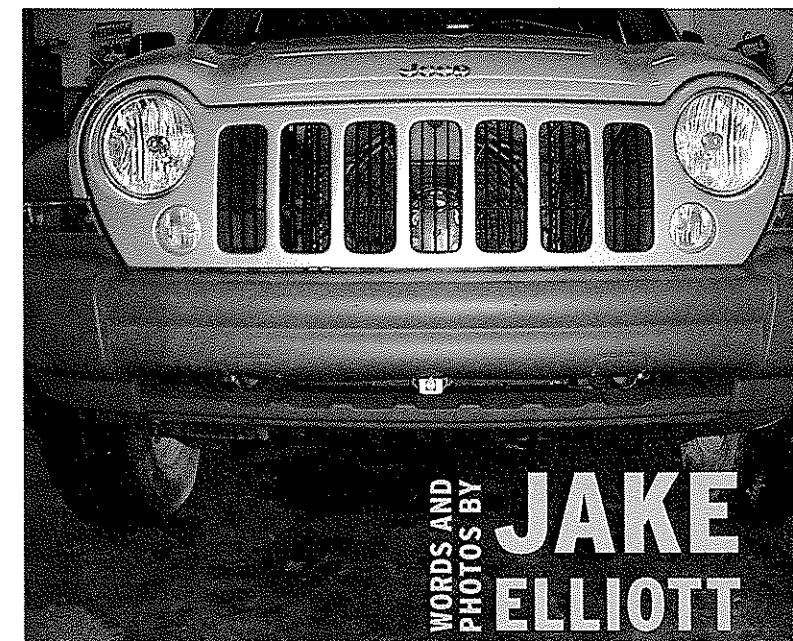
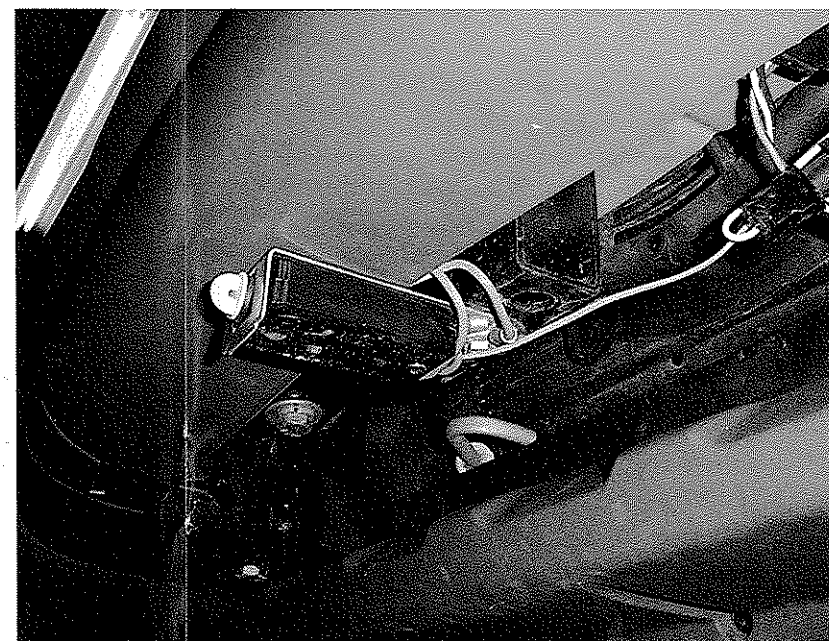
While a prewired coach provides reduced installation time, installing the U.S. Gear Unified Tow Brake in a coach built before model year 2006 is easily accomplished by your local Monaco Coach Corporation Service Center. To show just how easy it is, and because installation is recommended by your Holiday Rambler dealer, we arranged to have a Unified Tow Brake system installed on a 2002 Class A pulling a 2005 Jeep Liberty, Common Rail Diesel (CRD), 4x4 at the Monaco Coach Corporation Elkhart Service Center.

The Unified Tow Brake offers a number of exclusive  
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Left: The remote 12-volt vacuum pump is tucked away in the engine compartment of the Liberty.

Right: The breakaway switch and umbilical are located in front, under the bumper.



WORDS AND  
PHOTOS BY  
**JAKE  
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features, including what U.S. Gear calls “proportional” and “progressive” braking. According to U.S. Gear, proportional braking is when the motorhome or towed vehicle provide sufficient braking power, which is proportional to the vehicle’s own weight. Proportional braking is adjusted via a “gain control” located on the Remote Controller mounted in the motorhome, which is connected to the Power Module installed in the towed vehicle.

Progressive braking, as defined by U.S. Gear, means that the towed vehicle mirrors the amount of braking force applied at the motorhome. If the motorhome braking force is light, so is the towed vehicle; if the motorhome’s brakes are applied heavy as in a panic stop, so are the towed vehicle’s brakes.

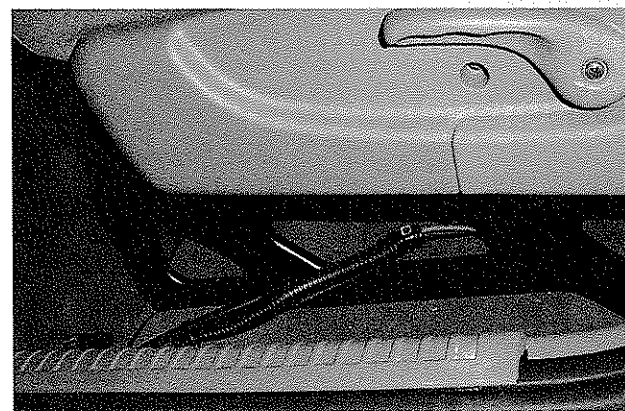
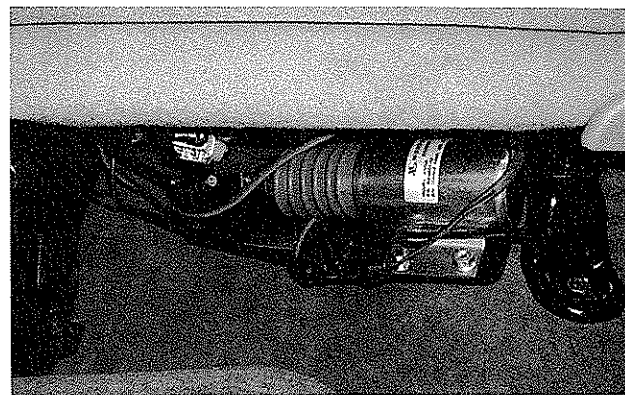
One of the nicer features offered by the Unified Tow Brake is that it is completely self-contained. The only requirement for operation is to connect the umbilical cord, once the unit is installed in both vehicles. All of the components necessary to operate your towed vehicle’s brakes remain installed, almost completely out of sight. Since the system is universal (not vehicle model specific), should you ever change dinghies, you can remove the components from the current vehicle and have them installed in your new vehicle.

Unified Tow Brake relies on vacuum-assisted brakes. Braking power is achieved by utilizing a 12-volt vacuum pump, which mounts in the engine compartment of your towed vehicle. This precludes the use of the Unified Tow Brake in most diesel-powered vehicles, as diesel engines do not produce vacuum. If your desire is to tow a Hummer, full-sized GM, Ford, Dodge or VW that is diesel powered, you will need to look elsewhere for a braking system.

Installation in the coach is straightforward. Connect a wire to the “cold side” of the coach’s brake switch, mount the brake controller in an accessible location, add 12-volt power to the Unified Tow Brake controller and run a wire to the back of the coach to connect to the umbilical.

The installation in the towed vehicle is more involved. Because the U.S. Gear Unified Tow Brake is a “one size fits all” (universal) system, the installation varies in time and degree of difficulty depending on the vehicle. It may require additional time for the installer to determine the exact location of the system’s components. We found a suitable location in the engine compartment

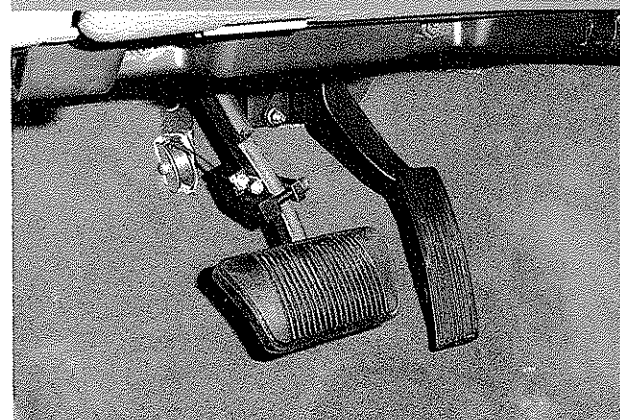
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**Top:** The Unified Tow Brake actuator is secured with tie wraps under the driver's seat. Some foot/leg room is sacrificed from the passenger's foot area. (Viewed from the rear seat looking forward at the back of the driver's seat)

**Above:** The wiring and cable from the actuator is routed from under the driver's seat to the doorsill cover.

**Below:** The Unified Tow Brake actuator applies braking force to the Liberty's brake pedal via a cable.



of our Jeep Liberty to mount the remote vacuum pump. Once the pump is securely mounted, the Unified Tow Brake's vacuum lines are spliced into the vacuum lines on the Liberty. While it is true the system does not cut into the towed vehicle's brake lines, it is necessary to splice into the towed vehicle's vacuum system in order for the Unified Tow Brake to work.

The actuator for the system was mounted with "tie wraps" under our Liberty's driver seat, almost out of sight, and leaving a small reduction in legroom behind the front seats. The actuator is tied to the Liberty's brake pedal via a small cable. Our cable is slightly visible as it passes from under the seat to the driver's side doorsill cover.

The umbilical connection at the front of the Liberty and the rear of the coach are "weather pack"-type connectors. At the time of installation these items were left loose and while they did provide for an easy connection and disconnect for the system between our coach and the Liberty, it would have been a cleaner, more functional installation if the connectors had some type of bulkhead bracket.

Since no standardized, universally accepted method of testing supplemental braking exists, we made no attempts to measure the performance of the U.S. Gear Unified Tow Brake. However, we can tell you that there is definitely a perceived reduction in the distance and time required to stop the motorhome/Liberty combination when connected to U.S. Gear's supplemental system. In addition, installation of the Unified Tow Brake should provide some reduction in the wear and tear on the coach's service brakes, while generally providing a safer coach and dinghy-combined vehicle combination and

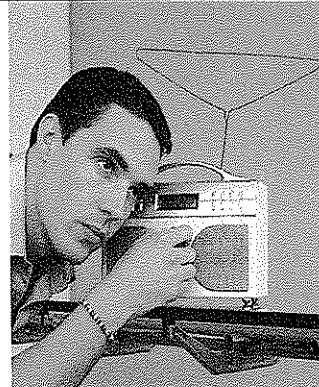
should bring you into compliance with most state's laws with regard to supplemental braking requirements.

Owners of model year 2006 and newer Monaco Coach Corporation class A motorhomes (built after July 1, 2005) can now enjoy additional savings. When purchasing the U.S. Gear towed vehicle kit, customers will also receive a free

in-coach brake controller. This offer is good at any Monaco Coach Corporation dealer, or directly from Monaco Coach Corporation. ■

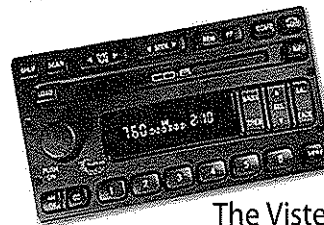
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