



(Researched and written by Chris Sanderson)

### Al-Ko under chassis spare wheel carrier

The changes introduced in 2004 to caravan gas supply arrangements i.e. regulators fixed to the bulk head etc has meant, that in the majority of cases, the spare wheel being reassigned to be housed under the chassis. Similarly some people have opted to have the spare wheel located under the chassis to reduce hitch nose weight. The spare wheel carrier has in itself brought about a couple of potential problems, so if your caravan has one fitted, read on, as it may help overcome any problems and hopefully provide you with trouble free wheel changes.



a) Nearside wheel puncture – the spare wheel carrier is basically designed to allow correct access, lowering and withdrawal, with the caravan chassis at its normal height to the road surface. In the event of a nearside puncture this clearance is reduced considerably. As such, the caravan should be first raised using the jack before attempting to access the spare wheel carrier and remove the spare wheel.

b) Offside wheel puncture - due to the increased rim/tyre widths used for 14 and 15-inch wheels and the prevailing road or ground conditions, it might prove necessary in some circumstances to first jack up slightly the nearside of the caravan to gain sufficient clearance for the carrier and spare wheel to be withdrawn. It is therefore recommended that for any offside wheel puncture, the spare wheel is accessed and removed prior to utilising the caravan jack to raise the punctured wheel.

c) Position of spare wheel on carrier – the carrier is essentially made up in two halves using a pair of tubes that telescopically slide one inside the other. Crimping at the end of the tubes is designed to prevent the two halves from separating but if the carrier half holding the spare wheel is withdrawn too far to allow the spare wheel to be removed, the carrier could still come apart. This could be the case where the spare wheel has been positioned amidships to the caravan chassis to balance weight etc.

To avoid problems, the spare wheel should be fitted to the carrier as close as possible to the nearside chassis member just allowing enough clearance between the tyre and chassis to allow the carrier to be withdrawn from its chassis locating holes prior to lowering.

The majority of the caravan manufactures now fit the carrier supplied to them from Al-Ko pre-assembled; this positions the wheel relative to the width of the chassis correctly.

Should you wish to fit one yourself, you can purchase a carrier already assembled, against ALKO part No.1287 180\*, This covers chassis widths of 1410 -1715 mm.

Information above as discussed and verified with Al-Ko representative at Earls Court Caravan & Leisure show (Nov 2005) and confirmed by recent e-mail.

It is recommended that if you are unfamiliar with the operation of the spare wheel carrier on your caravan, that you make yourself so in dry and relatively comfortable conditions that an unfortunate puncture might not give you.

Safety First - Don't forget to apply hand brakes to both tow car and caravan and to chock the non-punctured wheel before attempting any wheel changing operation.