

Retro-fitting the Dakota Digital VHX-84B-REG Into Your 78-83 Regal

Since there is not a VHX gauge package for the 78-83 Buick Regal, this manual will show how to retro-fit the VHX-84B-REG into the older version of the car. With a couple of modifications, a quality, precise instrument cluster can be enjoyed by owners of the less popular model years of the Buick Regal.

For starters, a gauge housing and bezel from a 1984-87 Regal will need to be purchased. If desired, the headlight switch and dimmer knob from an 84-87 can also be purchased so the original cutouts in the bezel will be used as they were meant to be used. While not required, this will result in a little cleaner look. In this particular case, the owner decided to rearrange the factory switches that are in his 79 Regal.

Once the aforementioned parts are obtained, the tear-down process can begin. The bezel must be removed from the stock gauges. Before the bezel can come out, the headlight switch knob needs to be removed. There are several clips that hold the bezel in place, so take care when pulling the bezel out to avoid cracking it.

Now that the bezel is out of the way, the screws that fasten gauges to the black plastic housing can be removed. The gauge cluster will have a little wiggle room once it is unfastened from the dash. This should allow enough room to reach behind the cluster and disconnect the speedometer cable. If this proves to be difficult, removing the dash pad can make it a little easier to access that area.

****NOTE:** these screws can be used to mount the VHX gauges to the new housing.

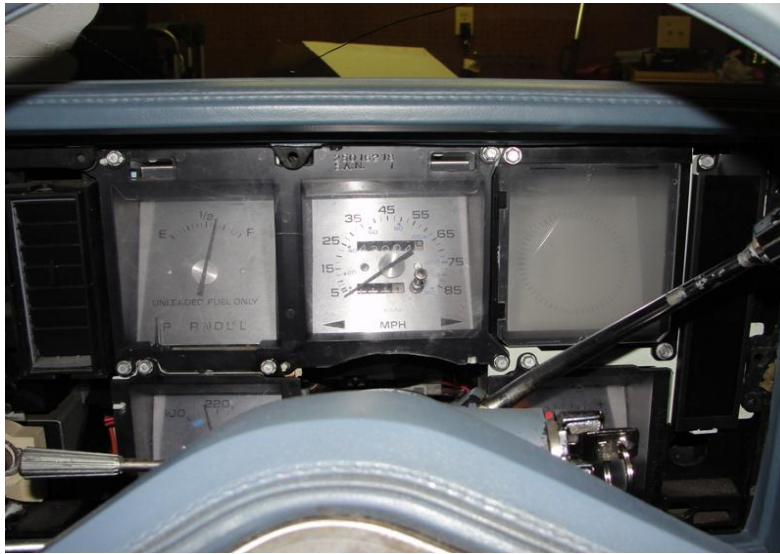


Illustration 1: Bezel Removed

After removing the stock gauge cluster, remove the mounting screws that hold in the black housing. In addition to removing the screws, there are several clips attached to the wiring harness that will need to be pushed through the housing in order to take it out of the dash. Lastly, the connector for the wiring harness, headlight switch, and wiper switch will have to be disconnected from the housing. At this point, the housing should be able to be removed. ****NOTE:** these screws can be used to mount the new housing into the dash.



Illustration 2: Stock Cluster Removed



Illustration 3: Stock Housing Removed

After removing the stock housing, refer to the VHX installation manual to properly install the included senders. It is always a good idea to label your wires with a small piece of tape and a marker before routing them through the car. Find a good spot to mount the control box and run the wires to it to ensure that there is enough wire to reach the control box. For this installation, the owner of this car found that there was enough room between the housing and gauges to mount the control box behind the gauges in the dash.

If the switches for the 84-87 Regal were purchased along with the bezel, these will have to be wired into the car before the 84-87 housing can be mounted in the dash. The switches will clip directly into the housing with no modification. If you wish to re-use the switches that came with the car, you can do it as follows. (NOTE: This is one example of how it can be done. You may have another way you prefer to complete the process.)

Attach the headlight switch to the 84-87 gauge bezel in the LIGHTS cutout in the bezel. This can be done using the retaining nut from the headlight switch. On the backside of the bezel, use a rubber washer to provide tension once the nut is tightened against the front of the bezel.

For the wiper switch, this owner simply used strips of double-sided tape around the cutout (on the backside) for the INTERIOR LIGHTS dimmer knob on the new bezel. Make sure the areas that the tape is contacting, both on the bezel and the wiper switch, are clean to ensure solid adhesion.



Illustration 5: Switch Mounting

With the switches now attached to the bezel, mock up the bezel and housing together. The housing will have to be modified to accept the switches. This can prove to be a tedious, yet necessary step. When placing the bezel on the housing, you will notice both switches will encounter some clearance issues. After finding the trouble areas, take your favorite cutting tool and remove material until the bezel can rest on the housing properly. In this case, a jigsaw did the trick.

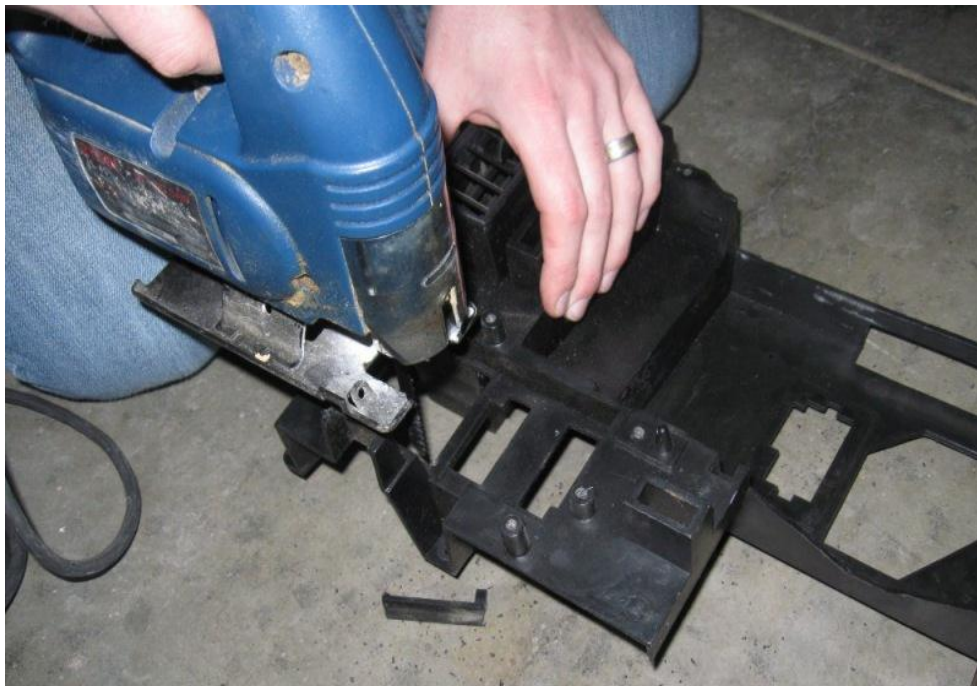


Illustration 4: Trim the housing to provide clearance for the retro-fitted switches.

There are two other pieces of the black plastic housing that need to be trimmed in order for the bezel to sit flush once installed in the dash. In the upper right corner, there is a plastic boss that extrudes too far outward. A few inches below that, there is a rectangular extrusion that will interfere with the bezel if left alone. Trim these two areas. The bezel should be flush to the lens.



Illustration 7: Upper right area to be trimmed

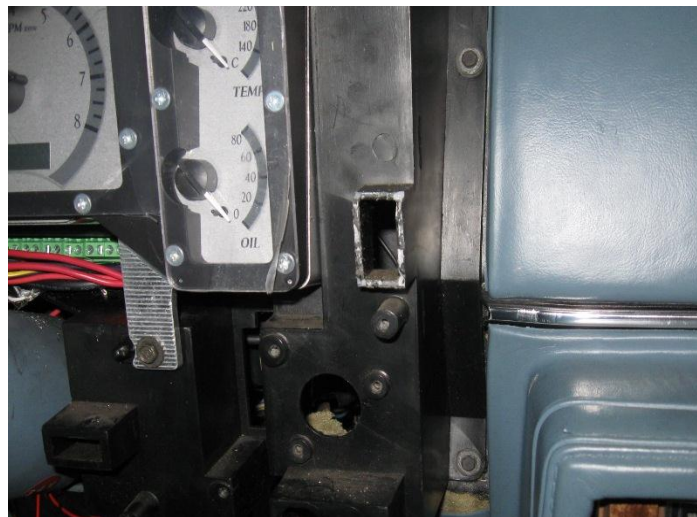


Illustration 6: Lower rectangular piece to be trimmed

Following the mounting instructions in the VHX-84B-REG installation manual, the new VHX gauges can now be secured to the black housing. Again, the screws that were used to hold the stock gauges in place can be re-used at this point. Make sure to plug the CAT5 cable into the gauges as well as the control box before installing the gauges into the dash.

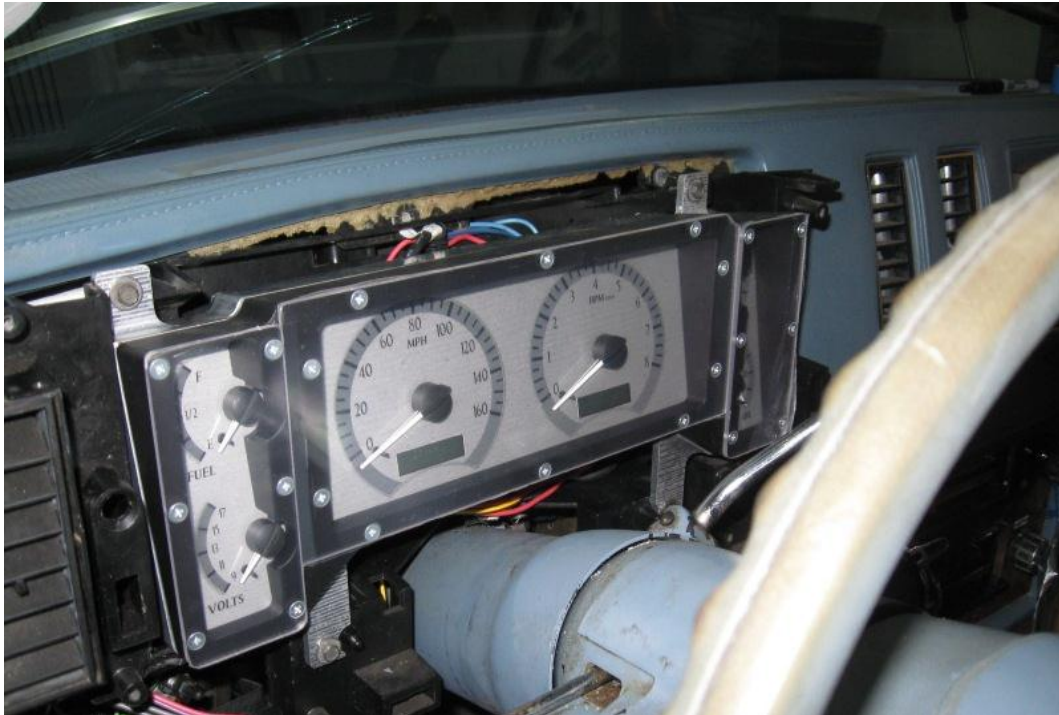


Illustration 10: VHX gauge cluster installed in dash

Now is a good time to make sure the gauges work properly and make sure everything is wired correctly. Once satisfied, the bezel can be placed on the gauges and clipped into place. ****NOTE:** If the old switches were used, remember to connect them to their respective wiring connector as the bezel is installed.

This completes the process of retro-fitting the Dakota Digital VHX-84B-REG into a 78-83 Buick Regal. While this is not as convenient as a direct-fit system, it's a great alternative for a group of Regal enthusiasts that historically have fewer upgrade options compared to the much more popular model years and body styles.



Illustration 11: VHX installation is complete.