

MAY 2007

Window Repair Process For Hamptons Homes

BACKGROUND: The windows are prone to failure of the lift mechanism. The repair is not difficult for a handyman, if you know the basics of how to get the window out and to install the new lift mechanism.

PARTS: The manufacturer of the windows was Alcan Aluminum, Building Products Division. This operation has been sold and is now known as "Norandex" and is located at 1701 Australian Ave, Riviera Beach. Phone number is 844-8527. The primary parts you need are called "#3640 Block & Tackle Assy". The "#3640" indicates a 36" travel & a 40lb lift force. All except the kitchen sink window use the same part. The kitchen sink window uses a "#2930 Block & Tackle Assy" due to its smaller size. You will need two B&T's for each window. Always replace both assemblies even if the old assemblies look ok. You will also need 2 new "sash guides" for each window. ALWAYS replace the sash guides even if they look good. It is this part that initiates the failures, as it becomes brittle from age and UV light exposure. Thus for repair of 3 windows, you should purchase: 6ea #3640 B&T Assys, 6ea Sash Guides. In addition, go to Home Depot and pick up a small tube (hobby size) of Liquid Nails-Original Formulation. Since you can expect more failures in the future, buying an extra set of parts is a good investment.

1. Tools required are: (a) medium Phillips screwdriver, (b) small flat blade screwdriver, (c) medium waterpump pliers (straight or vice grips ok if you don't have the waterpump pliers), (d) 3-4 ft step stool or ladder, (e) old beach towel or throw rug to protect floor from dirt off the removed window frame.
2. Remove the plastic sash stop insert (which may be) located at the very top of the jamb covering the track. This is a "C" shaped plastic insert that keeps the moveable sash from going all the way to the top of the jamb.
3. Remove any B&T Assy's that are sticking up above the moveable sash. Sometimes they come out easy, sometimes you need to use the waterpump pliers and significant force. Usually it is possible to pull them out at an angle and then get a good grip on them and push upward. Sometimes you end up bending the B&T Assy if it is really wedged in place. It is a whole lot better to get them out before you try to remove the moveable sash.
4. With the moveable sash still "down", look in the track about 1" above the moveable sash and you will see a silver clip. Get the tip of a small flat screwdriver under the bottom end of this clip and pry it out. This clip forms a "temporary stop" to hold the B&T Assy in place while the window is removed and replaced. Do this on both sides, even if the B&T Assy has been removed in step 2.
5. Raise the removable sash up in the track. As you get midway up, push it to either side (toward the missing B&T Assy if one has been removed in step #2) and the opposite edge should become free and you pull the moveable sash out. Be careful here, the sash is about 40# and you may be on a ladder. A helper at this point is an asset.
6. Place the sash on the towel or rug (to protect your floors from the typically very dirty bottom of the sash) and remove the old sash guide or the broken pieces of the old sash guide. (Often the old sash guide is nowhere to be found because it has been expelled and lost when the B&T Assy "fired" out of the channel.) Replace it with a new sash guide, applying a small amount of LiqNails adhesive to the bottom of the sash guide. The sash guide design is marginal for these heavy windows and the adhesive will help to avoid the new sash guide failing in the same way the original one failed.
7. CAREFULLY place the hook of the new B&T Assy in the square hole and pull the cord out until you can insert the wedge shaped end of the B&T Assy under the temporary stop clip exposed in step #3. Do this with both sides. BE VERY CAREFUL IN THIS OPERATION BECAUSE THE TENSION ON THE CORD IS HIGH AND IF IT GETS AWAY FROM YOU, THE RESULT CAN BE A NASTY INJURY. MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE HOLDING THE B&T ASSY SO THAT IF THE HOOK COMES LOOSE, IT WILL NOT CATCH YOUR HANDS AS IT RECOILS. SAFETY GLASSES ARE RECOMMENDED. BE VERY CAREFUL!
8. Pick up the moveable sash and reinsert it about midway high in the channel. Put one side in first and push the sash in that direction. Then the 2nd side should drop in place. When the sash is in the channel, lower it all the way down, and as it gets a few inches from the bottom, it will contact the B&T Assys and you will need to push it down to expose the "temporary stop clips". When the "temporary stop clips" are exposed, push them back into their normal stored position, replace the plastic sash blocks at the top of the jambs (these are often missing and are not really required). Raise the window and lower it to check it out, and take a bow, the job is almost done.
9. It goes without saying that when the window is removed is an ideal time to vacuum clean the tracks and jambs to remove trash and dirt. The plastic spline strips around the windows are often broken and you may desire to replace these too. This can be a somewhat laborious process, but not really hard to do and the parts are relatively cheap.

BTW... Kirk Mote, a Hamptons resident and handyman, can do these replacements for you. Contact Kirk at 252-1963 for info and pricing.

Hope this is helpful to you.
Charlie Godfrey, 746-6742

See 05/13/2010 addendum on next page:

Since the preceding was written, the source of parts has become more complex. Norandex (who was the successor to the original manufacturer (ALCAN) no longer has a store in this area does not even carry parts for this window. However, the parts needed are available from several sources, but with complications. The "Block & Tackle assembly" is a common part to many manufacturers and is more or less available. However, though the B&T is a common part, the plastic ends that are riveted to the B&T are unique to a specific window manufacturer. And there is much confusion as to the configuration you need when you try to order these parts via telephone from remote sources.

The best source that I know about is www.Replacement-Hardware.com located in Hialeah FL. (1-800-780-5051). You can see their parts sheet on the web. But, the part nomenclature and geometry is the key. You are looking for a "balance", also referred to as a "block & tackle assembly". But there are several series, defined by the internal width of the channel component which in this case is 1/2". The length of the channel is 36" and the lifting force is 40#, which is specified as a #3640 B&T. But that is not enough. The plastic parts that are riveted to the ends by the distributor (or sometimes the technician) are unique and unfortunately one of the two parts required for the Hamptons windows is not shown in the parts sheet. The best way will be to send a sample to the company and let them match it.

This is usually possible because the most common failure mode results in the balance assembly sticking out in the window track above the moveable sash. Just get hold of it and PULL it up and toward the center of the window till it comes free. This might be tough and require bending the balance assembly. But it will come out, and the bent channel will not stop them from matching the plastic parts on the ends.

Now there are several service agencies that will come out and replace the balances. Brite Systems of Hobe Sound; T J Davis Windows Inc. of Lake Worth; Window Doctors, etc. will do this work. However, the cost is significant. Expect to pay \$50+/window plus the basic service call. These companies are familiar with the task and know which parts are needed. You are paying for their expertise.

I have looked at the several of the various illustrations by other suppliers on the web and have not found an exact replacement. However, I am confident that there are parts that are sufficiently interchangeable to do the job. But getting the sample part to the supplier will be your best bet if you are going to do the repairs yourself.

Good Luck, Charlie Godfrey, 05/13/2010.