

Are Hardware Overhauls Justified?

A Garage Door Hardware Expert Responds

Editor's Note:

This story shows how the quality of manufacturers' products is being denigrated and falsely represented as part of a scheme to defraud customers. Dealers should take note. If you're using the sales tactics described below, you need to know that they are false and misleading.

We hope that dealers and manufacturers will post a link to this story in an effort to help protect consumers from false claims and overcharging by disreputable dealers.



John Scates

A common tactic used to run up a homeowner's garage door repair bill is to propose a hardware "overhaul," sometimes called a "rebuild package." A typical overhaul or rebuild includes new springs, 10 new rollers, two cables, end bearing brackets, and a center bearing bracket.

Even though all these parts can be bought on Amazon for less than \$150, we've seen invoices from some technicians who sold them, with installation, at anywhere from \$700 to well over \$1,300. We've also received a training document used in Southern California that teaches technicians how to sell these rebuilds to customers.

One technician in Orange County, Calif., told us that he was instructed to "sell rebuilds on doors every day" and to "tell every customer their spring is broken or worn out." The goal, he said, was to get the technician's average ticket up over \$400. While these tactics are certainly questionable, this article focuses on the engineering basis for these hardware overhauls.

Expert Testimony

Are hardware overhauls or rebuilds justified? To answer that question, we asked an independent garage door engineer to evaluate statements in two sales documents used to sell these overhaul or rebuild packages.

Our expert is John Scates, a degreed and licensed professional engineer (P.E.) with 30 years in the garage door industry. His experience includes extensive involvement in product design and garage door hardware testing, and he holds three U.S. patents relating to garage door springs and hardware. As an independent garage door engineer since 1997, he is often called on to provide expert testimony about garage door products.

In the chart below, the left column contains actual statements made in the overhaul sales documents. The right column contains John Scates' responses to each statement.

Rebuild/Overhaul Training Document	John Scates Responds
Tech is told to say: "I am in 4 to 5 garages a day, and 70% of those doors have broken springs, and they are 4, 5, or 6 years old."	This is a meaningless statistic. Since he only visits doors with problems, of course all of the doors he visits have problems. It ignores the thousands of other doors that do not need service.
Tech is told to say: "(Manufacturers) only have to warranty the hardware for one year."	He implies that the door will fail right after the warranty ends, which has no basis in fact.
Tech is told to say: "(Manufacturers supply) the cheapest parts they can find."	Manufacturers have minimum performance standards. Parts that cannot meet these often rigorous standards are not used. His choice of the word "cheapest" implies that manufacturers will use substandard parts. That's absolutely false.
Tech is told to say: "Within the next year, maybe year and a half, all the hardware on the (6-year-old) door is going to fail."	This claim has no basis in fact. If it were true, why does the 15-year-old door on my house operate just fine?

Rebuild/Overhaul Sales Sheet Claims	John Scates Responds
"We will make your Garage Door BETTER THAN NEW!"	At the prices they charge, the customer might as well buy a complete new door rather than just the few components they are pushing.
Our springs "last over four times as long as normal springs."	The manufacturers offer higher-cycle springs as well — if you want to pay for them. The real question for these "rebuilt" is, "Do you want to pay \$200 per spring plus \$100 labor for higher-cycle springs?"
Our "13-ball-bearing, nylon rollers ... are rated for over 100,000 cycles ... These are the last rollers you'll ever need!"	Perhaps, but do you really need to pay for 100,000-cycle rollers? If you open your door three times a day, 100,000 cycles is 90 years of use. I've tested "typical" nylon rollers provided by manufacturers that lasted 50,000 cycles. Isn't 45 years of life enough?
Our rollers are "simply the highest quality rollers on the market and will make your door operate quieter than ever!"	See my response above. Plus, all nylon rollers are quiet. Do you really need to pay extra for different nylon rollers that are equally quiet?
Our "bright zinc-plated brackets (are) made of heavy-duty 12-gauge steel. The internal bearing has hardened steel races and balls. It has a rated load of 250 lbs. at 10,000 - 8' door cycles."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are just commercial headplate brackets being used on a residential door, and they may not fit if you have a low ceiling in the garage. • "Bright zinc-plated" is a fancy phrase for galvanizing. It's nothing special; all unpainted steel from the manufacturers is galvanized. • All metal bearings used to support the door have "hardened steel races and balls." Again, they're nothing special. • Few residential doors weigh 500 lbs. (250 lbs. per side), and many doors perform well with nylon bearings. • From an engineering standpoint, this upgrade is unnecessary.
Our "heavy duty, adjustable center bearing ... is comprised of hardened steel races and balls with a rated load of 250 lbs. for an extremely long life under extreme conditions."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, this is simply a commercial center bracket being used on a residential door. • Why would you need a bearing that supports 250 lbs. when the center bracket only supports about 40 lbs. of springs? • As an engineer who knows these parts, I would never buy this. Yes, it is an upgrade, but a pointless one. • Residential center brackets are designed to fit within tight clearances with garage ceilings. Larger commercial brackets may not fit without replacing the whole track system as well. That, of course, opens the door to selling an unnecessary track "upgrade" as well.

Scates added that these hardware overhaul packages do not make financial sense. "As an engineer, I can say that these 'upgrade' door parts are not needed and represent substantial added cost," he said.

These hardware overhauls or rebuilds are commonly offered when a spring has failed. Scates noted that springs are a limited-life item like the tires on your car.

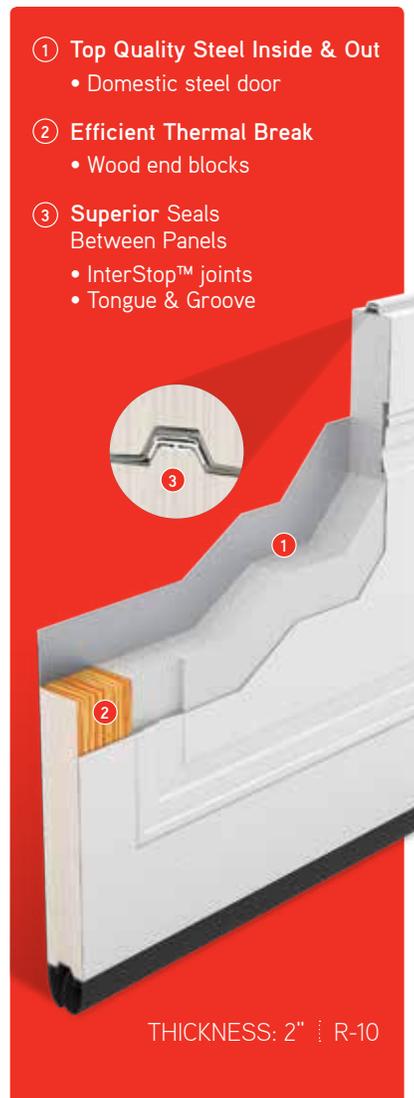
"They're implying that, since a spring has broken, the rest of the door must be about to collapse. This is like being told that, because the tires on your car have worn out, everything else must be about to fail: wheels, brake disks and pads, wheel bearings, suspension components, and hundreds of other parts," said Scates.

"When you buy a door from the manufacturer, you know that its components have been tested and verified to work well as a system. If you want the best of everything, then buy a complete top-end door. That's much better than trying to retrofit a portion of an old door with a mix of commercial and residential parts that may or may not work well together." ■

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