

Replacing the lights behind the center console

Every major button or control in the center console should be backlit when the headlights are on. Sometimes the little bulbs burn out. The previous owner of my car demonstrated that they tend to burn out faster if you soak them with a can or two of cola. The good news is that with some care, you can fix the burned out lights yourself. This page details the steps I followed for replacing several different lights. **If none of the interior controls are lit up, check the dimmer ring on the headlight switch and make sure it is turned to the brightest setting.** The interior lights don't show up very well during the daytime, so you may want to do this work in a dark or shaded location.

General instructions for replacing the micro bulbs

Each of the miniature bulbs behind the buttons or switches in a Subaru has a base that is the right size for its location. I recommend replacing only one bulb at a time or keeping track of where each bulb base was removed from. You don't want to get poor lighting results because you plugged the wrong light base into a given socket (even though it may fit). You may be able to buy the complete bulb assemblies at a Subaru dealer, but in my case I was trying not to put any more money into these repairs than I had to.

1. Remove the bulb to be replaced by twisting it ~1/8th turn counterclockwise. If the bulb doesn't fall out of its socket, you may need tweezers or fine pliers to grab the base of the bulb and remove it.
2. Use a pin or fine screwdriver to unwrap the little wires from their canals in the base of the light assembly. Once the wires are more or less straight, you should be able to pull the bulb out of the base.
3. When separated, the base and removed bulb will look something like this:



Base:

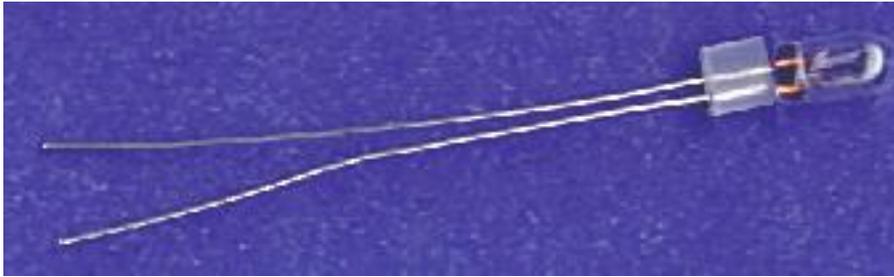


Bulb:

4. Radio Shack stores sell micro bulbs that will fit and work very well as replacement bulbs, but you'll have to fit them into the Subaru light bases. They are Radio Shack #7219 and come in a package of two. The bulbs are 12 volts · 60 mA. The other number on the package is 272-1092C,

although I don't know if that matters or not. The 2-pack should be less than \$2.

5. The Radio Shack bulbs are slightly shorter than the Subaru bulbs, so you may need to cut a short piece of plastic to make the bulb stick out as far as the original bulb sticks out. I used a little ring cut from the ink tube on a Bic Rollerstick and slid it over the wires like this:



6. Some of the lights have little green covers on them (the ones behind the climate control switches are like this). The green covers will fit the Radio Shack bulbs very well and will also make it easier to determine how much bulb should stick out of the base.
7. Feed the wires from the Radio Shack bulb through the holes in the light base (one wire per hole to avoid shorting out the circuit).
8. Wrap the wires through the grooves in the light base, making sure to follow the path that the original wires were wrapped along. The loops on the bulb side of the base are the most important, since they form the electrical contact with the light socket. Before you trim the excess wire, it should look something like this:



9. Trim the excess wires, make sure the two wires don't touch each other at any point, and plug the light assembly back into the socket it came out of.
10. Turn the base $\sim 1/8$ th turn clockwise to lock the light in position.

Foglight, Rear Defroster, or Cruise Control switches

All of these switches have two light bulbs: one for backlighting the symbol or text, another for the little light that indicates the button is in the "on" position.

1. Remove the switch from the instrument panel and disconnect the plug connected to the rear of the switch. It may help to remove the instrument panel first, so that you can get at the back side of the switches and pop them out more easily.
2. Remove the light assembly and replace the bulb according to the [general instructions](#).
3. Reconnect the plug into the back of the switch and test for lights.
4. Pop the switch back into place and reassemble the instrument panel.

Hazard Light switch

This switch has only one bulb that backlights the symbol. The only difficult part is getting the switch out so you can work on it (the bulb is located on the top side of the switch so you have to disassemble the panel pretty much completely).

1. Remove the cup holder, including the two screws and the socket that holds the tray.
2. Remove the whole center vent assembly (entire piece surrounding the heater controls, vents, and hazard switch). It should pop out fairly easily (anchor points seem to be beside each vent).
3. Unplug the wires from the back of the hazard switch.
4. The next trick is to get the vent assembly apart from the trim piece that holds the hazard switch.
 - o Remove the two black screws holding the bottom of the vents to the trim piece.
 - o Loosen or remove the 4 small screws that hold the vent top & bottom together (two gold colored screws on each side).
 - o Look in through the back of each vent and note that there are about 4 pop-in type "teeth" holding the vent snapped together with the trim piece.
 - o Pop the vent assembly loose from the trim piece.
5. You should be able to get at the light bulb (on top of the switch) without detaching the hazard switch from the trim piece, but it may be easier to go ahead and unscrew the two screws holding the hazard switch in place on the trim and remove the switch.
6. Remove the light assembly and replace the bulb according to the [general instructions](#).
7. Reconnect the plug into the back of the switch and test for lights.
8. If you detached the hazard switch from the trim, reattach it.
9. Pop the vent assembly back onto the back of the trim piece, making sure that all the "teeth" pop back into place.
10. Replace and tighten all screws removed from the whole center vent/trim assembly.
11. Pop the whole center vent assembly back into place.
12. Reinstall the cup holder socket and screws and slide the cup holder tray back into place.

Climate control panel

The entire panel for the vent selection, fan speed, and internal temperature control is lit by three bulbs at the back of the control assembly. Replacing them is a fairly involved repair, but worth it if you want to see those controls at night. I think the little indicators beneath each vent selection (floor, vent, recirc, defrost, etc.) are LEDs. All of mine work, so I haven't had to mess with them. The light in the A/C switch is also separate, and mine works so I haven't had to mess with it either.

1. Remove the center vent and trim according to steps 1-3 for replacing the [hazard switch](#).
2. Pop the sliding knob off of the temperature control slider.

3. Remove the 4 screws holding the control panel in place.
4. There are three plugs going to the back of the control panel (one for fan speed control, one for A/C, one for all other switches). Unplug all three.
5. The cable attached to the temperature slider will prevent you from removing the whole control panel assembly.
6. In order to pull the panel out, you need to disassemble the sliding part from the rest of the panel. This is somewhat complicated.
 - There is a cover made of softer black plastic on top of the back part of the assembly. Work with the clips near each end to free this piece and slide it up and out.
 - Looking at the top of the assembly, you should now see a small circuit board held vertical between two supports.
 - On the back side of each support is a tab that secures the ends of the circuit board.
 - As you lift upward on the small circuit board, use a small screwdriver to pry the tabs outward (away from the back of the assembly) to release the ends of the small circuit board and slide the circuit board up and out of its supports. It will remain attached by a short grey ribbon wire.
 - Remove the two small silver screws from the bottom of the assembly.
 - Lift the little clips near where those screws were and slide the front part away from the rest of assembly, leaving the A/C switch, the slider and cable still in the dashboard.
7. Now you should be able to look at the back of the main circuit board (across the whole back of the vent control assembly) and see the bases for three bulbs.
8. If you don't know which bulbs are burned out, plug in the main plug to the little circuit board and carefully test the lights (don't short anything out on any of the wires or pins).
9. Remove any burned out light assemblies and replace the bulbs according to the [general instructions](#). The light nearest the fan speed switch has a considerably longer base than the others, so don't get this mixed up with other bulbs. All three of these lights should have little green sheaths covering the bulbs.
10. Reconnect the plugs into the back of the assembly and test for lights (again, be careful not to short things out).
11. Unplug the system again and reassemble it. Once you have slid the front and back parts of the assembly back together and replaced the small silver screws, slide the small circuit board down into its supports. Don't forget to put the black plastic cover back on behind the vent control assembly, and the temperature slider knob back in place.
12. Plug all three connections back into the back of the whole climate control assembly, and mount it back in place with the four screws.
13. Replace the center vent assembly, cup holder socket and screws, and cup holder tray.