



# E30 Water Leaks

Wet boot and damp dog smell getting you down? E30 water leaks are common but they're easy to solve.

## YOU'LL NEED

Screwdrivers  
Centre punch  
Hammer  
Silicone sealer  
Socket set

It's a familiar scenario to many owners of the E30 3-Series cars — a damp boot carpet, a musty smell to go with it and no obvious sign of where the water is coming in.

Water leaks into the boot are a common problem on these cars but the first most people know about it is when they find a puddle under the jack on the left-hand side. If you find this, then the chances are there's also a matching puddle on the other side, but this often goes undetected for ages as it's hidden by the battery in the six-cylinder cars.

The problem is even worse on the Touring and it was a common warranty problem when the cars were new. If you notice the rear windows steaming up

frequently, open up the carpeted storage areas on each side and take a look. On the left-hand side you'll spot a puddle easily but on the right-hand side you'll need to unclip the plastic trim panel.

So what do you do about it? Well it's easier than you might think, especially on the saloon, and 90 per cent of the time it's caused by a leaking rear light seal or a defective boot seal. On the Touring it's harder to trace the leak as there are more possible points of entry for the water, but if you strip out all the trim from the tailgate, then sit inside the boot while someone plays a hose over the back of the car, you'll soon find it. Follow our step-by-step guide and you'll soon have a dry boot again.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL WHITESTONE



This is what you'll end up with if you don't catch it. Earlier cars had a small drain hole in these storage wells but later cars and the Touring did without this, so the water will accumulate and you'll end up with a large puddle and the beginnings of a rusty nightmare.



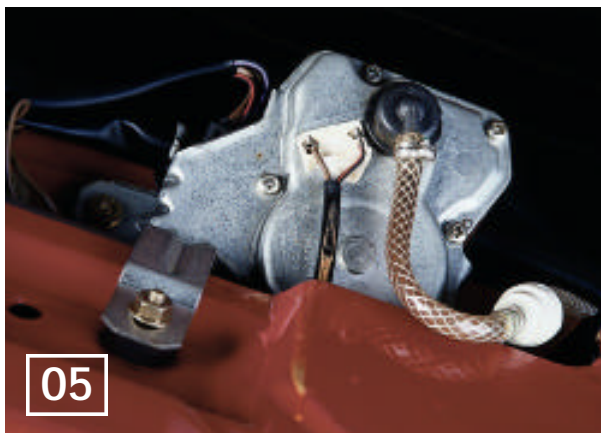
Before you rip the boot trim out, check the rear sunroof drain (the big black pipe) is draining properly out through the air extractor vent behind the bumper. Throw some water over the outside of this area and check the vent is sealed against the bodywork too. On the Touring you've also got the rear window washer reservoir in the boot, so check the bottle and the pipework isn't leaking.



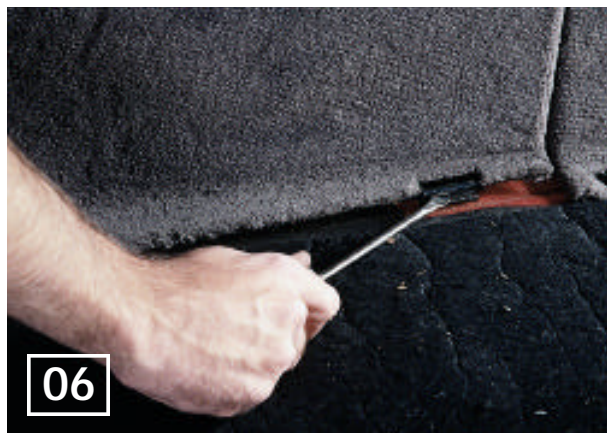
For a Grade A job, you'll want to trace the leak, so strip out all the carpeting from the boot and play water over the rear of the car with a hose to find out where it's coming in. On the Touring it's a bit more involved as stripping the trim off the tailgate involves removing the gas struts...



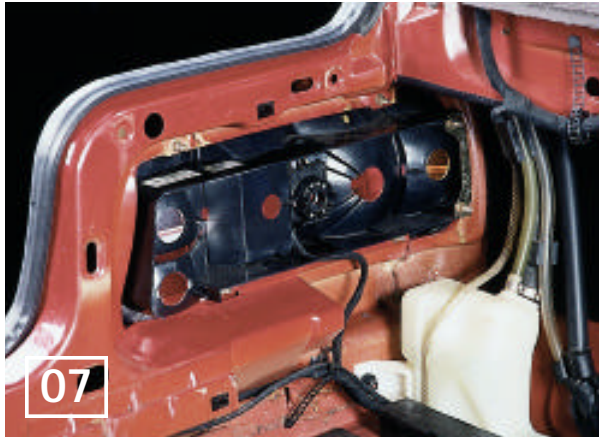
... in order to unclip the plastic trim around the window. The gas struts unclip after the retaining spring is flipped out with a screwdriver, then the rest of the trim just unclips. Use a long screwdriver and protect the paintwork with a cloth and you should find you don't break any of the clips.



When the tailgate trim is all removed, check the rear window washer pipework isn't leaking. Other points of entry on the Touring are the plastic surround to outside of the glass and the rubber grommet around the wiper spindle. Water will collect inside the plastic trim and drip on to the carpet, from where it drains into the side storage wells.



Taking the rear lamp first, the new seals are £5.48 and the dealer will either have them in stock or get them for you the next day. On the Touring, you'll need to remove the carpeted doors on either side before you can get to the lamp unit. Flick them carefully out of their plastic hinges with a screwdriver.



With all the trim out of the way, you've got just six 7 mm nuts to remove from inside and the lamp can be removed from the outside. Note which way the metal bracket fits as this is crucial to clamping the lamp unit properly when you refit it.



Clean up the bodywork where the lamp seal sits against the bodywork, as any grit here will affect the seal and it only needs a very small gap in the seal to cause a major leak.



When you reconnect the electrical plug to the lamp unit, take the chance to clean up the terminals as a poor contact will have the lamp failure warning flashing on cars with the check panel.



Now it's time to turn to the boot seal itself. It only takes a small imperfection on the rubber seal to render it useless and something like a small tear can let in enough water to make the carpet damp in just a single day. The Touring will often leak past the seal on the top edge by the hinges and water coming in here just collects inside the tailgate trim and drains down on to the carpet.



Simply pull the old seal away, clean up the bodywork flange underneath and then you're ready to fit the new seal.



The new seal is just pushed on to the flange on the bodywork. Start at the centre under the boot lock and thump it with either your fist or a hammer and a piece of thick cardboard until it seats properly, especially around the tight corners.



The old seal will be all flat and lifeless so simply pull it out of the lamp unit and clean up the channel where it fits. We chose to use silicone sealant to seal the new rubber in place but this is probably overkill.



Replace the lamp unit, ensuring that the seal sits flat against the bodywork and tighten the nuts carefully in sequence, working round the lamp to seat it evenly against the bodywork. Make sure it's sealed properly but don't overtighten the nuts or you'll crack the plastic lamp unit.



The seal just pulls off on the saloon but on the Touring you need to remove this plastic trim piece. It's held in place with four plastic fittings which use a centre pin to expand the teeth and hold them in place like a Rawlplug. They can be removed after the centre pin is knocked out with a punch and a hammer. Fish around in the hollow sections with a torch and if you're lucky enough you'll recover all the centre pins to use again.



The new seal is £32 from BMW and if you compare it to the old one you'll see that the design has been slightly improved, with a bigger cross-section.



Make sure the ends meet. The new seal has an extra piece of rubber protruding from one end which will fit neatly inside the other end to seal it neatly without a gap.



Adjust the boot lock until the boot shuts properly and you're finished. You want the boot to shut tightly against the seal and if it requires a firm push by the badge to latch it then that's about right. On the Touring you may also have to adjust the rubber buffers at each corner.