

A tarp to cover your garage door.

Keep prying eyes out of your garage.

I live across from a Kwik-E-Mart and I don't like the people looking in my garage. I rigged up a tarp that hides the contents of the garage but allows my Sportster to get through. It took about 5 iterations to get something that worked.

I tried a 2-inch piece of conduit tied to the door guides with bailing wire. Then I draped a FEMA temporary shelter tarp over the conduit. I could slip around the tarp to walk into the garage.

When I wanted to get my bike out, I rigged a piece of 1/2 inch conduit on the bottom edge of the tarp. So I could chain up the bottom of the tarp to the garage door guides to hold the tarp.



Chaining up the tarp was a pain and still allowed people to see in the garage when it was chained up. So I bought a 8x10-foot heavy-duty tarp from Lowes. The 8-foot width matched the garage door width. The tarp was light, so the rather than chain it up to get a bike out, I just pushed the bike through it. That allowed me to replace the bailing wire with the chains so the whole thing was more solid.

The next headache was that the wind would blow the tarp into the door sensors and stop it from coming down. So rev 3 was to put another section of 2-inch conduit at the bottom of the tarp to keep it from flapping around. That made it impossible to slide the bike under, so I slit the tarp down the middle and cut the bottom conduit in half. That was OK for a few months, but the two 4-foot sections of conduit at the bottom made got caught in the wheels as I pushed the bike through the slit. The tarp also got melted by the pipes so the conduit was dragging.



So rev 4 was to cut the 4-foot conduit sections in half. That allowed the tarp to split open much nicer when I pushed the bike through it. But the 2-foot sections of conduit still got tangled up in the bike and the dragging section got caught under the tire and ripped the tarp.

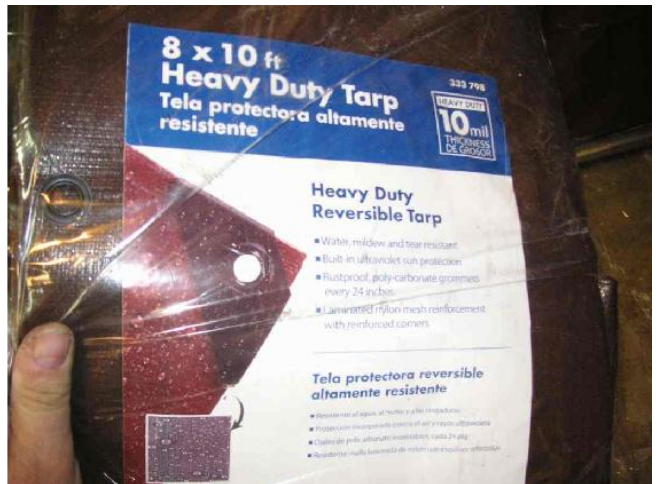
Each side is weighted down with two sections of 2-inch conduit. Having two pieces on each side helps when you push the bike through the middle. Having the tarp drag on the floor will keep it from blowing around, but the bike tire rolls over it and it rips the tarp worse.



Half the damage is from the exhaust pipes melting the tarp and the rest was caused by the conduit getting caught under the bike tire as I rolled it in.



Here is how I held up the middle of the tarp. Two 1/4-20 bolts, one going through a grommet on the tarp edge and the other just punched through the tarp edge.



This is the heavy-duty tarp I got at Home Depot. The ripped one was from Lowe's and I liked it better, it is all silver on one side, this one has a brown edge. The new one seems a bit cheaper too.



Here are the main tools. A dental tool pokes a hole in the tarp, the drift opens the hole up. Ruler is to get the two sides level.

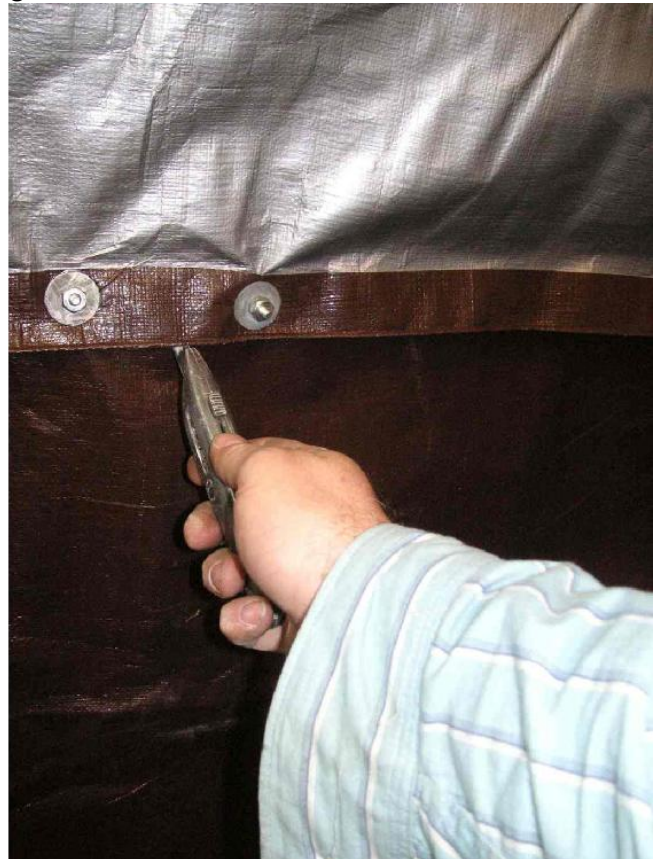


The 1/4-20 bolts pass through a grommet and a hole you punch in the other side. I ran out of fender washers so this side just has an SAE washer.

Don't let *perfect* be the enemy of *good*. Just whip something together and keep messing with it until it gets the job done. Once it works right you can make it pretty.



I did not split the tarp first. Instead, I punched the holes for the center bolts. The one on the left goes through a grommet on this side.



You might want to measure and mark but I just winged it. You have a grommet on the bottom that you want to aim 2 inches to the right. The tarp likes to cut with its grain, so it is easier to cut straight than you might think.



Time to turn the four pieces of conduit weighing down the tarp into six pieces. Don't be a dork that your friends call "Patches" or "One eye". These safety glasses have reading lenses built in like bifocals. I got them on the web. I love them.



I like DeWalt tools despite their being owned by the craptastic Black and Decker. After I cut the two 2-foot sections in half I took them to the wire wheel and de-burred them. You really need safety glasses with a wire wheel..



This is a really important point. When you strap the conduit pieces to the bottom edge of the tarp, leave enough space between them so the tarp can fold back on itself. This really helps let your bike push through the split in the tarp.



Here is the right side of the tarp door. When I put the big gaps in between the conduit, it pushed the 2-foot section well outside of the tarp. I will leave this for now. If the overhang is too short, the end of the conduit gets caught in the door track channel as you push a bike out. Then you have to clear it before you close the door.



Here is the left side. Note the fire extinguisher by the door. I learned that tip from the Sunnyvale firemen that used to inspect my shop. You put the fire extinguisher by the door. When there is a fire, your first action should be getting to a door. Once you are there you can decide if you should go back in and fight the fire. That is why you put the extinguishers by the door.



Here is the finished garage door tarp. One interesting thing is that it was not folded squarely. Measure the two sides. don't go by the folds in the material. You can see the center split has opened up a bit. I might move the bolts down a bit in the center, but right now I want to keep the split open so I can get the bike tire in the split without pinning a conduit to the floor.