

What's in a Name?

BY MATT LEROUX

As a parts seller, I have learned many details of the parts industry. Sometimes I forget that not every Volvo owner knows these things. Recently, I've had a few customers that were confused about parts that I was selling, so here's a refresher for folks about the way parts are described by vendors on eBay and other venues.

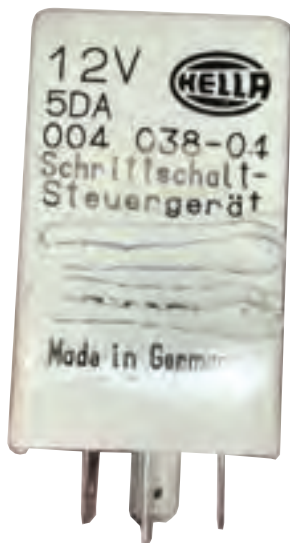
NOS means New Old Stock These are new parts though they could be decades old. They come about when folks like me purchase old inventory from dealerships, independent shops, and individuals. NOS parts have usually been sitting on a shelf at the shop or in a box in someone's basement for many years. NOS parts can have a unique appeal for some customers.

Older parts for Volvos from the 1990s and older were often made in Europe, mainly in Sweden and Germany. In more recent times, many manufacturers have shifted production to Southeast Asia, South America, or China. Some customers prefer the European-made parts.

Something else unique about NOS parts is that they can't simply be re-ordered when sold out. I sometimes chuckle to myself when I am sold out of a particular NOS part, and someone contacts me to find out when I will restock it. By nature, NOS is hit or miss and when it's gone, it's gone!

NLA means No Longer Available These are parts that are out of production and no longer available from Volvo. Thus, sometimes NLA means that the part is only available in used condition or as NOS (if you can find it).

On the left, the photo my alarmed customer sent me. She had peeled off the sticker and saw the scratched off lettering. On the right, a Genuine Volvo relay, fresh from the sealed bag from Volvo.



NIB means New in Box or New in Bag Some sellers use this to communicate that the part is new, whether it is NLA/NOS or still available from suppliers.

OEM means Original Equipment Manufacturer This one bears a lengthier discussion. Something I really love about European car makers is that they use a collection of independent manufacturers to make most of their parts. So, a Genuine Volvo part is probably made by Hella, Bosch, or Meyle, to name just a few.

These manufacturers win contracts to make parts for Volvo, which then get packaged in Genuine Volvo packaging for sale. Often, the parts have the "VOLVO" lettering printed on or cast into them.

However, in these cases, the manufacturers own the tooling and equipment to make those parts, so they also produce the same part to sell under their own brand name, in their own packaging.

For example, I recently had a customer order Hella Overdrive relay (#3523804) from me. Once she received it, she was concerned because the writing on the part had been scratched off, making it look used and inferior. I explained that it is very common for these manufacturers to simply scratch off the "Volvo" name on parts they make so they can be sold under their own label. The part she had ordered from my site was listed as "Hella" brand, not Genuine Volvo. Indeed, it was a Hella part and identical to a Genuine Volvo relay (made in Germany by Hella), except that Hella had scratched/ground the "VOLVO" lettering and part number from the

plastic cover and covered it with a barcode sticker. I am glad to say that, upon learning this, my customer was relieved and satisfied.

OEM parts are every bit as good as Genuine and usually sold at a lower price. You can usually find a blank spot or ground-off spot where they removed the Volvo name to avoid a legal battle. I have seen it scratched off everything from metal parts, rubber bushings, switches, relays, and more.

A final note about OEM parts, Volvo sometimes used more than one OEM supplier for the same part, switching vendors over the years. You can find, for example, a relay with the same Volvo part number manufactured by Stribel and Hella. Also, the "4-panel" taillights used on late 140s and early 240s were made by both Cibie and Hella at different times. The lenses do not interchange between the two brands, but the appearance is essentially the same. There are other examples as well.

OE means Original Equipment This can refer to Genuine Volvo or OEM parts. The point is that the part is the same as originally used by Volvo.

Aftermarket This is the term that most people use to refer to non-Genuine, non-OEM parts. In my business, I describe off-brand, unknown brand, and "generic" parts as aftermarket. Aftermarket parts are made by a third party (not Volvo and not their OEM supplier). You can easily find parts like relays, exhausts, hoses, suspension components, lenses for lights, and interior plastics from aftermarket manufacturers. They are companies that never had a contract to make the part for Volvo but possessed the technology to make a copy and saw an opportunity in the marketplace.

Aftermarket tends to carry a negative connotation, because some low-quality manufacturers are making parts, but it is not necessarily a bad thing. High quality manufacturers also make aftermarket parts for Volvo. Take for example Koni shocks or German-made K.A.E relays, both make great parts for the market. They are examples of well-known manufacturers that, in addition to making aftermarket parts, also supply OEM parts to various car manufacturers. Other companies/brands focus exclusively on producing aftermarket parts. Common brands that focus exclusively on the aftermarket for Volvos include ProParts Sweden, MTC, Nordic, and Uro.

Reproduction and Remanufactured The final categories for parts include reproduction and remanufactured. Remanufactured means a part was rebuilt, repaired, and/or restored. They are usually Genuine or OEM parts, like



Three new relays, all of them Volvo part number 3523804. The one on the left is a Genuine Volvo relay, the middle one is an OEM Hella relay, and the right one an aftermarket relay made by K.A.E. in Germany. Note that Hella attached a sticker to cover up the scratched off "Volvo 3523804."

brake calipers, radios, and alternators, that have been rebuilt to the original specifications.

Reproduction parts, on the other hand, are essentially aftermarket parts, but made with the intent to be identical, high-quality copies for restorations and show cars. VP Autoparts is a great example of a reproduction manufacturer. In some cases, they even have the original tooling that Volvo used to

make the part, making it as close to Genuine as possible.

When shopping for parts, look to match your needs with your budget. In some cases, there are several options out there: new, used, Genuine, aftermarket, and so on. Depending on the car and the usage, you can usually find something to suit your budget. A daily driver and a show car or restoration will have differ-

ent needs. When only the best will do, look for Genuine Volvo and NOS. When you are keeping your daily driver on the road, used and aftermarket might be good enough. In either case, adding acronyms and key words will help narrow your search. ■

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Two identical 240 cruise control switches, both NOS. One was sold by Volvo as a Genuine part. The other was sourced from a parts distributor without a brand name. Both switches were made by LK, the one sold generically has LK's logo and part number ground off, as opposed to Volvo's part number. LK may have produced these for a third party "white label" vendor, as opposed to marketing them under their own name.

