



**PROJECT**

**PART II**

# AL-KHAMSIN

## ALUMINESS FRONT BUMPER

By David Zartman

Last issue we introduced Project Al-Khamsin (Arabic for 'ferocious sandstorm'), a 2010 Trail Teams-edition FJ Cruiser. We started the party with excellent BDS suspension and Icon Vehicle Dynamics' super-trick billet aluminum, adjustable lower control arms. That's a superb start, but friends, we are just beginning on this 4WD Toyota!

### LIGHTS! CAMERA! ALUMINESS!

We are going to continue the aluminum trend as a whole with this FJ Cruiser. Aluminum is getting more and more accepted in an off-road world that has seen steel be the main player for decades. But we're going to

outfit this truck with as much aluminum as we can and report on the outcome. So after the Icon control arms, we placed a call to Aluminess ([www.aluminess.com](http://www.aluminess.com), 619-449-9930), makers of aluminum bumpers for a wide range of Toyota trucks, and ordered their front FJ

*ABOVE: We've outfitted the front of our 2010 Trail Teams-edition FJ Cruiser with an all-aluminum bumper from Aluminess. At approximately 48 pounds, it's over a hundred pounds lighter than a comparable steel bumper, and it will never rust, either. It's made to hold a winch and two, 6-inch lights. It looks great!*



*The Aluminess bumper is designed to hold a winch and has the standard mount pattern found on Warn and other winches. We'll soon be adding a winch to Project Al-Khamsin. For now, you can use the winch compartment as a storage area, complete with its own lockable access handle.*

Cruiser bumper for \$1250.

What advantages does aluminum have over steel? First is weight. The Aluminess basic bumper weighs 43 pounds (a few pounds more with the brush guard)—a huge advantage over similar steel bumpers, where 150 pounds is typical. Also, aluminum does not rust. Aluminess says the powder coat finish on aluminum is a better quality than on steel "as it adheres better and there are no impurities in the welds". The lighter weight means better engine performance, and less fatigue on brakes and axles. "For example, our FJ Cruiser bumper weighs only nine pounds more than the stock bumper, so there is no need to upgrade suspension. Our goal is to provide a winch-ready aluminum bumper that provides better performance, a long-lasting professional finish, protection from impact, and lower overall cost from savings on suspension upgrades, to wear and tear on your vehicle's performance components."

What about disadvantages? "The strength of our bumper is in the design and materials used. Many people forget that fighter jets and space shuttles are made of lightweight alloys, not steel. While our aluminum bumpers have withstood impacts from deer, bear, highway barriers, etc, extreme rock crawlers may find steel a better alternative to support the vehicle weight on boulders, etc. Scratches and gouges will be deeper with aluminum."

#### METAL SPEC

Aluminess uses 6061 T6 aluminum for the bumper. The plate is 5/16-inch thick while the tow hooks are 1" x 3". They use 3/16-inch 5051 for the cosmetic covers.

The front bumper is built

to accommodate a winch. The mounting pattern is standard 4.5" x 10", while the dimensions are 28.5" long x 11-5/8" high x 7.5" deep. Warn, Ramsey, Mile Marker and others fit within that profile. Be aware there is a bracket and A/C tube that may need modifications to fit a taller winch. The winch compartment can be used as lockable storage if the customer doesn't have a winch.

Aluminess has bumpers for FJ Cruiser, Tacoma and Tundra. Do they have plans to expand their line into other 4WD Toyotas such as Land Cruiser or 4 Runners? "We plan to create bumpers for the Land Cruiser and 4Runner. We have recently had a number of potential customers contact us and offer to leave their vehicle at our facility for that purpose, so we believe we will have bumpers for the 4Runners and Land Cruisers in the very near future." Great! Until then, we're going to use and abuse this good-looking unit on Project Al-Khamsin, save some weight, and mount up a winch. Stay tuned! ✓



6061 T6 aluminum is used to construct the Aluminess bumper, with the main plating being 5/16-inch thick. The two recovery hooks are 1" thick by 3" deep—burly. You can order it with a basic brush guard, or as a full bull bar-type design. To see them all, go to <http://aluminess.com/fj-cruisers.htm>.



Aluminess has bumpers for other 4WD Toyotas. Here is a cool dual-swingout bumper for 2005+ Tacomas. 4Runners and Land Cruisers are also on R&D agenda. There is also a cool rear bumper for FJ Cruisers available.



Front bumper on a 2005+ Tacoma in raw aluminum (Aluminess powdercoats in black on final shipments). Tundra owners, you can also get aluminum units from Aluminess—check their web site for full info and photos.



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