



Saab 9-3 Ignition Switch Module (ISM) Replacement

How to replace the Ignition Switch Module (ISM) on a Saab 9-3 Aero 2007-2011, after "Steering lock Malfunction" error message

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INTRODUCTION

I have a 2007 Saab 9-3 Aero petrol Automatic car. It has been a joy to own and ride, but recently it started to show warning messages:

"Steering lock Malfunction. Please come to a safe stop and call service" (or something like that)

On other occasions, the key would refuse to turn. Disconnecting the battery for a while would sometimes fix the issue, but this was clearly not a safe car to drive any longer.

Googling the issue revealed that there are two components involved in starting the car:

The ISM (Ignition Switch Module) is where the key is inserted.

The CIM (Column Integration Module) is located inside the steering wheel. It is the security centre and controls the central locking, ignition, immobilisation, steering lock etc.

Both of these could be the culprit. However, whereas the ISM can be replaced by a layman (i.e. me!!), the CIM requires both special tools and the electronic equipment to be able to remove and replace, and pair up with a new set of keys.

So, equipped with a Haynes "Saab 9-3 Sept 2007 to 2011 Owners Workshop Manual", a set of star shaped screwdrivers, and a camera to record all the steps, as well as a pile of clear plastic bags to put the screws in and label them (they are all subtly different in size, thread and length), I set about to replace the ISM with a unit I bought on eBay. This involves removing the centre console to get to the ISM itself.

TOOLS:

- Flathead Screwdriver (1)
- T25 Torx Screwdriver (1)

PARTS:

- [Saab 9-3 ISM \(Ignition Switch Module\)](#) (1)

Step 1 — The starting point



- Our starting point: The center console with the ignition switch in the middle

Step 2 — The tool



- This is the screwdriver bit used to remove all the screws.

Step 3 — The ISM (Ignition Switch Module)



- This is the item we need to replace

Step 4 — Front side panels



- Step one is to remove the front side panels. There is a single (covered) screw in the footwell on each side

that can be removed, and the panel slides rearwards, down and out.

Step 5 — Panel screw



- Unscrew and remove this screw

Step 6 — Front side panel comes off



- The panel can now come off.

Step 7 — Rear cover



- Rear cover is removed next.

Step 8 — Remove rear panel



- Next, locate the rear cover visible from the back seats, between the two front seats. Pull it sharply to the rear, and remove.

Step 9 — Rear side panels



- The rear side panels in front of the rear cover are now easily accessible and can be removed.

Step 10 — Rubber mat in front of gear lever



- Next, remove the rubber mat in front of the gear lever.

Step 11 — Gear lever surround trim



- The (shiny) gear lever surround trim can now be prised off, starting at the rear, and removed.

Step 12 — Retaining frame holding screw



- Removing the gear lever surround trim exposes a single screw holding a retaining frame underneath the gear change mechanism.

Step 13



- Unscrew the retaining screw

Step 14



- Remove the retaining frame

Step 15 — Hand brake cover



- Slide out horizontally the protective plastic cover underneath the hand brake.

Step 16



- This exposes a single screw. Remove this.

Step 17 — CD holder



- On the other side, remove the CD holder top cover,

Step 18



- unscrew the two screws inside,

Step 19



- and remove the CD holder itself. This exposes another single screw. Remove this.

Step 20 — Storage unit



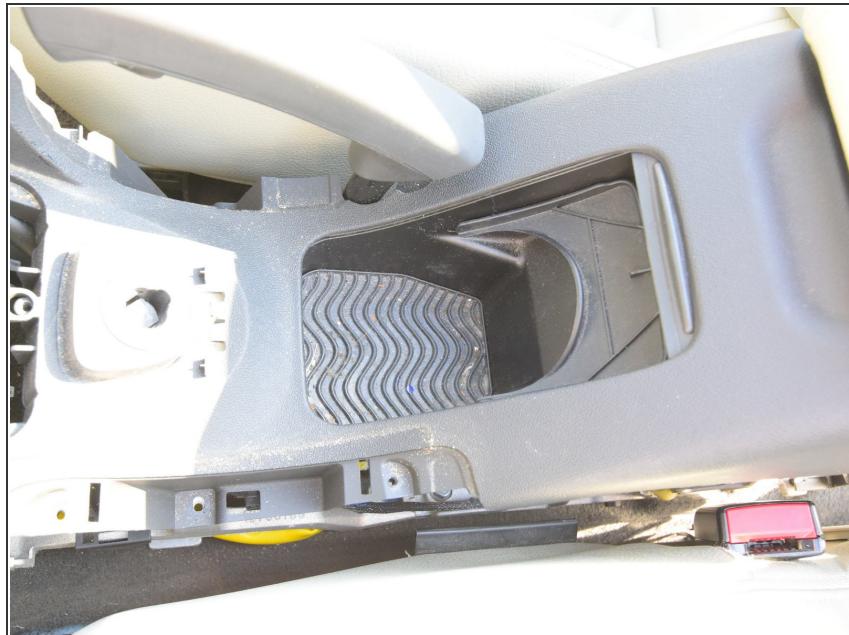
- Remove the bottom rubber cover in the centre console storage unit.

Step 21



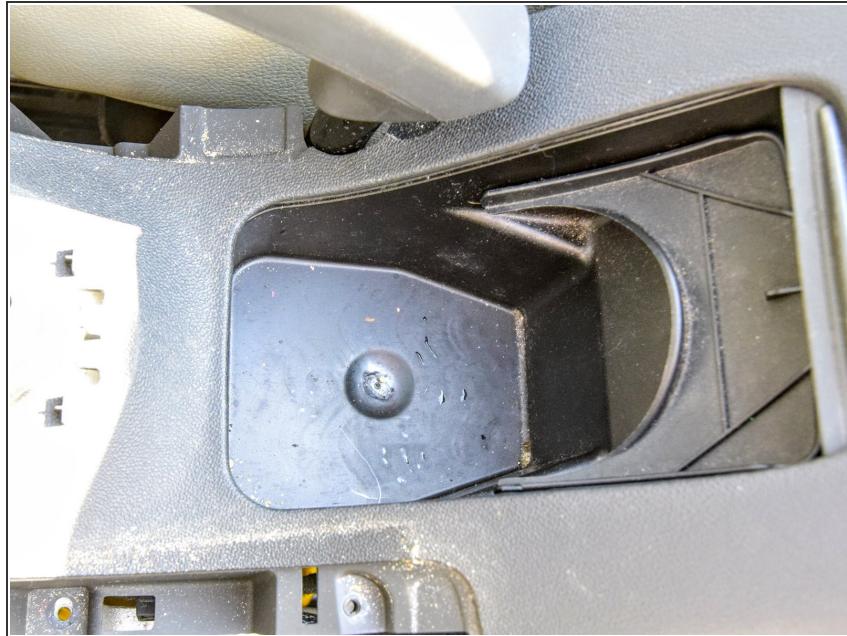
- This exposes two screws that need removing.

Step 22 — Drinks holder



- The drinks holder has another rubber mat.

Step 23



- There are no screws underneath, but this is a good opportunity to remove it and clean it separately.

Step 24 — Air duct



- Underneath the air vent controlling air flow to the passengers from the center console sits a square duct.

Step 25



- The Haynes manual suggests pulling this out next, and although it is possible to do so, it requires force, and is much easier to do later when all other fixings have been removed.

Step 26 — Cable bundles



- There are two cable bundles connected to the center console from the rest of the car. One is

connected via a large, square plug with a red tab.

Step 27



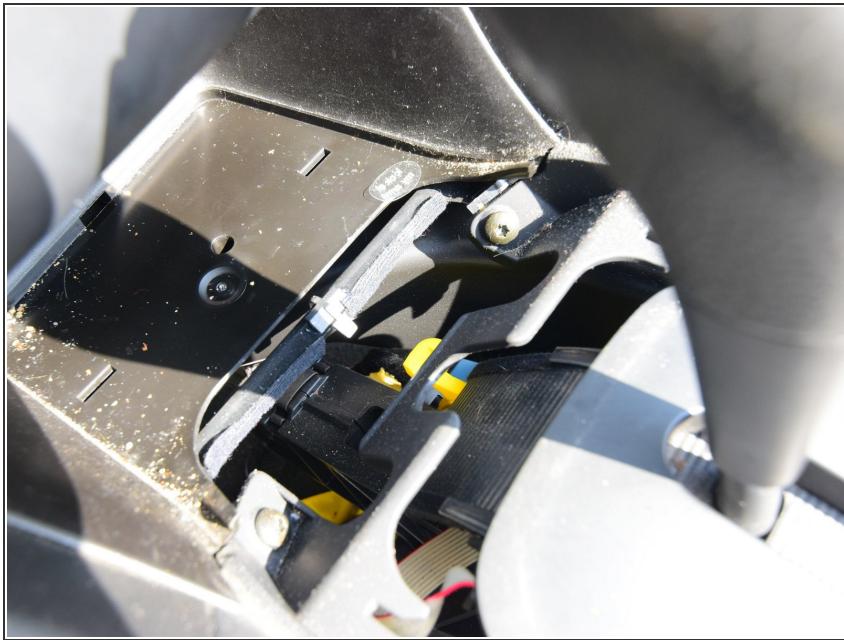
- Push a screwdriver inside the red tab and pull, and the connector splits neatly apart.

Step 28



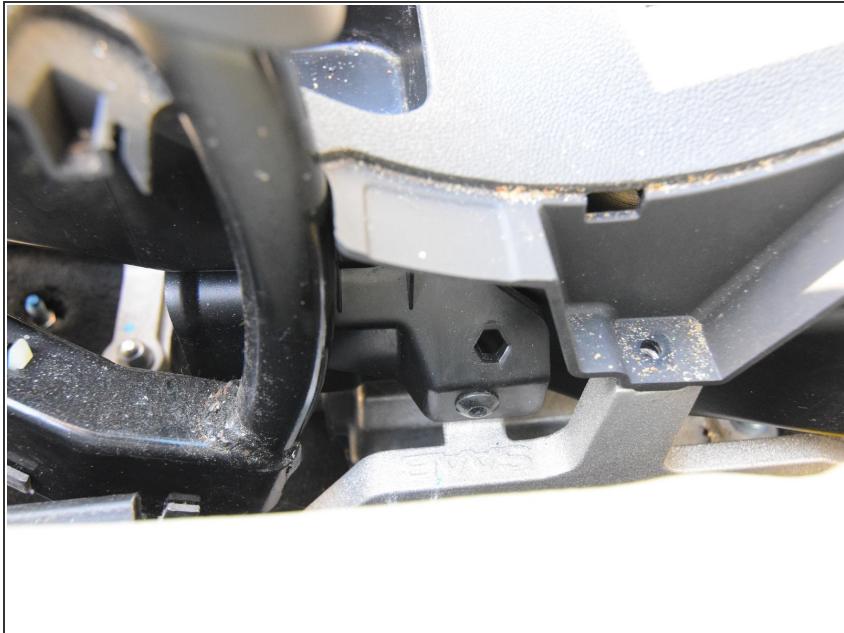
- The other is an earth connector near the rear of the console. This can easily be pulled away.

Step 29 — Retaining screws in front of the gear lever



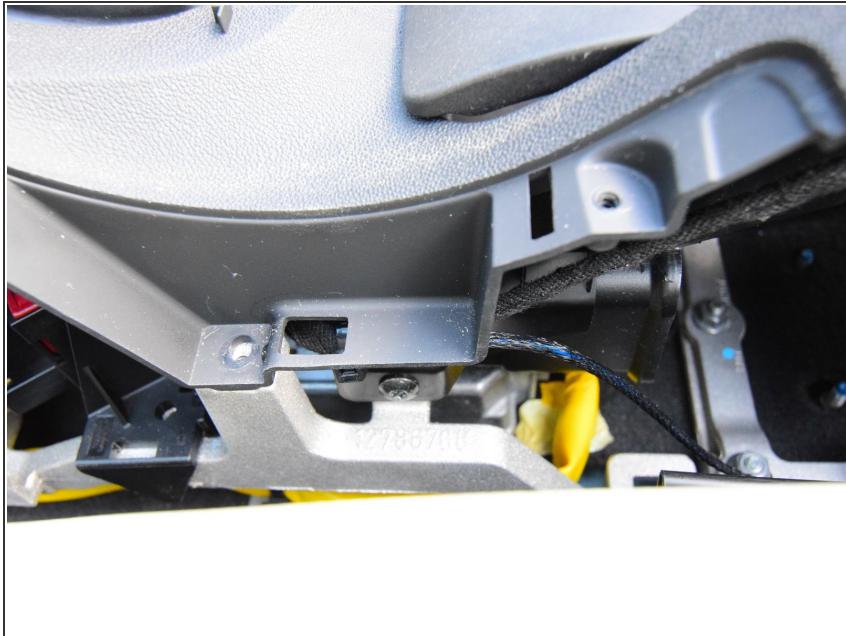
- Remove two screws located in front of the gear lever.

Step 30 — Horizontal retainer screws -- a fiddle to get out!!



- The next bit is a bit fiddly to get to: There are two screws going horizontally, one underneath the handbrake,

Step 31



- the other on the CD holder side. These need to be removed. There is limited workspace. Use a separate loose screwdriver bit, and a spanner to twist it.

Step 32 — Remove center console



- The center console is now loose, and can be pulled backwards and upwards, and removed from the car.

Step 33 — ISM switch



- Tip the centre console upside down and locate the ISM ignition switch. There are four spring clips holding it in place. Use a screwdriver to compress each clip in turn, whilst pushing the switch out of its socket.

Step 34



- The switch is connected to a cable via a connector. Locate the torque lever and twist this to release the connector.

Step 35



- You now have the ISM in your hand. Swap this with a replacement unit. Mine cost £126,00 new from eBay. Clip it in the same spot, and connect the cable again.

Step 36



- The rest of the procedure is doing the dismantling in reverse. However, this is the best order that I found (choosing the wrong order once or twice):

Step 37



- The square air conditioning duct goes in first. The console goes in next. It is a bit awkward to riggle past all the lugs, screws, tabs and cables, but just persevere. Once in, fit all the screws holding it in place, including the awkward ones.

Step 38



- Connect the two cables. The earth connector is push-on, and the square plug self-locks when the red tab is pushed.

Step 39



- Next, fit the retaining frame underneath the gear lever, all screws around it, then the shiny gear lever surround trim, and finally the rubber mat in front of it. Fit the side rear panels, then the front panels (fasten them with the single screw), then the rear cover.

Step 40



- With all side panels in place, re-fit the screws around the gear lever and CD holder. Finally, slide the handbrake cover in place, and screw the CD holder in. All rubber mats put in place (you **did** clean them whilst you had the chance, right..?). You are done!

Step 41 — Summary



- Touch Wood, my car is now purring, with none of the issues I had before. Having heard quotes from around £1,000 upwards for a complete ISM / CIM refit, I am well pleased with the result.

To reassemble your device, follow these instructions in reverse order.