



July Tech Tip



HOW LONG SHOULD A BRAKE JOB LAST?

Every technician knows it's impossible to estimate how long a set of brake pads will last. But, due to changing ownership cycles, your customers are developing new expectations.

According to R.L. Polk, the typical consumer held onto a vehicle for 57 months in 2012. This is up from 38 months in 2002. So, if a customer drives 15,000 miles a year, the customer will accumulate 23,000 more miles before they trade it in. These extra miles could mean an extra front brake job. These repair incidents create points of reference that form certain customer expectations that were not there just a decade ago.

But, in some cases, reality may not meet customer expectations. Why? Each time the brakes are serviced, the pads could be compromised by the previous brake jobs that did not restore the brakes to like-new condition.

The brake hardware might not have been -replaced during the first brake job. Halfway through the customer-expected life of the pads, the abutment clips may have corroded and lost their spring. The guide pins could have been neglected on the next brake job. Now, the pads wear really unevenly and the customer will notice that mileage between pad changes has significantly dropped. Performing a complete brake job will break the cycle.

A normal customer-expected wear interval cannot be achieved if a low-quality brake pad set is used. One area that is consistently compromised is the quality of the backing plate and how it retains the friction material during the life of the brake job.

Keeping a friction material attached to a piece of metal under more than 1,400 psi and shearing forces is not something to take for granted when selecting a replacement brake pad. If the attachment method and implementation is substandard, it can result in noise and, eventually, failure of the pad before it's worn.

This is called edge lift or delamination. It's caused by failure of the attachment method and can be hastened by corrosion. The first symptom of the failure is noise. The noise is a result of the separation, causing -irregularities in the braking surface and the pad now having completely -different NVH properties.

Some manufacturers are using mechanical -attachment methods that can prevent delamination in a brake pad. The technology allows brake pads to be run down to the last few millimeters of friction material. The bond can be resistant to shear loads, corrosion and heat. This makes for a pad that can meet or exceed a customer's expectations.

In a recent survey of technicians and shops -conducted by Brake & Front End magazine, noise was the primary reason why a customer brought their -vehicle in to have the brakes inspected. They did not bring it in for a low-priced brake job. Customers are concerned about safety, not a low price. They can see the value in getting more miles out of a complete brake job, over a cheap brake job that has them returning to you sooner than expected.

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