

Car Care Corner

When Brakes Talk, Drivers Should Listen

(NAPSA)—When it comes to driving safely, it's easy to take your vehicle's ability to stop for granted—until you really need it.

According to brake expert Akebono, your brakes often reveal possible serious situations when they make noise, pull, judder—another term for vibrate—or feel soft. Addressing these symptoms promptly enhances your safety and may save time and money in the long run.

Brake Squealing and Groaning

Squealing noises soon after a brake job may indicate there is a problem. You should return to the shop where the work was done as soon as possible, to have the brakes checked out by a technician. Installing premium brake pads, calipers and rotors may cost a bit more up front, but often provides noise- and vibration-free operation and longer pad life.

In some instances, however, brake squealing simply indicates the pads are worn down and those squeaking wear indicators are doing their job.

The abrasive nature of many traditional brake pads against the rotor may also cause squealing. Low quality rotors could be the noise culprit, as well. Neither of these situations is ideal, but the resulting noise is more annoying than anything else.

Groaning noises also can be caused by low quality or abrasive brake pads. Squealing and groaning can both be minimized by installing premium brake system components. Have your installer use the same type of pad fitted as original equipment or an upgrade pad. Ultra-premium ceramic pads, such as Akebono's ProACT brand, are now available for virtually all domestic, Japanese and European models.



Pulling and Judder

When your brakes are applied and the vehicle pulls to one side, low tire pressure may be at fault. But, it can also mean a brake caliper is sticking, leaking or not sliding properly due to corrosion.

This can lead to uneven brake pad and rotor wear, reducing the life of the pads and causing steering wheel judder or vibration.

The rotor may be able to be machined smooth, but this is not a long-term fix. A corroded caliper or rotor may need to be replaced. A trained technician can assess the situation and fix it right the first time.

Soft-Pedal Feel

When air or water gets into the brake system, you may experience a soft-pedal feel. Improper bleeding and general corrosion are typically the culprits. Air in the system forces you to push harder on the brake pedal than normal to stop.

Water can adversely affect caliper performance by causing brake fluid to boil prematurely. This can result in a significant loss of stopping power. It's best to have the brake fluid changed as recommended.

Motorists can learn a lot by paying attention to what their brakes have to say. It can be a key to being both safe on the road—and with their money.