Headline: Brake noise tell-tale sign pads are thin

Deckhead: Ignoring indicators could lead to more damage

Replacing brakes is a nuisance we wish we could avoid but know it’s inevitable. It’s among the more common repairs and dangerous to ignore.

Be aware of indications letting you know they need to be replaced. A vehicle pulling or unusual noises when brakes are used are signs they are wearing and they should be inspected.

Squeals, scrapes and grinds are indicators that the pads are thinning and need to be replaced. Brake pads worn to a certain point are designed to scrape against the rotor and make noise. Allowing them to reach the “metal-on-metal” stage is dangerous and costly.

Here are some warning signs that it’s time to have your vehicle’s brakes inspected by a professional:

***Brake light is on* –** Unless the parking brake is in use, this light often is an indication that your brake fluid is low or there’s a problem with your ABS system.

***Brakes feel spongy –***Pressing the brake pedal harder or deeper to stop is an indication there might be a problem.

***You see or smell brake fluid* –** This points to a leak. Brake fluid is a light amber color. Once you smell its pungent odor, you’re not likely to forget it.

***Brake pedal or wheel vibrates* –** Vibrations can indicate issues developing on the surface of the rotor.

***Brakes squeal when you come to a stop –***Squealing brakes usually indicate a need for servicing, but sometimes brakes keep squealing after they are replaced. Semi-metallic brake pads often are to blame, but squeaky brakes can be an indication of mismatched or lower-quality parts.

***Brakes grabbing –***This can signify problems with the braking system or components.

***Brakes grind or growl –***The sound of metal-on-metal is evidence that the brake pads are completely worn down.

Brakes also could squeal when a vehicle has been off the road for an extended period of time. Rust forms on the braking surface of the rotors and drums. Apply the brakes lightly during for the first few feet of driving to remove any rust buildup. Brake dust – the sooty, black residue that collects on the exterior of a wheel – is a normal byproduct of your brake pads being worn away by friction.

Low brake fluid results in more lining wear in the braking system. The alert system that indicates your vehicle’s pads are worn is defeated if a service facility tops off the brake fluid with every oil change. The only time brake fluid should be at the full level is when all braking-system components are new.

Cutline: BRAKE DANCE – Worn out pads could have a negative impact on the vehicle’s rotors if they aren’t replaced in a timely manner. Image: Анатолий Савицкий. Adobe Stock.

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