

GENERIC · CHASSIS

C0049

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

C0049

Brake Fluid Level

C0049 is a generic chassis code indicating that the brake fluid level sensor circuit has reported a low fluid condition or an implausible signal to the control module. The computer detects this when the sensor voltage falls outside the expected range for a sufficient period, typically because the fluid is genuinely low or the sensor circuit has an electrical fault.

SYSTEM

Chassis

CODE TYPE

Generic (all makes)

SEVERITY

High

FIX DIFFICULTY

Intermediate

AREA

Brakes, steering and suspension

Symptoms you may notice

- Red brake warning light illuminated on the dashboard
- Message on the driver information center stating low brake fluid
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light if the fluid is only slightly low
- Soft or spongy brake pedal if fluid loss is significant
- Visible fluid weeping around a wheel cylinder or brake line
- ABS or traction control warning light may also appear on some vehicles

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Brake fluid level genuinely low due to a leak in a line, caliper, wheel cylinder, or master cylinder
- 2 Faulty brake fluid level sensor or float switch stuck in the down position
- 3 Damaged or disconnected wiring harness at the fluid reservoir
- 4 Corroded or loose electrical connector at the sensor
- 5 Brake fluid reservoir cap not sealing properly, allowing evaporation or contamination
- 6 Failed body control module or instrument cluster not interpreting the sensor signal correctly
- 7 Brake fluid contaminated or aged, causing the sensor float to stick

How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check the brake fluid level in the reservoir and top up with the specified fluid if low
- 2 Inspect the reservoir, cap, and surrounding area for signs of leakage or seepage
- 3 Disconnect the fluid level sensor connector and inspect terminals for corrosion or damage
- 4 Test the sensor with a multimeter for continuity or resistance change as the float is moved
- 5 Check the wiring between the sensor and the control module for opens, shorts, or high resistance
- 6 If the sensor tests faulty, replace the brake fluid level sensor or reservoir assembly as required
- 7 Clear the code and verify the warning light goes out after repair



What a low fluid light often hides

- A brake fluid level warning is frequently the first sign of a slow leak at a rear wheel cylinder or caliper that has not yet produced a visible puddle on the ground.
- The fluid level sensor float can become saturated or mechanically stuck, causing a false low reading even when the reservoir is full.
- On many vehicles, the brake fluid level sensor shares a ground with other chassis sensors, so a bad ground can set C0049 along with unrelated codes.
- A collapsed or swollen brake hose can trap fluid and cause the reservoir level to drop without an obvious external leak.
- Some vehicles require a scan tool to reset the brake warning light after the fluid level is corrected, even though the code clears from memory.

Can I keep driving with C0049?

Do not continue driving if the brake pedal feels soft or the fluid level is visibly low, because a brake hydraulic failure can occur without warning. If the light is on but the pedal feels normal and the fluid is only slightly low, drive directly to a repair shop and avoid heavy braking or towing.

Tools that help

- Scan tool with chassis code capability
- Multimeter
- Brake fluid (correct specification for the vehicle)
- Clean rags or shop towels
- Flashlight
- Basic socket set

Reading C0049

C	Chassis: brakes, steering and suspension.
0	Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
0	Brakes, steering and suspension.
49	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

C0045 Left Rear Wheel Speed Sensor Circuit Malfunction · **C0050** Right Rear Wheel Speed Sensor Circuit Malfunction · **C0060** Right Rear Wheel Speed Sensor Circuit · **C0110** ABS Pump Motor Circuit Malfunction · **P0571** Brake Switch 'A' Circuit



See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How ABS Works: Anti-Lock Brakes in X-Ray](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/c0049/>

