

FORD · POWERTRAIN

P1260

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P1260 · Ford

Theft Detected Engine Disabled

P1260 on Ford vehicles means the powertrain control module (PCM) has detected a theft condition and has disabled the engine to prevent unauthorized starting. The PCM stores this code when the passive anti-theft system (PATS) fails to provide a valid key authorization, so the engine will crank but not start or may start and immediately shut off.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Ford specific	High	Professional	Fuel and air metering (injector circuits)

Symptoms you may notice

- Engine cranks but will not start, or starts then stalls immediately
- Theft warning light on the dashboard flashes rapidly or stays illuminated
- No communication with the PCM when using a scan tool, or the PCM refuses to communicate
- Intermittent no-start condition that may resolve after several attempts or a battery disconnect
- Other modules may show U-codes related to lost communication with the PCM
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light if the vehicle is started with a properly programmed key

Common causes, most likely first

- Unprogrammed or damaged transponder key (PATS key) not recognized by the PCM
- Faulty passive anti-theft system (PATS) transceiver ring around the ignition lock cylinder
- Corroded or damaged wiring between the PATS transceiver and the PCM
- PCM failure or corrupted PATS memory (especially after battery replacement or voltage spikes)
- Aftermarket remote starter or alarm system interfering with the PATS signal
- Low or weak vehicle battery causing voltage drops that disrupt PATS communication
- Damaged ignition lock cylinder or key cylinder that prevents the transceiver from reading the key

How to diagnose and fix it

- Check battery voltage and charge or replace the battery if it is below 12.4 volts at rest
- Inspect the PATS transceiver ring and wiring for corrosion, damage, or loose connections
- Try a second known-good programmed key to see if the no-start is key-specific
- Use a scan tool with PATS capability to retrieve any additional body or security module codes
- Reprogram the PATS keys using a diagnostic tool with security access (requires two programmed keys)
- Check for aftermarket alarm or remote start wiring and disconnect it temporarily to isolate the fault
- If PATS programming fails, replace the PCM and perform PATS initialization with a factory scan tool



PATS faults that mimic a bad PCM

- A weak or failing battery is one of the most common triggers for P1260 because the PATS module may not receive stable voltage during cranking, causing a false theft detection.
- Aftermarket remote starters and alarm systems frequently tap into the PATS transceiver wiring, and a poor splice can set P1260 even when the key and transceiver are good.
- The code does not always mean the PCM is defective; many technicians replace the PCM only to find a corroded transceiver connector or a damaged key was the real cause.
- On some Ford models, a failed instrument cluster or body control module (BCM) can interrupt the PATS communication bus and set P1260 along with U-codes.
- Disconnecting the battery for an extended period can cause the PCM to lose PATS key information on certain models, requiring key reprogramming even though no hardware failed.

Can I keep driving with P1260?

Do not attempt to drive the vehicle if it will not start or stalls immediately, as the engine is intentionally disabled and driving could be dangerous. If the engine starts and runs normally, have the code diagnosed soon because the fault may be intermittent and could leave you stranded.

Tools that help

- Ford-compatible scan tool with PATS programming capability
- Digital multimeter for voltage and continuity checks
- Battery load tester
- Trim removal tools for accessing the transceiver ring
- Factory service information for PATS wiring diagrams

Reading P1260

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
1	Manufacturer-specific code (Ford): its meaning depends on the make.
2	Fuel and air metering (injector circuits).
60	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P1261 Cylinder 1 High To Low Side Short · **P1262** Cylinder 2 High To Low Side Short · **U0100** Lost Communication With ECM/PCM A · **U0140** Lost Communication With Instrument Panel Cluster



See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How a Boxer Engine Works: Flat Engine Cutaway](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/ford-p1260/>

