

HONDA · POWERTRAIN

P1279

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P1279 · Honda

VTEC System Malfunction Front Bank 2

P1279 is a Honda-specific code indicating that the powertrain control module (PCM) has detected a malfunction in the variable valve timing and lift electronic control (VTEC) system for the front bank of cylinders on V6 engines. The PCM monitors oil pressure switches and rocker arm oil control solenoids, and it sets this code when the commanded VTEC state does not match the actual oil pressure feedback, or when electrical circuit values fall outside expected ranges.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Honda specific	Medium	Intermediate	Fuel and air metering (injector circuits)

Symptoms you may notice

- Illumination of the check engine light, often with no other noticeable symptoms.
- Reduced engine power or a limp-home mode feeling, especially above 3,000 RPM.
- Rough idle or misfire-like shuddering when the VTEC system fails to engage or disengage properly.
- A noticeable loss of fuel economy and increased emissions due to incorrect valve timing.
- Intermittent hesitation or stumble during acceleration when the PCM attempts to activate VTEC.
- In rare cases, a no-start condition if the VTEC solenoid circuit is shorted and affects the PCM's power supply.

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Low engine oil level or degraded oil that cannot maintain the pressure required to actuate the VTEC rocker arms.
- 2 Clogged or restricted VTEC oil control solenoid screen or filter, often due to sludge or debris.
- 3 Faulty VTEC oil pressure switch that fails to report correct pressure to the PCM.
- 4 Open or shorted wiring in the VTEC solenoid circuit, including damaged connectors or chafed harnesses.
- 5 Failed VTEC rocker arm oil control solenoid that does not physically move the spool valve.
- 6 Sticking VTEC rocker arm pistons due to varnish or wear, preventing proper engagement.
- 7 PCM internal fault, though this is rare and should only be suspected after all other causes are ruled out.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check the engine oil level and condition; top off or change the oil and filter if the oil is dirty or low.
- 2 Inspect the VTEC oil control solenoid screen for debris and clean or replace the solenoid if clogged.
- 3 Test the VTEC oil pressure switch using a multimeter and verify it changes state when oil pressure is applied.
- 4 Perform a resistance and continuity test on the VTEC solenoid and switch wiring harness, repairing any opens or shorts.
- 5 Command the VTEC solenoid on with a scan tool and listen for a click; if no click, test the solenoid with direct battery voltage.
- 6 Remove the VTEC rocker arm assembly and inspect the pistons for free movement, cleaning or replacing as necessary.
- 7 If all mechanical and electrical checks pass, reflash or replace the PCM only after confirming no other faults exist.

Oil quality and screen clogs drive most P1279 faults

- A dirty VTEC solenoid screen is the most common cause of P1279 on Honda V6 engines, and it often occurs without any other driveability symptoms.
- Many technicians replace the VTEC solenoid without first checking the oil pressure switch, which can be faulty and set the same code.
- The front bank VTEC system on Honda V6 engines is more prone to oil sludge buildup because of its location and heat exposure, so regular oil changes are critical.
- A P1279 code can be set by a momentary loss of oil pressure during hard cornering or low oil level, so always verify oil level before condemning parts.
- Do not confuse P1279 with P1259 (VTEC system malfunction for the rear bank) on V6 engines; the diagnostic steps are similar but the affected bank differs.

Can I keep driving with P1279?

You can usually drive the vehicle with P1279, but avoid hard acceleration and high RPM until the fault is repaired, as the VTEC system may not engage and engine performance will be reduced. Prolonged driving with low oil pressure or a clogged solenoid can lead to more serious engine damage, so schedule diagnosis promptly.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with Honda-specific software to command VTEC solenoid activation.
- Digital multimeter for testing resistance and continuity on the solenoid and switch circuits.
- Oil pressure gauge to verify actual oil pressure at the VTEC switch port.
- Socket set and wrenches for removing the VTEC solenoid and valve cover.
- Feeler gauges and a torque wrench for rocker arm inspection and reassembly.



Reading P1279

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

Often seen with

P1259 Engine Coolant System Valve Short To Ground · **P1259** VTEC System Malfunction Rear Bank 1 · **P0011** 'A' Camshaft Position - Timing Over-Advanced or System Perfo · **P0012** 'A' Camshaft Position - Timing Over-Retarded (Bank 1) · **P2646** 'A' Rocker Arm Actuator System Performance or Stuck Off (Ban · **P2647** 'A' Rocker Arm Actuator System Stuck On (Bank 1)

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How Variable Valve Timing Works: Cam Phaser and VVT Solenoid](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/honda-p1279/>

