

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P0136

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P0136

O2 Sensor Circuit Malfunction (Bank 1 Sensor 2)

P0136 means the powertrain control module has detected a fault in the electrical circuit for the downstream oxygen sensor on bank 1, which is the sensor mounted after the catalytic converter. The computer monitors this sensor's heater circuit and signal return for open circuits, short circuits, or excessive resistance, and it sets the code when the voltage or current falls outside the expected range for a calibrated period.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Generic (all makes)	Low	Intermediate	Fuel and air metering

Symptoms you may notice

- Illumination of the check engine light, often with no other noticeable symptoms.
- A slight decrease in fuel economy as the computer may default to a less efficient fuel strategy.
- Occasional rough idle or hesitation during acceleration if the sensor signal is erratic.
- A failed emissions test because the downstream oxygen sensor monitor is not ready or has failed.
- In rare cases, a sulfur or rotten egg smell from the exhaust if the mixture is affected.

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 A failed downstream oxygen sensor heater element, which is the most common cause.
- 2 Damaged or corroded wiring or connector pins between the sensor and the powertrain control module.
- 3 An open or shorted sensor signal circuit, often from chafing against the exhaust or body.
- 4 A blown fuse that supplies power to the oxygen sensor heater circuit.
- 5 Exhaust leaks near the sensor that allow outside air to affect the reading, though this more often sets a different code.
- 6 A faulty powertrain control module, which is rare but possible after all other circuits are verified.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Connect a scan tool and record all stored and pending codes, then check freeze-frame data for the conditions when P0136 set.
- 2 Inspect the downstream oxygen sensor connector and wiring for corrosion, chafing, or loose pins, and repair as needed.
- 3 Check the fuse that powers the oxygen sensor heater circuit and replace it if blown, then recheck for a short.
- 4 Measure the resistance of the sensor heater element with a multimeter and compare it to the manufacturer's specification.
- 5 Back-probe the sensor signal and heater circuits to verify voltage and ground integrity while wiggling the harness.
- 6 If the circuit tests good, replace the downstream oxygen sensor with a quality direct-fit unit.
- 7 Clear the codes and perform a drive cycle to confirm the repair and ensure the monitor runs to completion.

Downstream sensor codes are not always the sensor

- A P0136 is often caused by a failed heater circuit inside the sensor, but a blown fuse or a rubbed-through wire near the exhaust can mimic the same symptom and fool a parts-swapper.
- Technicians sometimes replace the downstream sensor only to find the connector at the powertrain control module is corroded, so always inspect both ends of the circuit.
- An exhaust leak just ahead of the downstream sensor can pull in outside oxygen and skew the signal, but it more typically sets a lean or catalyst efficiency code rather than P0136.
- The downstream sensor's main job is to monitor the catalytic converter, so a P0136 does not necessarily mean the converter is failing, and replacing the converter is a costly misdiagnosis.
- On some vehicles, a weak battery or charging system can cause low voltage to the sensor heater and set this code intermittently, so check system voltage first.

Can I keep driving with P0136?

You can usually continue driving with P0136 because the engine will run in a default mode and the risk of immediate damage is low. Avoid ignoring it for months, as a persistent fault can affect emissions and fuel economy, and have it diagnosed before an emissions test.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with live data capability
- Digital multimeter
- Jack and jack stands or ramps for under-vehicle access
- Oxygen sensor socket
- Wire repair kit with crimp connectors and heat shrink



Reading P0136

- P** Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
- 0** Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
- 1** Fuel and air metering.
- 36** The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0135 O2 Sensor Heater Circuit Malfunction (Bank 1 Sensor 1) · **P0137** O2 Sensor Circuit Low Voltage (Bank 1 Sensor 2) · **P0138** O2 Sensor Circuit High Voltage (Bank 1 Sensor 2) · **P0141** O2 Sensor Heater Circuit Malfunction (Bank 1 Sensor 2) · **P0420** Catalyst System Efficiency Below Threshold (Bank 1)

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How a Refrigerator Works: The Cooling Cycle](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p0136/>

