

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P072E

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P072E

Stuck in Gear 3

P072E is a generic transmission code indicating that the transmission control module (TCM) has detected the transmission is stuck in third gear when it should have shifted to another ratio. The TCM commands a shift, monitors input and output speed sensors, and sees that the ratio remains fixed at the third-gear value, setting the code and often illuminating the malfunction indicator lamp (MIL).

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Generic (all makes)	High	Professional	Transmission

Symptoms you may notice

- The malfunction indicator lamp (MIL) is illuminated, and often no other symptoms are noticed by the driver.
- The transmission may fail to upshift or downshift from third gear, holding that ratio regardless of vehicle speed or throttle input.
- Engine speed may be abnormally high or low for the vehicle speed, depending on whether the transmission is stuck in third when a lower or higher gear is expected.
- The transmission may enter limp mode, defaulting to a single gear (often third) to protect the unit, resulting in reduced performance and fuel economy.
- Harsh or delayed engagement may be felt when shifting into drive or reverse, especially if the stuck condition is due to internal hydraulic pressure issues.
- A noticeable lack of acceleration or power may occur if the vehicle is forced to start from a stop in third gear.

Common causes, most likely first

- A faulty shift solenoid (particularly the 2-3 or 3-4 shift solenoid) that is stuck in the open or closed position, preventing hydraulic pressure from releasing third gear.
- Internal transmission mechanical failure, such as a stuck shift valve, broken accumulator spring, or damaged clutch pack, causing the gear to remain engaged.
- Low or contaminated transmission fluid, which can cause valve body spools to stick and solenoids to malfunction.
- A malfunctioning transmission control module (TCM) or a software calibration issue that incorrectly commands third gear.
- Wiring harness damage, including chafed wires, corroded connectors, or a short to ground in the shift solenoid circuit.
- A faulty input or output speed sensor that provides incorrect ratio information to the TCM, leading to a false stuck-gear detection.
- Valve body wear or debris accumulation that restricts hydraulic flow and prevents proper shift solenoid operation.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check the transmission fluid level and condition; top off or replace fluid if it is low or contaminated, and inspect for leaks.
- 2 Perform a visual inspection of the wiring harness and connectors at the transmission, TCM, and shift solenoids for damage or corrosion.
- 3 Use a scan tool to command each shift solenoid on and off and listen for an audible click; compare commanded state to actual gear ratio using live data.
- 4 Test the resistance of the suspected shift solenoid(s) with a multimeter and compare to the manufacturer's specification; replace if out of range.
- 5 Remove the transmission oil pan and inspect for debris, then test the solenoid(s) electrically and, if possible, apply air pressure to check valve body operation.
- 6 If the solenoid and wiring test good, perform a hydraulic pressure test and inspect the valve body for stuck valves or worn bores; rebuild or replace as needed.
- 7 After repairs, clear the codes, perform a relearn or adaptive reset procedure if required, and test-drive the vehicle through all gears to verify the fix.

Before you replace the transmission

- A stuck third gear is often caused by a failed shift solenoid or contaminated fluid rather than a completely failed transmission, so always start with electrical and fluid checks.
- Some vehicles use a single shift solenoid for multiple gears, and a solenoid that tests good electrically can still stick mechanically due to debris, leading to a false diagnosis.
- The TCM may set P072E if the input and output speed sensor signals are implausible even when the transmission is mechanically fine, so check sensor signals and wiring before internal repairs.
- A low battery or charging system issue can cause the TCM to misbehave and set false stuck-gear codes, so verify battery voltage and grounds as part of the diagnostic routine.
- After replacing a solenoid or valve body, some transmissions require an adaptive learning procedure or a software update to prevent the code from returning immediately.

Can I keep driving with P072E?

Driving with P072E is not recommended because the transmission may be stuck in third gear, causing poor acceleration, overheating, and potential further internal damage. If you must move the vehicle, drive slowly and directly to a repair shop, avoiding highways and heavy loads.



Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with live data and bidirectional control
- Digital multimeter
- Transmission fluid level dipstick or scan tool with fluid temperature reading
- Factory service information for solenoid resistance and hydraulic test specifications
- Transmission pressure gauge kit
- Basic hand tools for pan removal and solenoid replacement

Reading P072E

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
0	Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
7	Transmission.
2E	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P072D Stuck in Gear 2 · **P072F** Stuck in Gear 4 · **P0730** Incorrect Gear Ratio · **P0733** Gear 3 Incorrect Ratio · **P0750** Shift Solenoid 'A'

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How an Automatic Transmission Works, Gear by Gear](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p072e/>

