

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P073E

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P073E

Unable to Engage Reverse

P073E is a generic transmission code indicating that the transmission control module (TCM) commanded reverse gear but did not receive confirmation that reverse was actually engaged. The TCM monitors the ratio between the transmission input speed sensor (ISS) and output speed sensor (OSS) and sets this code when the calculated ratio falls outside the expected range for reverse.

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

Symptoms you may notice

- The reverse gear may fail to engage when selected, leaving the vehicle unable to move backward.
- A harsh engagement or delayed engagement when shifting into reverse.
- The transmission may slip or shudder while in reverse.
- The check engine light or transmission warning light illuminates on the dashboard.
- The vehicle may enter limp mode, limiting speed and gear selection.
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light, especially if the fault is intermittent.

Common causes, most likely first

- Low or degraded transmission fluid level, causing insufficient hydraulic pressure to engage reverse.
- Faulty transmission input speed sensor (ISS) or output speed sensor (OSS) providing incorrect data to the TCM.
- Sticking or failed reverse shift solenoid or valve body solenoid pack.
- Internal transmission mechanical failure, such as a worn reverse clutch pack or broken band.
- Damaged wiring or corroded connectors in the transmission control circuit.
- A faulty transmission control module (TCM) or software calibration issue.
- Valve body wear or contamination causing pressure loss in the reverse circuit.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check transmission fluid level and condition; top off or replace fluid if contaminated or low.
- 2 Scan all modules for stored codes and freeze-frame data to confirm P073E and identify related faults.
- 3 Inspect the transmission wiring harness and connectors for damage, corrosion, or loose pins.
- 4 Test the input and output speed sensors with a multimeter or oscilloscope for proper signal output.
- 5 Perform a resistance and function test on the reverse shift solenoid and compare to manufacturer specifications.
- 6 Conduct a hydraulic pressure test on the reverse circuit to verify pressure meets specifications.
- 7 If electrical and hydraulic checks pass, remove the transmission pan to inspect the valve body and reverse clutch components for wear or debris.

Before you replace the transmission

- A low fluid level or a clogged transmission filter is a common cause of P073E that is often overlooked because the fluid may look fine on the dipstick.
Incorrect speed sensor signals can set P073E even when the transmission mechanically engages reverse, so always verify sensor operation before internal repairs.
- The code can be set by a faulty ignition switch or battery voltage issue that interrupts power to the TCM during the reverse engagement sequence.
- Some vehicles require a relearn or adaptive reset procedure after repairs, and failing to perform it can cause the code to return immediately.
A worn reverse clutch pack may only cause the code when the transmission is cold, so testing should include both cold and warm operating conditions.

Can I keep driving with P073E?

If reverse is not working, do not continue driving the vehicle because you may be unable to maneuver safely in parking situations or traffic. Have the vehicle towed to a repair facility to avoid further transmission damage.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with transmission module capability
- Digital multimeter
- Oscilloscope for speed sensor signal testing
- Transmission pressure gauge set
- Fluid level dipstick and pump
- Factory service information for specifications and procedures



Reading P073E

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
0	Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
7	Transmission.
3E	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0730 Incorrect Gear Ratio · **P0731** Gear 1 Incorrect Ratio · **P0732** Gear 2 Incorrect Ratio · **P0733** Gear 3 Incorrect Ratio · **P0734** Gear 4 Incorrect Ratio

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How Misfire Detection Works: Crankshaft Speed](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p073e/>

