

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P073F

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P073F

Unable to Engage Gear 1

P073F indicates the transmission control module commanded first gear but did not see the expected engine speed drop relative to output speed, meaning the gear did not engage. The computer detects this by comparing input and output shaft speeds after the shift command and flagging an error when the ratio stays wrong.

SYSTEM

Powertrain

CODE TYPE

Generic (all makes)

SEVERITY

High

FIX DIFFICULTY

Professional

AREA

Transmission

Symptoms you may notice

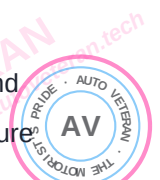
- Illumination of the check engine light or transmission warning lamp, often with no other symptoms
- Delayed or harsh engagement when shifting from Park or Neutral into Drive
- The transmission may stay in a higher gear or fail to move off from a stop
- Slipping or flaring during acceleration from a standstill
- Limp-home mode with reduced power and limited gear selection
- Unusual noises such as clunking or whining when first gear is selected

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Low or degraded automatic transmission fluid (ATF) level or condition
- 2 Faulty or sticking first-gear shift solenoid or valve body solenoid
- 3 Internal transmission mechanical failure such as a broken first-gear band, clutch pack, or sprag
- 4 Valve body wear or contamination causing hydraulic pressure loss to the first-gear circuit
- 5 Wiring or connector damage to the transmission solenoid pack or speed sensors
- 6 Faulty transmission speed sensor or erratic signal from the input/output speed sensors
- 7 Transmission control module (TCM) software or hardware fault, though less common

How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check transmission fluid level and condition; top off or replace fluid if burnt or contaminated
- 2 Scan all modules for stored and pending codes, and record freeze-frame data to confirm the fault conditions
- 3 Inspect the transmission wiring harness and connectors for chafing, corrosion, or loose pins
- 4 Test the first-gear shift solenoid and related solenoids for resistance and function according to the manufacturer's procedure
- 5 Perform a hydraulic pressure test to check line pressure and first-gear circuit pressure
- 6 Remove the valve body for inspection and cleaning or replacement if contamination or wear is found
- 7 If electrical and hydraulic checks pass, perform internal transmission inspection for mechanical failure



Before you replace the transmission

- A low fluid level or a clogged transmission filter can cause P073F without any internal damage, so always verify fluid condition first.
- The code can be set by a faulty speed sensor or wiring issue that mimics a mechanical failure, so check sensor signals before condemning the transmission.
- Some vehicles require a transmission adaptive relearn or software update after repairs, and skipping this step can cause the code to return.
- P073F can be stored alongside other gear-ratio codes if multiple gears are affected, pointing to a common hydraulic or electrical fault rather than a single gear problem.
- A sticking valve body solenoid may test fine electrically but still fail to direct fluid properly, so a pressure test is more reliable than a resistance check alone.

Can I keep driving with P073F?

If the vehicle drives but shifts poorly, limit driving to a short distance to a repair shop and avoid heavy acceleration or towing. If the transmission will not engage first gear or the vehicle is in limp mode, stop driving and arrange a tow to prevent further damage.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with transmission module capability
- Digital multimeter for circuit and solenoid testing
- Transmission fluid level gauge and fluid pump
- Hydraulic pressure gauge set
- Factory service information for solenoid and pressure specifications

Reading P073F

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

Often seen with

P0700 Transmission Control System Malfunction · **P0730** Incorrect Gear Ratio · **P0731** Gear 1 Incorrect Ratio · **P0732** Gear 2 Incorrect Ratio · **P0741** Torque Converter Clutch Circuit Performance or Stuck Off



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/p073f/>

