

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P079A

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P079A

Transmission Friction Element A Slip Detected

P079A indicates that the transmission control module has detected an excessive slip in friction element A, which is typically a clutch pack or band inside the automatic transmission. The computer monitors input and output shaft speeds and calculates that the expected gear ratio is not being achieved when that element is applied, meaning the element is not holding torque as designed.

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 light, often with no other noticeable symptoms
- Slipping sensation during acceleration, where engine speed rises without a corresponding increase in vehicle speed
- Harsh or delayed gear engagements, especially when shifting into drive or reverse
- Transmission may enter limp mode, limiting vehicle speed and gear selection
- Shuddering or vibration during gear changes under load
- Poor fuel economy or unexplained increase in engine RPM at cruising speed

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Worn or burnt clutch pack or band associated with friction element A
- 2 Low transmission fluid level due to a leak or improper service
- 3 Degraded transmission fluid that has lost its friction properties or is contaminated
- 4 Faulty solenoid or valve body issue preventing proper hydraulic pressure to the element
- 5 Sticking or damaged accumulator piston or spring affecting apply pressure
- 6 Internal seal failure causing pressure loss to the friction element
- 7 Transmission control module software calibration issue or faulty speed sensor signal



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check transmission fluid level and condition; top off or replace fluid if low or degraded
- 2 Inspect for external leaks around the transmission pan, cooler lines, and seals
- 3 Use a scan tool to read transmission control module codes and monitor live data for input and output shaft speeds and solenoid commands
- 4 Perform a pressure test on the transmission to verify hydraulic pressure to friction element A
- 5 Inspect the valve body and solenoids for debris or malfunction; clean or replace as needed
- 6 Remove the transmission pan to check for excessive clutch material or metal debris in the fluid
- 7 If internal damage is confirmed, remove and disassemble the transmission to replace worn clutch packs, bands, seals, and possibly the torque converter

What a Slip Code Really Tells You

- A P079A can be set by a simple low fluid level that has not yet caused permanent damage, so always verify fluid level and condition before condemning internal components.
Some vehicles use a separate transmission control module that may require relearning or adaptation after repairs, and failing to perform this step can cause the code to return.
- A faulty wheel speed sensor or mismatched tire sizes can cause the transmission to calculate incorrect slip ratios and set a false P079A on some systems.
- The code does not always mean the transmission is mechanically failed; electrical issues such as a chafed wiring harness to a solenoid can mimic hydraulic slip.
After a transmission replacement or rebuild, the adaptive learning values must be reset, otherwise the new unit may slip initially and trigger the same code.

Can I keep driving with P079A?

Driving with P079A is not recommended because continued slipping can overheat the transmission and turn a repairable problem into a complete failure. If you must move the vehicle, drive gently and avoid heavy acceleration, and have it diagnosed by a professional as soon as possible.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with transmission live data capability
- Transmission fluid level dipstick or service tool
- Hydraulic pressure gauge kit
- Digital multimeter for electrical checks
- Transmission jack and stands for removal
- Torque wrench for reassembly



Reading P079A

- P** Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
- 0** Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
- 7** Transmission.
- 9A** The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0730 Incorrect Gear Ratio · **P0740** Torque Converter Clutch Circuit Malfunction · **P079B** Transmission Friction Element B Slip Detected · **P079C** Transmission Friction Element C Slip Detected · **P079D** Transmission Friction Element D Slip Detected

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/p079a/>

