

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P0959

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P0959

Auto Shift Manual Mode Circuit Intermittent

P0959 indicates that the transmission control module (TCM) has detected an intermittent fault in the electrical circuit for the auto shift manual mode function, which allows the driver to select gears manually in an automatic transmission. The TCM monitors voltage and current on the circuit and sets this code when the signal is erratic or momentarily lost, rather than completely open or shorted.

SYSTEM

Powertrain

CODE TYPE

Generic (all makes)

SEVERITY

Medium

FIX DIFFICULTY

Intermediate

AREA

Transmission

Symptoms you may notice

- The manual mode may not engage when selected, or may disengage unexpectedly while driving.
- The gear position indicator may flash or show the wrong gear when in manual mode.
- The transmission may revert to automatic mode without warning.
- The check engine light or transmission warning light illuminates.
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light, especially if the intermittent fault is brief.

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Worn or damaged wiring in the manual mode switch circuit, often at flex points or near moving components.
- 2 Corroded or loose electrical connectors at the manual mode switch, TCM, or transmission range sensor.
- 3 Faulty manual mode switch (also called tiptronic or sport mode switch) internal contact wear.
- 4 Poor ground connection for the TCM or switch circuit.
- 5 Intermittent short or open in the wiring harness due to chafing or heat damage.
- 6 Failing transmission range sensor (also called neutral safety switch) that affects manual mode signal.
- 7 Rarely, an internal fault in the TCM itself.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Inspect the manual mode switch and its connector for corrosion, loose pins, or damage; clean and reseat as needed.
- 2 Check the wiring harness from the switch to the TCM for chafing, burns, or loose connectors; repair any damaged sections.
- 3 Test the manual mode switch with a multimeter for continuity and resistance in each position; replace if out of specification.
- 4 Verify the transmission range sensor operation and adjustment; replace if faulty.
- 5 Check and clean all ground connections related to the TCM and transmission.
- 6 Clear the code and test-drive the vehicle in manual mode to see if the code returns; if it does, perform a wiggle test on the harness while monitoring live data.
- 7 If all external circuits check out, consult factory service information for TCM diagnostics and consider TCM replacement as a last resort.

Intermittent faults often hide in plain sight

- A common oversight is replacing the manual mode switch without checking the wiring harness, which often causes the intermittent signal due to flexing at the gear selector.
- The code can be set by a momentary voltage drop caused by a poor ground, so cleaning ground points is a cheap and effective first step.
- Some vehicles use a separate transmission control module that can store this code even if the switch tests good, so live data monitoring during a test drive is crucial.
- The manual mode circuit may share wiring with the sport mode or tow/haul mode, so a fault in one can trigger codes for the other.
- A weak battery or charging system can cause intermittent electrical glitches that set this code, so always verify battery and charging voltage first.

Can I keep driving with P0959?

The vehicle is generally safe to drive because the transmission defaults to automatic mode, but avoid using manual mode until the fault is repaired to prevent unpredictable shifting. If the transmission exhibits harsh shifting or fails to engage gears, seek professional diagnosis promptly.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with live data capability
- Digital multimeter
- Wiring diagram for the specific vehicle
- Trim removal tools for accessing the shifter assembly
- Contact cleaner and dielectric grease



Reading P0959

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

Often seen with

P0705 Transmission Range Sensor Circuit Malfunction · **P0706** Transmission Range Sensor Circuit Range/Performance · **P0715** Input/Turbine Speed Sensor Circuit Malfunction · **P0958** Auto Shift Manual Mode Circuit High · **P0960** Pressure Control Solenoid 'A' Control Circuit/Open

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/p0959/>

