

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P263D

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P263D

Reductant Heater Driver Performance

P263D means the engine control module has detected a performance fault in the driver circuit for the reductant heater, which is the heating element used to keep diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) from freezing and to bring it to operating temperature. The computer monitors the heater driver's electrical response and sets this code when the circuit does not behave as expected during commanded heating cycles.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Generic (all makes)	Medium	Intermediate	Computer and output circuits

Symptoms you may notice

- Illuminated check engine light, often with no other noticeable symptoms
- A pending or stored code with no drivability complaint in mild weather
- Extended crank or rough running in freezing temperatures if DEF is frozen and the heater cannot thaw it
- Reduced engine power or limp mode if the powertrain control strategy derates the engine
- A driver information message about diesel exhaust fluid or emissions system service
- Slightly increased DEF consumption or poor DEF dosing performance over time

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Failed reductant heater element with an open or shorted internal circuit
- 2 Damaged or corroded wiring and connector pins between the heater and the control module
- 3 Blown fuse or failed relay supplying power to the reductant heater circuit
- 4 Faulty reductant heater driver inside the engine control module or a separate control unit
- 5 Poor ground connection for the heater circuit causing voltage drop under load
- 6 DEF contamination or a restricted heater passage that overheats the element and stresses the driver
- 7 Software calibration issue in the control module affecting heater driver diagnostics

How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Scan all modules and record freeze-frame data for P263D before clearing anything
- 2 Inspect the reductant heater fuse, relay, and ground connections for corrosion or looseness
- 3 Measure resistance and supply voltage at the heater connector and compare with manufacturer specifications
- 4 Perform a commanded heater activation test with a scan tool and watch current draw and voltage drop
- 5 Check wiring continuity and pin tension from the heater back to the control module
- 6 Replace the reductant heater assembly if electrical tests confirm an open or shorted element
- 7 Reprogram or replace the control module only after all circuit and component tests pass



What the heater driver code really means

- A P263D can be set by a weak battery or charging system fault because the heater driver expects a stable supply voltage during its self-test.
- Technicians often replace the heater when the real fault is a corroded ground strap or a chafed harness near the DEF tank.
- The code can appear intermittently in cold weather and clear itself once the heater completes a successful cycle, so always check for pending codes.
- A failed reductant heater does not always cause a visible drivability problem until the DEF freezes or the system derates power.
- Aftermarket scan tools may not command the heater test correctly, so verify driver operation with a scope or manufacturer-level tool.

Can I keep driving with P263D?

You can usually drive the vehicle short distances at moderate temperatures, but avoid long trips or freezing conditions until the fault is repaired because the system may enter limp mode or fail emissions testing. Do not ignore the warning light if the vehicle is used in cold climates.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with bidirectional control and live data
- Digital multimeter with resistance and voltage drop functions
- Oscilloscope for observing heater driver waveform
- Fuse puller and test light
- Manufacturer service information for circuit specifications

Reading P263D

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
2	Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
6	Computer and output circuits.
3D	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P20B9 Reductant Heater A Control Circuit/Open · **P20BA** Reductant Heater A Control Performance · **P20BB** Reductant Heater A Control Circuit Low · **P263C** Glow Plug Control Driver Performance · **P263E** Glow Plug Control Module 1 Over Temperature



See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How a Radiator Fan Relay Circuit Works](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p263d/>

