

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P26A0

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P26A0

Exhaust Aftertreatment Glow Plug Performance

P26A0 indicates that the engine control module has detected a performance issue with the exhaust aftertreatment glow plug, which is used to heat the exhaust system and help reduce emissions during cold starts. The computer monitors the glow plug's electrical circuit and expects a certain current draw or temperature rise when commanded on, and it sets this code when the actual response falls outside the expected range.

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

Symptoms you may notice

- Illumination of the check engine light, often with no other noticeable symptoms
- Extended crank time or rough running during cold starts if the glow plug is not heating properly
- Increased exhaust smoke or odor during cold engine operation
- Reduced fuel economy or power in some cases due to altered regeneration strategies
- Possible limp mode or reduced engine performance if the fault escalates

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Faulty exhaust aftertreatment glow plug (open or shorted element)
- 2 Damaged or corroded wiring or connector at the glow plug
- 3 Blown fuse or faulty relay supplying power to the glow plug circuit
- 4 Failed glow plug control module or driver circuit in the engine control module
- 5 Exhaust system modifications or leaks affecting glow plug operation
- 6 Software calibration issue requiring an update (less common)

How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Scan all modules for stored codes and freeze frame data to confirm P26A0 is the primary fault
- 2 Visually inspect the glow plug, wiring, and connectors for damage, corrosion, or loose connections
- 3 Check the glow plug circuit fuse and relay, and test for power and ground at the glow plug connector
- 4 Measure the resistance of the glow plug and compare to the manufacturer's specification
- 5 Command the glow plug on with a scan tool and verify current draw or temperature change
- 6 If the circuit and glow plug test good, diagnose the control module or wiring back to the engine control module
- 7 Replace the faulty component and clear codes, then verify the repair with a test drive and monitor readiness

Glow Plug Circuit Checks Before Replacement

- A common mistake is replacing the glow plug without checking the control module or wiring, which can lead to repeat failures if the root cause is a damaged harness.
- The exhaust aftertreatment glow plug is often confused with the engine glow plugs, but it serves a different purpose and is located in the exhaust system, so misdiagnosis can occur.
- Some vehicles use the glow plug for exhaust system heating during regeneration; a fault may not trigger a noticeable symptom until regeneration is inhibited, leading to clogged filters.
- Resistance testing alone can be misleading because the glow plug may test good at room temperature but fail when hot; a current ramp test with a lab scope is more reliable.
- After repairs, a relearn or adaptation reset may be required for the new glow plug to be recognized by the control module.

Can I keep driving with P26A0?

You can generally continue driving with this code, but avoid long periods of idling and schedule a diagnosis soon to prevent potential exhaust aftertreatment issues. If the check engine light starts flashing or you notice severe power loss, stop driving and seek professional help.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with bidirectional control and live data
- Digital multimeter
- Lab scope for current ramp testing
- Basic hand tools (wrenches, sockets, screwdrivers)
- Service information for wiring diagrams and specifications

Reading P26A0

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.
A0	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0544 Exhaust Gas Temperature Sensor Circuit (Bank 1 Sensor 1) · **P0545** Exhaust Gas Temperature Sensor Circuit Low (Bank 1 Sensor 1) · **P26A1** Exhaust Aftertreatment Glow Plug Circuit Low · **P26A2** Exhaust Aftertreatment Glow Plug Circuit High · **P26A3** Engine Coolant Bypass Valve A Range/Performance



See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How a Refrigerator Works: The Cooling Cycle](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p26a0/>

