

VOLKSWAGEN · POWERTRAIN

P1852

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P1852 · Volkswagen

CAN Bus Unplausible Message From Engine Control

P1852 on Volkswagen vehicles means the engine control module (ECM) is receiving a CAN (Controller Area Network) bus message from another module that it considers implausible or invalid. The ECM has detected a message that does not match expected values or timing, often due to a communication fault or a software mismatch between modules.

SYSTEM

Powertrain

CODE TYPE

Volkswagen
specific

SEVERITY

Medium

FIX DIFFICULTY

Professional

AREA

Transmission

Symptoms you may notice

- Illumination of the check engine light or electronic power control (EPC) warning lamp
- Engine may enter limp mode with reduced power
- Intermittent rough running or stalling
- Transmission may shift harshly or fail to shift
- Often no symptoms besides the warning light

Common causes, most likely first

- 1 Faulty or corrupted software in the engine control module or another control module on the CAN bus
- 2 Damaged or chafed CAN bus wiring (CAN high or CAN low) causing signal distortion
- 3 Poor electrical connections at control module connectors or ground points
- 4 A failing control module (e.g., transmission, ABS, or gateway) sending implausible data
- 5 Aftermarket electronic devices improperly installed on the CAN bus
- 6 Low battery voltage or charging system issues affecting module communication



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Scan all modules for stored codes and freeze-frame data to identify which module is sending the implausible message
- 2 Check battery voltage and charging system output; low voltage can cause communication errors
- 3 Inspect CAN bus wiring for damage, corrosion, or loose connectors, especially at the ECM and gateway
- 4 Perform a visual inspection of all control module connectors for water intrusion or bent pins
- 5 Use a diagnostic scan tool to perform a CAN bus communication test and check for software updates or coding mismatches
- 6 If software is outdated, reprogram or update the affected control module according to Volkswagen service procedures
- 7 If a specific module is consistently sending implausible data, replace or repair that module after confirming wiring integrity

Before you replace the engine control module

- A common cause of P1852 is a software mismatch after a module replacement or update, so check for technical service bulletins and software versions before condemning hardware.
- The code does not always indicate a faulty ECM; often the implausible message originates from a transmission or ABS module, so scan all modules for related codes.
- Aftermarket accessories such as alarms or audio equipment tapped into the CAN bus can corrupt messages and trigger this code.
- Intermittent CAN bus faults from chafed wiring near the firewall or under the hood are frequently missed during visual inspections.
- Low battery voltage from a failing battery or alternator can cause multiple modules to send implausible messages, setting P1852 without any hardware fault.

Can I keep driving with P1852?

If the vehicle is in limp mode or running poorly, avoid driving and have it towed to a repair shop. If the only symptom is a warning light and the car drives normally, you can drive cautiously to a workshop, but avoid heavy acceleration or long trips until diagnosed.

Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with Volkswagen-specific software (e.g., VCDS or ODIS)
- Digital multimeter for voltage and resistance checks
- CAN bus breakout box or oscilloscope for signal analysis
- Wiring diagram for the vehicle's CAN bus network
- Battery tester and charging system analyzer



Reading P1852

- P** Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
- 1** Manufacturer-specific code (Volkswagen): its meaning depends on the make.
- 8** Transmission.
- 52** The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P1851 CAN Bus Missing Message From Brake Control · **P1853** CAN Bus Unplausible Message From Brake Control · **P1851** Brake Band Apply Solenoid Performance · **P1853** Brake Band Apply Solenoid High Voltage · **U0001** Loss of Bus Communication · **U0100** Lost Communication With ECM/PCM A · **U0101** Lost Communication with TCM

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [Four-Stroke Engine Cutaway: Intake to Exhaust](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/volkswagen-p1852/>

