

IMPORT
AUTOMOTIVE

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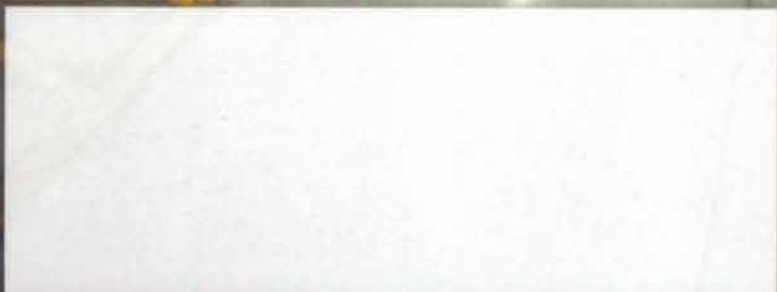
WORLD PAC

BRAKES

MERCEDES-BENZ

TRUCK & SUV SHOWCASE

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put on the car. When you get into the specialist shops, virtually everybody has a different opinion as to which pad is the one to use for that type of car. That really complicates the notion of stocking loaded calipers.

"I think it's important to differentiate between a semi-loaded and a bare caliper, because semi-loaded includes the brackets, and the bracket is the component that actually fits on calipers, more so than the hydraulic. So, to actually correct the most common problem with the calipers, you need at least the semi-loaded."

"There are lots of choices out there, but we pretty much are happy with the Centric line," said Jeff Klockner, Meyers Auto Parts, Las Vegas, Nev. "The Centric line has been very well received by our customers, and we really like the way that that company moves forward. They come to mind when I think of 'best to market.' I see a lot of new products coming out from Centric, very quickly.

"That gives us the opportunity to bring in a set or two of brake pads to have here so that when we get that first call, it's here. I think every company will eventually have the same coverage, but some will have it sooner. Sometimes you surprise that customer when he has his first call and he sees that you've got it. It's pretty impressed — 'Wow, they've got it!'"

"Of the categories of brake pads that we carry, the ceramic will be the best, by far. On rubber, too, we're gone with Centric. They have two grades; they have the premium and the C-Tek. We carry mostly C-Tek. They are very well received; they do the job and the customers are very happy. We do have some premium applications, too. For some of the European vehicles, for example, that would prefer to have the premium rubber, we'll carry those.

"Calipers are a very interesting segment. We need to expand our coverage, but I would like to be able to expand the coverage in the direction that the customer wants it to go — loaded, semi-loaded, or unloaded. We're judging it on the feedback we're getting from the field.

"Brake pad wear sensors are becoming more popular. It's very interesting because some sensors are selling like hotcakes and others, for other vehicles, are not selling at all. I'm not real

ly sure why. Maybe they don't wear, or perhaps they are something that the customer chooses not to include because they want a budget brake job."

"One thing about brakes is, there seems to be a high-low crowd and a low-low crowd and not a whole lot in the middle," said Bill Galeward, Olympus Imported Auto Parts, Alexandria, Va. "So you have a lot of people that are putting on high-low brake pads, and you have a lot of people that are putting on absolute low-low brake pads, and there's just not a lot in the middle.

"We use pads that allow us to give an economical price while still maintaining a certain amount of quality. Quality is always our goal. We'll get involved in looking for a lower price, to a certain extent, but the product that we're selling has to be very high quality. That's always our key concern. We want to make the installer happy and get the job, but even more important to us is the installer's customer — we want that person to have a good experience so they'll go back to that installer. So, there are places that I simply will not go. I've been offered, numerous times, low-price brake pads that what I'm currently stocking, but that's just not anything that I'm willing to take a chance on.

"Same thing with brake rotors. What everyone is going to have a premium line and a Chinese line. I would say that our premium line does well and our Chinese line does well. The way that we source the Chinese line is the same way that we would source anything else; the Chinese line is one of the most highly certified and highest quality products available on the market today.

"If I had to describe today's market place, I would say, 'Anything you want, it's there for you. I think the big problem is, how many different levels of quality and how many different levels of price can a person logically justify?' It's like when you go to the store to buy something and there's a high and a low, but there's five different brands in between as well, and it just gets a little too overwhelming. I think that's really where the brake market is right now. For most people, it's a little bit overwhelming, so they look at the high, they look at the low, and they go, 'Okay, I'll pick one of the two.'" **EMK**

Reducing Brake Noise through Product Selection

BY MONTU KHOKHAR

Along with proper installation techniques, the most significant way to help reduce brake noise is the selection of the proper brake pads. Only focusing on the friction materials and design and neglecting the other components of a set of brake pads is sure to lead to comebacks. It is critical to choose a brand that uses top-quality friction, shims, backing plates, and provides critical hardware.

Brake Shims are a layer of material designed to absorb the noise-causing vibrations created during braking. The material and attachment method used will have significant impact on performance. Materials can range from lower-end single-layer products to high-end constrained layer products, which eliminate more noise at additional frequencies. It is also critical that the shim is properly attached to the brake pad. For best results, select a brand that uses a mechanical bond or a tab design to secure the shim onto the pad.

Backing Plates have two critical areas to consider for noise reduction. First is the bond of the friction material to the plate. Any separation of the friction material from the backing plate will cause significant noise in addition to a potential safety issue. Higher-end products will use mechanical attachment during molding as opposed to simply relying on glues. The second area of concern is the critical tolerances at the key pad-caliper mounting interfaces. Low-quality backing plates may create a gap larger than specified, which creates pad slap noise.

Brake Hardware at the abutment areas (the interface where the brake pads ride within the caliper) should always be replaced. Advanced hardware materials can absorb more vibrations and eliminate pad rattle, while maintaining proper tolerances to reduce pad slap.

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