Air Disc Brakes: Tips for Navigating After-the-Sale Support

A simple approach to maintenance and service helps maximize return on investment

Drum brakes have long been the incumbent in North American trailer applications, but air disc brakes are making a surge. In recent years, the topic of air disc brakes has been punctuated by an explosion of products in the marketplace touting enhanced performance in certain applications, weight savings and maximized stopping power. While understanding the performance benefits is one piece of a fleet's decision to invest in air disc brakes, knowing what to do after the initial equipment acquisition is equally important to managing your business and maximizing your bottom line.

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After-the-sale: Afterthought?

Now that you've assessed your fleet's operations, researched the benefits and weighed your options, it's time to look at how to maintain and service the new braking system. After all, the ability to react quickly and maintain a steady flow of product through distribution channels is key to limiting downtime and maintaining profitability. However, lingering questions about part identification, availability, serviceability and maintenance can leave service managers who are new to air disc brakes bewildered and frustrated. That's why it's imperative to arm yourself with simple tools to identify, stock, train and maintain your new investment by simplifying after-the-sale support.

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Identify and Stock

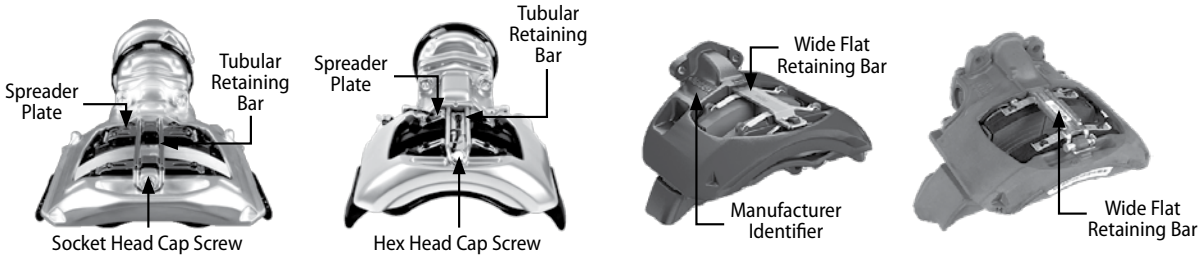
Numerous air disc brake systems are available in the marketplace today and all use different components. From air chambers to calipers to brake pads, identifying and stocking parts can seem like a tedious and time-consuming task. Here are three tips for identifying and stocking components that may be new to your shelves:

1. Learn the location of the identification (ID) tag.

The ID tag often includes the brand and model of the air disc brake system. Typically, ID tags are located on the inboard side of the caliper/carrier assembly or on the guide pin.

2. Identify visual differences between air disc brake brands.

If the ID tag is missing, other visual cues can help identify the system. Pay attention to key components like the spreader plate, the retaining bar and the screws that hold the bar in place. Some systems use a spreader plate while others do not. Some also use a flat retaining bar versus a tubular retaining bar. Furthermore, the type of screw that is used to hold the retaining bar in place varies between air disc brake systems.



3. Keep helpful tools at your fingertips.

Have a good set of up-to-date reference tools handy to make identifying, stocking and replacing components quick and convenient. Recommended stocking lists, part number cross reference lists, parts lists and maintenance manuals can go a long way to saving time and frustration at the beginning of the service process.

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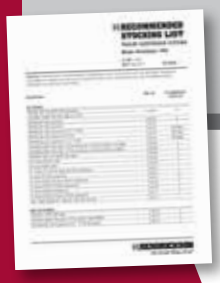
for after-the-sale support:

IDENTIFY / STOCK

- **L1063 Air Disc Brake Parts List**
- **L949 Wheel-End and Brakes Parts List**
- **L1000 Recommended Stocking List**
- **L1181 Recommended Stocking List**
- **PLUS+ Parts Look-Up System**



Train

It's no secret that technicians are hard to come by. Finding, training, motivating and retaining qualified technicians is crucial to adapting to the fluid landscape of today's commercial vehicle technologies. Justifying time off the shop floor can be a challenge, but following these simple steps can minimize time away from work while maximizing retention:

YouTube reaches more 18-49 year olds than any cable network in the U.S.

— International Business Times August 2016

1. **Make regularly scheduled training a priority.**
   Establish a calendar for training whether quarterly, monthly or yearly. Planning makes it easier to coordinate technician downtime from the shop floor in order to maximize productivity. Following a disciplined schedule also helps set the expectation that continued learning is a vital part of a technician's success and development within the organization.

2. **Choose course content that is impactful but easy to consume.**
   According to a 2016 article in The New York Times, humans have shorter attention spans than goldfish. In today's fast-paced world, time is scarce, so content should be quick and easy to access and consume. Choose an online training program that is simple to follow and easy to measure progress. For technicians who may need a quick refresher, supplement training initiatives with short, impactful, mobile-friendly videos that provide instant access to information.

3. **Learn by doing.**
   Incorporate hands-on learning in your training regimen to solidify key skills and concepts. Videos and training manuals provide great guidance, but sometimes there's no substitute for real-world experience. Take advantage of classroom training, which is sometimes offered by suppliers at on-site locations or at local universities.

4. **Reward technicians for progress.**
   Whether through wage incentives, certifications, company swag, vacation or some other means, acknowledging progress can go a long way for boosting morale, enhancing employees' skill-sets and increasing retention.

Maintain

While the perception may be that air disc brakes are maintenance-free, the reality is that, like any other braking system, a regularly planned maintenance schedule is integral to maximizing performance, enhancing safety and achieving optimal life.

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Good technicians and knowledgeable drivers are essential to the success of a fleet's maintenance program, and comprehensive preventative maintenance includes two critical components: maintaining good records and understanding operating conditions. Dynamics like average length of haul, application, terrain, driver patterns and tractor-trailer equipment combinations are important factors to consider when determining intervals at which critical components like brake pads should be replaced. Some specific recommendations include:

1. **Train drivers on what to look for during their daily "walk around" inspections.**
   For instance, check that there are no signs of oil around the hub and wheel, ensure hoses are not touching wheels or brake equipment and that brake calipers move freely. Refer to the brake manufacturer for a full list of pre-trip inspection criteria.

2. **Establish a regular maintenance schedule for air disc brakes.**
   Checking lining/pad thickness, inspecting rotor for cracks and measuring brake caliper position are just a few of the regular maintenance checks you should conduct on your air disc brake system.

3. **Keep good notes.**
   The ability to anticipate maintenance makes the service process more seamless and less time-consuming. Tracking and monitoring the performance of key components at regular intervals can also help identify potential problems early. A sophisticated tracking method is not needed. Keeping a simple log, whether electronic or paper, can be a great tool for monitoring components.

Conclusion

With air disc brakes emerging in popularity, it's important to know how to maintain and service your investment. A simple approach to after-the-sale support is a key step toward maximizing the return on your investment.

To make it easier, Hendrickson offers comprehensive warranties, maintenance tools, on-site training, how-to-videos and parts lists. One size does not fit all when it comes to brakes and that's why Hendrickson aims to provide service solutions that help you get the support you need.

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TRAIN / MAINTAIN

- **T72009 MAXX22T Air Disc Brake Installation & Maintenance Procedures**
- **www.Hendrickson-Academy.com**

HELPFUL LITERATURE:

- **Understanding Your Brakes: Considerations When Specifying Air Disc Brakes**
- **L809 Brake Certification**
- **L1225 Air Disc Brake Application Guide**

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Hendrickson is a leading global manufacturer and supplier of medium- and heavy-duty mechanical, elastomeric and air suspensions; integrated and non-integrated axle and brake systems; tire pressure control systems; parabolic and multi-leaf springs; stabilizers; and bumper and trim components to the global commercial transportation industry. Everyday around the world, millions of Hendrickson suspensions carry countless loads of freight and raw materials both on- and off-highway. We supply durable, lightweight, high-performing suspension systems and components to the major North and South American, European, Asian and Australian medium- and heavy-duty truck and trailer OEMs and fleets. Hendrickson's growing global position in the commercial transportation industry and the on-going drive to provide products and services benefits truck and trailer manufacturers, fleets and owner operators around the world. Our tagline, ***The World Rides On Us***®, not only reflects the spirit of the brand but also Hendrickson's 100 plus years of innovation, engineering advancements and manufacturing excellence.

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Trailer Commercial Vehicle Systems
2070 Industrial Place SE
Canton, Ohio 44707-2641

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