

ANTI-LOCK BRAKES (ABS)

Information Fact Sheet

This system prevents the wheels locking during hard braking. ABS uses sensors on each wheel to detect when a wheel is about to lock and momentarily releases the brake before re-applying it. The system cycles on each wheel between brake on and off very quickly, much more quickly than a human can, to stop the wheels locking no matter how hard you press the brake pedal.

ABS allows you to steer the vehicle and turn away from the object you're trying to avoid while braking hard – something you can't do if the wheels are locked. When ABS is working, you will hear and feel a “chattering” through the brake pedal and “rapid vibration” through the whole vehicle. This confirms the system is working and you should keep pressing the brake pedal hard and steering away from danger until you stop.

ABS also minimises stopping distances on slippery surfaces like ice, and helps maintain direction when one side of the vehicle is on a slippery surface and the other is not, such as when pulling over on a snowy road shoulder.

For vehicles equipped with ABS brakes, “stomp and steer”, is a good message to remember when braking to avoid a crash. On a non-ABS car, you should alternately brake hard until the wheels lock, then ease off the brake until the wheels start turning again, allowing you to steer.