

Brake Calipers

By Harry McLean

Let me start off about brake calipers and the need for new ones. This is coming from me with my 50 yrs of experience working on cars. All too often people think that a caliper is bad when they are frozen from various things, non use, in the case of LBC's, as well as other things. Calipers themselves rarely go bad. However the seals in them as well as the pistons do, as that is where they seal. They do not seal on the sides of the caliper, it's just a hole to hold fluid and put more in when you apply the brakes to move the piston. When a caliper is frozen or goes bad there are several things you can do to get frozen pistons out. Here are the tricks I've used over the years.



1. Remove bleeder screw and hold piston in that is frozen with a clamp and install a grease fitting in bleeder screw hole. Hand pump grease into it. usually this breaks it free.
2. Tear dust boot off, (it's gonna get replaced anyhow), and squirt penetrating oil in it. Let it sit for a little bit then try to move piston out. If not take a block of wood and drive it down. Normally they will go down or use the pad and a clamp then use low air pressure to send it out. Normally they go. Sometimes a tool will need to be used to grab the piston from the inside and wiggle it out. Lisle used to make a tool for it but not sure about now.

The most that will have to be replaced is the piston, and sometimes a bleeder screw. The seals come with a kit anyhow \$20 at Moss or any other Brit car supplier. For bleeder screws that are hard to move, or if you have broken them then take to a machine shop they can get them out. However if you haven't screwed them up they are easily removed. This is how: Get your handy dandy propane torch, who doesn't have one of those? Then heat the casting up, (you aren't going to get it that hot as it won't turn red). Then cool it with penetrating oil and tap around the screw with a little ballpein hammer, an 8 oz. works good. Not those damn carpenter hammers. Do this in succession about 5 times then try to move screw, normally they do. If you have damaged it to where you can't get a wrench on it from using the open end wrenches when you should have used a 6 sided box wrench, then use Vise Grips to turn it. Then go to an auto parts for another as they should fit.

As long as the pistons are still shiny after clean up and no marks in them then they are still good to use as the seals seal against the piston. Make sure when rebuilding to clean everything inside & out etc., and get all rust out of groove for seals as well as dust boots. When installing the seals make sure to lube the sealing side with brake fluid. But if it's not cost effective to redo your calipers then reassemble it and get a rebuilt unit and turn yours in for the core charge. you can paint them at this time to make them look pretty if you like. Happy braking...