RDK TRUCK SALES

IMPORTANT

PRIORITY 2 OF 3 · ACTION RECOMMENDED

INSPECT BEFORE YOU GET INSPECTED

SERVICE BULLETIN

Technical Service & Compliance Notice

REF RDK-SB-2026-09-14 · 9-14-2026

RDK TRUCK SALES · TAMPA, FLORIDA · EST. 1997

BRAKES ARE THE #1 REASON A TRUCK GETS PULLED OFF THE ROAD

Refuse duty cycle wears brakes 40–60% faster than highway service — and on a four-brake rear loader, one defective brake takes the whole truck out of service.

SAFETY ITEM — DO THIS FIRST

This is a safety issue, and DOT will check it. Brakes are the first thing an inspector goes to, and it can park the truck on the spot. Put it at the front of your PM list, ahead of everything else on it.

BULLETIN NO.	**RDK-SB-2026-09-14**	ISSUE DATE	September 14, 2026
CLASSIFICATION	**IMPORTANT UPDATE** — action recommended	SUPERSEDES	None
APPLIES TO	All customer, fleet, municipal, and rental units — front loaders, automated side loaders, rear loaders, roll-off, grapple, and cab & chassis. All model years.	STATUS	Active
SYSTEMS COVERED	Air drum brakes · air disc brakes · linings and pads · drums and rotors · automatic slack adjusters · pushrod stroke · air supply and hoses	REVIEW	Ongoing through 2027
ISSUED BY	RDK Truck Sales — Service Department, Tampa, Florida	AUTHOR	Richard Kemner, Founder

1.0 PURPOSE

To notify RDK customers, fleet managers, and municipal maintenance departments that brake system defects remain the single largest cause of commercial vehicles being placed out of service in North America, and that refuse trucks carry a materially higher risk than highway equipment because of duty cycle, axle count, and the 20% defective-brake criterion. This bulletin sets out the measurements inspectors use, the five defects we find most often in our shop, and a driver-level yard check that catches them before an inspector does.

2.0 CONDITION OBSERVED

A highway tractor may apply its service brakes twice in a working day. A refuse truck makes 200 to 300 heavy brake applications in a single shift, and those brakes operate at 450 to 500 °F against the 125 to 150 °F an over-the-road truck sees.[1] A typical residential route is 800 to 1,200 stops per shift under load, which is why refuse units see 40% to 60% shorter brake-lining life than highway trucks and why engine hours, PTO hours, and stop counts predict brake wear far better than the odometer does.[2]

We continue to see refuse units maintained on intervals written for line-haul service. The trucks are not being abused — they are being measured against the wrong calendar.

3.0 WHY IT MATTERS — THE ENFORCEMENT NUMBERS

During the 2026 International Roadcheck, inspectors placed 19% of vehicles out of service. Brake systems were the number one vehicle out-of-service violation at 3,379 violations, or 24.3% of all vehicle OOS violations; the separate 20% defective-brakes criterion added 2,072 more. Combined, brake-related defects accounted for 39.1% of every out-of-service vehicle violation written in North America.[3]

ENFORCEMENT EVENT	INSPECTIONS	PLACED OUT OF SERVICE	WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU
2026 International Roadcheck (all violations)	54,575	19% of vehicles	Brakes were the top vehicle defect for the third straight cycle.[3]
2026 unannounced brake inspection day (May)	4,021	574 — 14.3% for brakes alone	One day, no warning. Roughly one truck in seven stopped moving.[4]
Brake Safety Week August 23–29, 2026	Focus: drums and rotors	15.1% OOS in the prior year (2,296 of 15,175)	The week is over. The criteria are not — they apply on a random Tuesday too.[5]

CVSA's 2026 North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria took effect April 1, 2026 and supersede all previous versions.[6]

4.0 PRIORITY ITEM — THE 20% RULE PUNISHES REFUSE TRUCKS

You do not need a catastrophic failure. You need one defect and a short axle count.
If 20% or more of the service brakes on the vehicle or combination have any defective condition, the entire unit is placed out of service until every defective brake is repaired and reinspected.[7] Highway combinations with ten or more brakes have room to be imperfect. A two-axle rear loader does not.

CONFIGURATION	SERVICE BRAKES	ONE DEFECT EQUALS	DEFECTS THAT TRIGGER OOS
Rear loader / cab & chassis, 2 axles	**4**	**25% — already out of service**	**1**
Front loader or ASL, 3 axles	**6**	16.7% — under the line	**2**
Roll-off with pusher / tag axle	**8**	12.5%	**2**
Tractor and trailer combination	**10**	10%	**2**

“A tractor-trailer gets a margin for error on the 20% rule. A rear loader gets one brake.” — Richard Kemner, RDK Truck Sales

5.0 THE FIVE DEFECTS THAT TAG REFUSE TRUCKS

DEFECT	WHAT THE INSPECTOR MEASURES	WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING
1. Lining and pad thickness	Air drum linings below 1/4 in. at the thinnest point, or worn past the manufacturer's wear indicator. On air disc, the CVSA limit is 1/16 in. (1.6 mm) of friction material.[7, 8]	Measure — do not eyeball. A limit is not a target. Lining that passes at a Monday PM can be under spec by month-end at 300 applications a day.
2. Cracked and heat-checked drums	A crack longer than half the width of the friction surface is an OOS defect. Spiderweb heat checking signals repeated hard braking or poor cooling.[9]	Pull a wheel on your worst-duty units at PM. Replace in axle sets, and find out why it got hot — a dragging mate or lazy adjuster is usually the cause.
3. Rusted or cracked air disc rotors	Severe rust across the entire friction surface, cracks reaching either rotor edge, grooves showing metal-to-metal contact, or wear exposing the center vents. Rusted rotors were the most common defect found on the 2026 brake inspection day.[8, 10]	Light rust and minor surface cracks are normal — a crack running to the edge is not. Teach the difference, because this defect hides until a light is put on it.
4. Pushrod stroke and slack adjusters	Stroke measured per axle with the system at 90–100 psi.[10]	Put chalk-mark stroke checks on the PM sheet as a measured value with a number written in the box — not a checkmark. One lazy adjuster overloads the rest.
5. Contamination and air leaks	Oil or grease on the friction surface, audible leaks at the chamber, and cut or chafed air hose and tubing.[7]	A weeping wheel seal is a brake job waiting to happen. Fix the seal and the lining together or you will do the work twice.

6.0 THE NINETY-SECOND YARD CHECK — FOR DRIVERS

No driver is measuring lining thickness at 5 AM, and we would not ask. This is what a driver can do before the truck leaves the yard:

- Listen to air build and leak-down. Air loss that was not there last week is a defect forming.
- Look behind the wheels. Oil or grease on a drum or rotor face means a leaking seal — and contaminated lining is a defective brake.
- Feel the first stop. A pull to one side out of the yard is one brake doing another brake's work.
- Check for heat at the end of the route. A wheel-end noticeably hotter than the others is dragging, and a dragging brake is what cracks a drum.
- Report it the same day. Caught in the yard, it is a shop repair. Caught on the road, it is an out-of-service order and a missed route.

7.0 RDK RECOMMENDED ACTION

Do this ahead of the rest of the PM list. Brakes are a safety item and a guaranteed DOT inspection point — everything else on the truck can wait a week.

STEP	ACTION	WHO
1	Re-base your brake PM interval on engine hours, PTO hours, and route stop counts instead of odometer miles.	Fleet maintenance
2	Add measured values — lining thickness, drum condition, pushrod stroke at 90–100 psi — to the PM sheet as written numbers.	Shop foreman

3	Identify every two-axle unit in the fleet and flag it as a one-defect-equals-OOS asset. These get inspected first.	Fleet maintenance
4	Stock shoes, drums, rotors, and adjusters for your highest-duty units so a measurement never waits on a parts order.	Parts / RDK
5	Schedule a brake inspection with RDK Service ahead of your next PM cycle — call (813) 241-0711.	Owner / manager

8.0 RDK CONTACT

RDK Truck Sales — Parts & Service
3214 E Adamo Drive, Tampa, Florida 33605
(813) 241-0711 · sales@rdktrucksales.com · www.rdk.com
Monday–Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM · Saturday 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Brake shoes, drums, rotors, adjusters, chambers, and full brake inspections for front loaders, side loaders, rear loaders, roll-off, and grapple units. Refuse equipment is all we do — since 1997, and 8,400+ trucks sold.

9.0 SOURCES

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7. CVSA out-of-service criteria for brakes — summary of defective conditions and the 20% rule — https://www.jittruckparts.com/blog/cvsa-out-of-service-criteria-for-brakes

8. Bendix — air disc brake troubleshooting guide (pad and rotor limits) — https://www.bendixvrc.com/itemDisplay.asp?documentID=7694

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10. Heavy Vehicle Inspection — Brake Safety Week 2026 brake inspection checklist — https://heavyvehicleinspection.com/blog/post/brake-safety-week-2026-prep

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