



BENDIX CONTINUES BRAND PROTECTION EFFORTS TO IMPROVE HIGHWAY SAFETY

For over 85 years, Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC has been setting the industry standard for developing advanced safety technologies. Bendix believes a critical factor in ensuring the performance of these technologies is leadership in the battle against counterfeit and knock-off parts.

As globalization has increased, the commercial vehicle industry has continued to experience an increase in the entry of knock-off and counterfeit components into the marketplace. The appeal of these lower-priced parts drives some customers to consider alternatives to genuine products, while others are unwittingly misled by distributors seeking to improve their profit. Bendix (Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC and Bendix Spicer Foundation Brake LLC) ***has long been an advocate for industry-wide engagement in opportunities to increase awareness and educate the marketplace about the impact of counterfeit and knock-off parts. Such parts can present a threat to the safety of our roadways because they are not subjected to the rigorous testing and quality assurance that their genuine counterparts undergo. Counterfeit and knock-off parts may not offer the same level of performance reliability.*** These parts may also fail inspections, which can impact fleet and driver Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) scores and are not covered under warranties customarily provided by braking system manufacturers. These two elements have a direct bottom line impact on fleet maintenance and repair costs as well as operating margins.

Along with CSA, today's trucking environment includes the federal mandate for reduced stopping distance. With phase one of the regulation implemented in August 2011, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) rule required a 30 percent reduction in the stopping distance for large commercial vehicles. Phase two took effect August 1, 2013. New trucks must meet the mandate, which dictates their ability to stop in an emergency situation. Vehicles with replacement parts, however, can operate outside of it if the parts installed are not genuine. Choosing the proper replacement friction is critical to maintain RSD compliance. With that in mind, Bendix advises when relining vehicles, fleets and owner operators should select RSD-certified friction materials that have been designed and tested to deliver the required stopping distance performance.

Bendix advises customers to ask their brake supplier for evidence of compliance. Trucks equipped with counterfeit or knock-off braking components – due to their heightened likelihood for unpredictable and inconsistent performance – may not be able to effectively stop during emergency situations requiring a reduced stopping distance. Worse, drivers of these vehicles often do not realize their braking limitations until a panic stop is needed. Bendix maintains that only by choosing genuine replacement braking components can fleets and owner-operators remain confident that their vehicles are operating within the braking system specs designed by their vehicle manufacturer and, as such, will meet the safety requirements set forth by NHTSA.

Bendix believes that preventing the entry of counterfeit parts into the marketplace is critical to helping to preserve and maintain the safety of our roadways. The long-standing genuine Bendix® initiative employs aggressive strategies to accomplish just that. The program's three-pronged approach includes extensive education and outreach, intellectual property protection, and enforcement of patents and trademarks. The genuine Bendix program is part of the company's broader effort to actively promote improved highway safety.

Bendix has long maintained that subjecting its genuine Bendix products – both new and remanufactured – to stringent reliability standards and substantive testing to ensure tolerance, performance, and dependability will help improve the safety of our roadways.

To the untrained eye, knock-off and counterfeit parts seem similar to a genuine Bendix product because they are manufactured to look the same. However, counterfeit and knock-off components may not be subjected to the rigorous testing and standards that Bendix employs to guarantee its parts. Often, counterfeits contain a “design-around,” which attempts to recreate a patented design without directly violating the patents. As a result, the component design does not function the same as the patented component. Parts may also contain components that reputable industry participants no longer use in production due to performance or environmental considerations, such as asbestos materials in brake pads. Counterfeiting can result in inferior products, which ultimately compromises public safety – both on the road and in the environment.

In September 2014 – during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance’s annual Brake Safety Week inspection program – nearly 2,200 commercial vehicles out of 13,305 inspected were placed out of service for brake violations. As the importance of maintenance is being highlighted in truck safety conversations, ensuring the right parts are used for maintenance and repair efforts helps ensure safety on the road. One of the contributing factors to out-of-service violations can be brake system components. Bendix advocates that counterfeit or knock-off brake products are not a viable solution in terms of highway safety or overall vehicle performance. For more cost-conscious vehicle operators, an alternative to OEM replacement parts is remanufactured products. They help extend vehicle life without sacrificing original equipment manufacturing quality. Remanufactured components offer a wide array of alternatives – under the Bendix® brand and other makes – including brake shoes, valves, air dryers, compressors, and electronics.

Bendix incorporates visual identifiers in many product designs. The company believes that these design elements (known as trade dress) provide customers an improved and visual way to discern between genuine Bendix and knock-off or counterfeit components.

The design elements – one example being parallel sets of ribbing on certain products – were engineered to provide a visual point of reference for customers, so they can determine whether a product is genuine. In 2012, Bendix also introduced a new package design on all of its aftermarket product packaging. The change includes the addition of a blue band around the base of the box, with the Bendix logo on two of four sides of the box. The Bendix website address – www.bendix.com – is also a graphic element, appearing in white type on the blue band. The use of unique Bendix packaging is another graphical confirmation for end-users that they are receiving a genuine Bendix product. The company hopes that the product design changes, the packaging update, and its ongoing industry education about these elements will help contribute to highway safety, as customers can more easily visually identify a genuine Bendix product. Incorporation of the design elements is part of a long-term, multi-phase effort.

Bendix remains a leader in the efforts to maintain the safety of our roadways. Through the integration of design elements enabling easy visual identification of a genuine Bendix product, as well as developing further educational efforts and outreach, Bendix is working toward a goal to improve safety and save lives.

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