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VOLUME 01

THE AIR BRAKE TEST, MASTERED

*The CDL-standard 7-step check — and the numbers
that pass and fail.*

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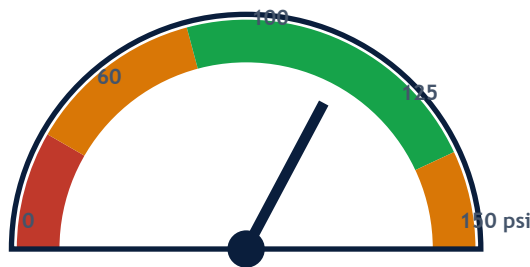
VOLUME 01 · SAFETY SERIES

The Air Brake Test, Mastered

Air brakes are the finest stopping system ever bolted to a bus — and the least forgiving of neglect. This is the full CDL-standard check, the numbers that pass and fail, and the habits that separate professionals from passengers-in-the-driver's-seat.

WHY THIS TEST EXISTS

Air leaks are silent. A coach can look perfect, sound perfect, and still be losing the air that will stop 40,000 pounds and 56 lives. The 7-step test finds the leak in the parking lot — instead of on a downgrade.



- RED · below 60 psi**
Low-air warning territory — spring brakes near pop-out. Park it.
- AMBER · 60-85 psi**
Not roll-ready. Build full pressure before moving.
- GREEN · 85-125 psi**
Normal operating range for most coach systems.
- CUT-OUT · ~ 120-140 psi**
Governor stops the compressor (check your coach's spec).
- Know YOUR coach**
Manufacturer specs govern — these are CDL-manual standards.

Figure 1 — Reading the pressure story: know your zones before you roll.

The 7 steps, in order

#	Step	The number that passes
1	Air build-up (engine at operating RPM)	Dual system builds 85-100 psi within 45 seconds
2	Governor cut-out / cut-in	Cut-out about 120-140 psi; cuts back in as pressure falls (per manufacturer spec)
3	Static leak test (engine off, brakes released, 1 min)	Loss of 2 psi or less (single vehicle)
4	Applied leak test (pedal held firm, 1 min)	Loss of 3 psi or less (single vehicle)
5	Low-air warning	Light/buzzer activates before 60 psi
6	Spring-brake pop-out	Parking valve pops out at roughly 20-45 psi
7	Service brake check (roll at ~5 mph, brake firmly)	Stops promptly and straight — no pulling, no delay

What each step is really telling you

- Build-up slow? Compressor wear, a governor issue, or a big leak already stealing your air.



- Static loss high? Fittings, tanks, or supply lines are leaking — the system bleeds even untouched.
- Applied loss high? Brake chambers or valves leak under pressure — exactly when you need them.
- Warning silent, or valve never pops? Your last two safety nets are gone. That coach does not move.

PRO HABIT — SAME ORDER, EVERY TIME

Do the seven steps in the same sequence every single morning until your hands know it without your head. Under a roadside inspection — or in a courtroom — 'I do the full test every morning, in this order' is a sentence that carries weight.

FAIL ANY STEP?

The coach carries no passengers until it's fixed. Write it on the DVIR, tag the coach, call the shop. No schedule is worth a brake failure at 65 mph.

Sources & further reading: State CDL manuals (Air Brakes section, e.g. California Commercial Driver Handbook); FMCSA. Manufacturer specifications govern your coach.

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