

# **BRAKES**

It is a good idea to keep a record of the mileage when you have your brake pads changed. This should be done for trailers as well as motorhomes. You should have the pads checked at least every 15,000 miles. The friction material should be a minimum of 1/4 inch thick. If it is less than 1/8 of an inch then change them ASAP. Be sure and check all of the wheels including the tag axles. On most automobiles, the pads can be checked without removing the wheels. For trailers and motorhomes, the wheels will usually have to be removed. When having a tire replaced I have asked them to check all of the brake pads, however, I have found that unless you are there and actually measure the pad thickness you do not get a reliable answer. After many long RV adventures, I have concluded that if I am going across the country and on a Caravan that will travel 10,000 miles or more (Alaska, Newfoundland, South West, Mexico, etc.), I will change the brake pads before the trip. Changing the pads is less than \$200 and since I will be on the road for 10,000 miles or more it is good insurance. Having to replace a rotor or caliper on a trip is usually a \$1000 job not to mention the difficulty in finding the parts. Listen for strange noises. A grinding sound may mean you have worn out your pads and are getting metal-to-metal contact. This usually means new rotors, calipers and pads. When your mechanic says you have at least 5 to 6000 miles left on your pads that is fine for your car if you are staying home but not if you are on a cross country trip.

For your trailer you should change the entire brake assembly including drums, magnets, springs etc. I know a number of campers that carry both right and left side spare brake assemblies for their trailers. A complete assembly costs about \$75 and can be easily replaced on a Caravan (four bolts and two wire connections). For a 2 to 3 month Caravan, this is a reasonable addition to your spare parts kit depending on the age of your brakes. Many of our Caravans spend considerable time in the Rocky Mountains with heavy wear and critical dependence on our braking systems. It is always less expensive to start out with new brake pads then having to change them on the trip.

If you change a trailer brake assembly, make sure you have reliable electric wire connections. The constant vibration and stress makes this a serious failure mode. You should have shrink-wrap tubing over the connection and it should be taped and rigidly supported.