

WHEEL BEARING REPACKING/TRAILER BRAKE SAFETY

A maintenance item safety tip comes from Dick Bartram, WBCCI # 281, regarding excess wheel bearing grease in trailer hubs that can make trailer brakes virtually useless. When the unit was new to him, he found that the trailer brakes stopped working. After having established that electricity was getting to each brake magnet, the wheels and brake drums were removed, revealing that the drums, shoes, and discs where the magnets rub were soaked in grease. Evidently someone had repacked the bearings but also filled the hub with grease. With this cavity overfilled the rotation of the wheels pumped the excess grease past the grease seals and into the brake shoe and magnet area.

He has since encountered two more similar situations on older trailers. There are service people that use a needle to penetrate the bearing seal and then just pump more grease into the cavity, resulting in too much grease and loss of braking soon thereafter. Always insist that the service technician remove the inner and outer bearings, clean them, repack them and reinstall seals. No filling the hubs with grease! Short cuts could kill you and others!

Editor's Note: The confusion about whether the hub cavity should be full of grease may come from small boat trailer owners. Many of them have a grease cap containing a zerk fitting (grease nipple), sold under the name Bearing Buddy if my recollection serves correctly. The boat trailer owner puts a grease gun on the grease fitting and pumps each hub cavity full of grease. The intent is to keep out all water from the bearing area when the trailer wheels are submerged in water during launching and recovery of the boat. However these small boat trailers do not have trailer brake components and are designed to run with a full hub. But that is not the case with an Airstream!