P0803: 1-4 UPSHIFT (SKIP SHIFT) SOLENOID CONTROL CIRCUIT MALFUNCTION

OVERVIEW

Severity	:	High
DIY Difficulty Level	:	Intermediate
Repair Cost	:	**$150-$200**
Can I Still Drive?	:	**Yes**

What Does The P0803 Code Mean?

If your vehicle has stored a code P0803, it means that the powertrain control module (PCM) has detected a malfunction in the transmission upshift (also called skip shift) solenoid control system.

The automatic transmission upshift control solenoid is used in vehicle applications where the transmission may be manually shifted through the gear range by pushing or pulling the shift lever in a singular direction.

This feature is especially popular in high-performance or sports cars. Since the shifter only needs to be moved slightly, an electronic solenoid is required to input a shift signal to the TCM and effect the desired gear change.

The transmission control module (TCM) may be stand alone unit but is most commonly integrated into a single housing with the engine control module (ECM). This is what is referred to as the PCM.

If the PCM detects a malfunction in the upshift solenoid control circuit, a code P0803 will be stored and a malfunction indicator lamp (MIL) illuminated.

What Are The Symptoms Of The P0803 Code?

Symptoms of a P0803 trouble code may include:

- Skip shift is partially or totally disabled
- Skip shift indicator lamp is illuminated or flashing
- The transmission may be placed in limp-in mode

What Are The Potential Causes Of The P0803 Code?

Causes for this code may include:

- Defective skip shift solenoid
- Shorted or open skip shift solenoid control wiring or connectors
- Controller programming error

How Can You Fix The P0803 Code?

When diagnosing automatic transmission codes, you should begin by making sure that the transmission fluid is clean and that the transmission if filled to the appropriate level. If the fluid level is low, locate the source of the leak and repair the condition. Refill the transmission with the recommended fluid and proceed.

If the fluid is excessively dark and smells strongly of burnt friction material, it will need to be replaced. This can be accomplished by removing the transmission pan (and draining the torque converter) or flushing the transmission (recommended).

Either way, you will want to replace the filter at this time too. When removing the pan from the transmission, take care to preserve whatever debris may have landed therein.

If the pan is relatively clear of debris you can assume that the clutches are mechanically intact. If there is an excessive amount of friction material in the pan (and stuck to the magnet), the transmission will require a rebuild from a qualified technician.

A diagnostic scanner, a digital volt/ohmmeter (DVOM), and a source of vehicle specific diagnostic information will be required to diagnose a code P0803.

You may use your source of vehicle information to locate a technical service bulletin (TSB) that matches the vehicle year, make, and model; as well as the engine size, code/s stored, and symptoms exhibited. If you find one, it could yield helpful diagnostic information.

With the transmission filled to the appropriate level with the recommended fluid, proceed with the first step of the diagnosis.

Step 1

Use the scanner (connected to the vehicle diagnostic connector) to retrieve all stored codes and pertinent freeze frame data. It is a good idea to write this information down before clearing the

codes then test-drive the vehicle until the PCM either enters readiness mode or the code is reset.

If the PCM enters readiness mode at this time, the code is intermittent and may be much more difficult to diagnose. If this is the case, the conditions which contributed to the code being stored may need to worsen before an accurate diagnosis can be made.

Step 2

If the code is immediately reset, the next step of your diagnosis will require that you search your vehicle information source for diagnostic flow-charts, connector pin-out charts, connector face views, and component testing procedures/specifications.

Step 3

Use the DVOM to test voltage and ground circuits at the skip shift solenoid. If voltage and ground are detected, use the DVOM to test the solenoid itself.

Step 4

If no skip shift components have failed, use the DVOM to test system circuits. The voltage drop testing method works well for this task. Disconnect all controllers from the circuit prior to testing resistance with the DVOM.

- Test skip shift control circuit fuses with the circuit loaded to avoid misdiagnosis

Severity Description

A stored code P0803 indicates that an upshift solenoid control circuit malfunction has been detected. Since the upshift (or skip shift) system is an auxiliary or high-performance shifter feature, it is not a critical transmission control system and a code P0803 should not be classified as severe.

Reference Sources

P0803 1-4 Upshift (Skip Shift) Solenoid Control Circuit Malfunction, OBD-Codes.