

Wheels: An e-mail from Ken says, “I have three Mazda Protégés, two are 1999s and one is a 2000. One of the 1999 and the 2000 have the same brake problem. The other Mazda is an ES and has no problems. The brakes drag on the others (LXs) when barely moving or driving slowly. I have had the calipers, rotors, and pads replaced on one of them, and rotors and pads on the other. I have had the brakes worked on at an independent shop and my Mazda dealer. They say they are fine. They are not. I know there is a problem because my 84-year-old father-in-law heard the noise and he has a hearing problem. Any ideas will be appreciated.”

Halderman: I assume that the pads are wearing out faster than normal. Right? The square cut o-ring inside the caliper is what retracts the caliper piston. This deformation of the rubber o-ring cannot exert much force so everything has to be well lubricated so that the caliper can return to its normal position when the brakes are released. The caliper slides must be free and the caliper should move slightly if you grab it and try to move it with the brakes released and the wheel off. The most common cause of your concern is rust causing the slides to bind, which prevents the caliper from moving freely. To fix this condition, the caliper pivot bolts need to be removed and the slides, seals, and shims lubricated using silicone grease. Do not use any other type of grease because some attract dirt or damage the rubber o-rings, which makes the problem even worse.

