

Brake wear: my email exchange with Rivian

Regarding premature brake pad and rotor wear on my 2022 Quad Large (VIN ending 010264) at ~23.5k miles, late Feb / March 2025. Email addresses removed. Rivian staff identified by first name only. I've led with Rivian's core explanation (Zac's reply), then the fuller back-and-forth in order.

Rivian's explanation for the accelerated wear

The heart of it, from Zac at Rivian, after I questioned why our trucks were needing brakes so early:

"If you bought a Ferrari or Porsche and the same diagnosis was provided, would it give you as much pause? Rivian built a purpose-built performance vehicle. We have more hp and torque than most Porsches or Ferraris, faster acceleration, and the ability to beat any production truck off-road, then out-accelerate some of the fastest production vehicles in the world—all while weighing 3x more than those performance machines. This is why you see accelerated brake wear. The brake system operates all of the time regardless of regeneration in order to provide one of the safest vehicles in its class.

Yes, tires and brakes wear very fast compared to a lot of vehicles, but those same vehicles cannot compete with ours in performance metrics. It was a no-compromise approach, but the cost is your wearable items. There aren't many, if any, that can do as much as a Rivian."

Take from that what you will. It's a fair framing of the engineering tradeoff—but "it's a performance vehicle" is cold comfort when you're paying ~\$1,700 out of pocket for all-four-corner brake jobs by ~20k miles across an entire fleet, on trucks that mostly commute. The full exchange that led to this reply is below.

The full exchange (oldest to newest)

Me → Rivian (Sat, Mar 1, 7:21 AM)

So I got a message today informing me that my brake pads and rotors need to be replaced (and a request to approve a work order / payment authorization).

I requested a call to discuss before signing. Late Friday, after not receiving one, I called in myself because I wanted to understand why another one of our trucks seems to be having premature brake component wear. Though I was pretty sure I knew the answer—that this isn't covered by warranty, that VT / Northern NE conditions seem to cause early wear—I was hoping the story might have changed.

I was told it was basically a non-starter: Rivian will not consider brake wear a warrantable issue, no matter how quickly it occurs (and the manager doesn't think 17k or 23k miles is premature). I approved the work order so as not to hold up the visit, but I have some questions and requests.

Some context:

- My truck has ~23.5k miles. It was a demo with ~9,500 miles when I got it in May 2024, and has only been in Vermont for this one winter.
- I use my brakes a few times a week to warm them and clear debris, but almost never brake hard (no towing, tame driving). I'm on medium regen with brake blending this winter, so there's been a fair bit of brake use given the cold.

- My father's R1T needed brakes around 17k miles. We were told this has been seen more in Vermont / Northern New England and, after engineer investigation, is not considered premature or warrantable.
- We have never had vehicles need brakes so soon, even other EVs with regen.

Questions:

- Is my pad wear pattern consistent inside to outside? I was told fronts were 3mm, rears 4mm—but is that all fours, the worst, an average? If it's uneven, what's the explanation, and how do we ensure the new components wear evenly?
- Is my brake system functioning as it should? Any pistons dragging a pad? Does it make sense to flush/bleed? Is the brake distribution block/valve working correctly? Any difference between early Gen 1 brake components and later Gen 1 / Gen 2? Pad compound? Retention-pin lubrication procedure?

Requests:

- Record all 8 brake pad depths; photograph all pads and rotors (or leave them in the truck).
- I'm not convinced I need new rotors with so few miles—rotor replacement shouldn't be recommended by default under low mileage unless there's scoring/pitting/unusual wear.
- Confirm the system operates properly (I've noticed the truck pulling right under braking—attributed to alignment before, but it makes me wonder about even brake distribution).
- Ensure retention pins are properly lubricated so pads float and wear evenly.

While I understand pads and rotors are wear components, I'm struggling to understand why Rivian considers it reasonable for them to wear this quickly, regardless of location. What about our Northern NE climate could be so much harder on these than rust-belt locations with real winter and salt? Why are other manufacturers able to build pads and rotors that last 2–5x longer? I realize I've approved the work and this seems non-negotiable, but I think Rivian should reconsider this for vehicles needing full pad/rotor replacement under 30k miles.

Zac (Rivian) → Me (Mar 1, 1:20 PM)

Sid, I will take a more thorough review of all your points this week and get back to you, but I want to leave you with one perspective shift that might help you understand our perspective. If you bought a Ferrari or Porsche and the same diagnosis was provided, would it give you as much pause?

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Yes, tires and brakes wear very fast compared to a lot of vehicles, but those same vehicles cannot compete with ours in performance metrics. It was a no-compromise approach, but the cost is your wearable items. There aren't many, if any, that can do as much as a Rivian. I appreciate your thorough write-up and we will review it, but I hope this helps you understand the why a little better.

Me → Zac (Mar 1, 10:06 PM)

Thanks for taking the time to give this perspective. You bring up fair points I hadn't fully considered (especially not really knowing how often the brakes are in use, given how smooth brake/regen blending is).

While I have no personal experience owning a Porsche or Ferrari, I'm aware such purpose-built vehicles require more attention (and money) than common ones. I fully appreciate how incredible the Rivian is and how much weight it's hiding while it performs. But while the Rivian is a different beast than a Model S/X in many ways, it also shares many core attributes. Our experience with a fairly early S was that despite an inordinate amount of *other* issues, it only needed brakes once in 5 years of Vermont ownership, around 70k miles. That, plus others' experiences with S and X vehicles, was the basis for my surprise—they're also heavy, powerful, and predominantly decelerate via regen in daily driving.

Regardless, it seems we should prepare ourselves mentally and financially for frequent brake pad/rotor replacements—assuming our trucks are operating as they should with parts up to spec. The tl;dr of my last email: I hope your tech can measure all 4 pads per caliper to confirm even wear; if it's uneven, that could indicate sticky pistons or poorly lubricated retention pins. I'd also appreciate specific input on why the *rotors* need replacement (scoring? measurements? corrosion? cracking?)—in my past experience with high-performance brakes I've gotten more life from rotors than pads, so needing new rotors at 23k was part of the surprise. As always, I appreciate your responsiveness.

Reproduced from my own email correspondence. Email addresses removed; Rivian staff identified by first name only. Shared for context alongside my four-year ownership review.