

Noise, Vibration and Harshness (NVH)

Noise is any undesirable sound, usually unpleasant in nature. Vibration is any motion, shaking or trembling, that can be felt or seen when an object moves back and forth or up and down. Harshness is a ride quality issue where the vehicle's response to the road transmits sharply to the customer. Harshness normally describes a firmer than usual response from the suspension system. NVH is a term used to describe these conditions, which result in varying degrees of dissatisfaction. Although a certain level of NVH caused by road and environmental conditions is normal, this section is designed to aid in the diagnosis, testing and repair of NVH symptoms.

Acceptable NVH

All internal combustion engines and drivelines produce some noise and vibration; operating in a real world environment adds noise that is not subject to control. Vibration isolators, mufflers and dampers reduce these to acceptable levels. A driver who is unfamiliar with a vehicle can think that some sounds are abnormal when actually the sounds are normal for the vehicle type. As a technician, it is very important to be familiar with vehicle features and know how they relate to NVH symptoms and their diagnosis. For example, if the vehicle has automatic overdrive, it is important to test drive the vehicle both in and out of overdrive mode.

Glossary of Terms

Amplitude

The quantity or amount of energy produced by a vibrating component (G-force). An extreme vibration has a high amplitude. A mild vibration has a low amplitude. See Intensity.

Boom

Low frequency or low pitched noise often accompanied by a vibration. Also refer to Drumming.

Buffet/Buffering

Strong noise fluctuations caused by gusting winds. An example would be wind gusts against the side glass.

Buzz

A low-pitched sound like that from a bee. Often a metallic or hard plastic humming sound. Also describes a high-frequency vibration. Vibration feels similar to an electric razor.

Chatter

A pronounced series of rapidly repeating rattling or clicking sounds.

Chirp

A short-duration, high-pitched noise associated with a slipping drive belt.