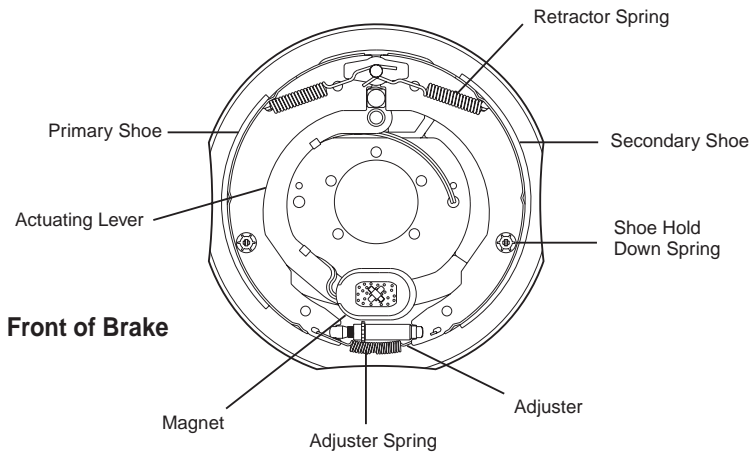


## Electric Brakes

The electric brakes on your trailer are similar to the drum brakes on your automobile. The basic difference is that your automotive brakes are actuated by hydraulic pressure while your electric trailer brakes are actuated by an electromagnet. With all of the brake components connected into the system, the brake will operate as follows:



When the electrical current is fed into the system by the controller, it flows through the electromagnets in the brakes. The high capacity electromagnets are energized and are attracted to the rotating armature surface of the drums which moves the actuating levers in the direction that the drums are turning.

The resulting force causes the actuating cam block at the shoe end of the lever to push the primary shoe out against the inside surface of the brake drum. The force generated by the primary shoe acting through the adjuster moves the secondary shoe out into contact with the brake drum.

Increasing the current flow to the electromagnet causes the magnet to grip the armature surface of the brake drum more firmly. This results in increasing the pressure against the shoes and brake drums until the desired stop is accomplished.





## Features

Electrically actuated brakes have several advantages over other brake actuation systems.

1. They can be manually adjusted at the controller to provide the correct braking capability for varying road and load conditions.
2. They can be modulated to provide more or less braking force, thus easing the brake load on the towing vehicle.
3. They have very little lag time from the moment the tow vehicle's brakes are actuated until the trailer brakes are actuated.
4. In an emergency situation, they can provide some braking independent of the tow vehicle.

### ***Parking Brake Option*** ***(Not available on all sizes)***

Dexter electric brakes with parking brake option are mechanically operated by a cable. Cable force applied to the parking lever creates a torque through the pivot pin and cam assembly. Torque transferred to the parking cam results in a spreading force between the primary and secondary shoes. The shoes, in turn, move towards the drum until contact is made. Friction generated between the drum and lining contact surface keeps the drum from rotating under normal loading conditions.

### ***Self Adjusting Feature*** ***(Not available on all sizes)***

Dexter electric brakes may be equipped with a forward self-adjust feature. This will allow the brakes to adjust on both forward and reverse stops. Brake adjustment occurs when lining wear results in enough gap between the shoes and the brake drum surface. This added clearance will allow the adjuster mechanism to rotate the screw assembly at the bottom of the brake. That action expands the distance between the shoes and thus closes the gap to the drum surface.

## ***Brake Controllers***

Electric brake controllers provide power to the magnets to actuate the trailer brakes. Dexter offers a state-of-the-art inertial controller called the Predator DX2®. This controller features a patented accelerometer design which senses the deceleration of the towing vehicle and sends a proportional voltage to the electric trailer brakes. Other features include a visual gain setting for quick and easy adjustment and a digital LED display to show the voltage output. A manual override sends full voltage to the trailer brakes, regardless of gain setting, for emergency conditions and also illuminates the brake lights to warn of an impending stop.

Most electric brake controllers provide a modulation function that varies the current to the electric brakes with the pressure on the brake pedal or amount of deceleration of the tow vehicle. Electronic or timing controllers do not provide proportional modulation. These controllers tend to be inexpensive but not the best choice for optimum braking. It is important that your brake controller provide approximately 2 volts to the braking system when the brake pedal is first depressed and gradually increases the voltage to 12 volts as brake pedal pressure is increased. If the controller “jumps” immediately to a high voltage output, even during a gradual stop, then the electric brakes will always be fully energized and will result in harsh brakes and potential wheel lockup.

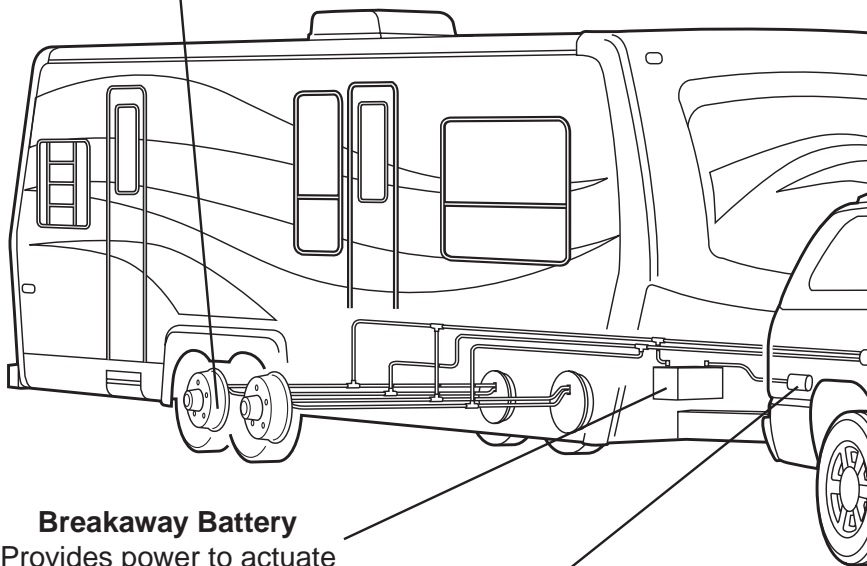




## Braking Systems - Electric

### Dexter Electric Brakes

Wired in parallel.



### Breakaway Battery

Provides power to actuate trailer brakes in the event of trailer breakaway.

### Breakaway Switch

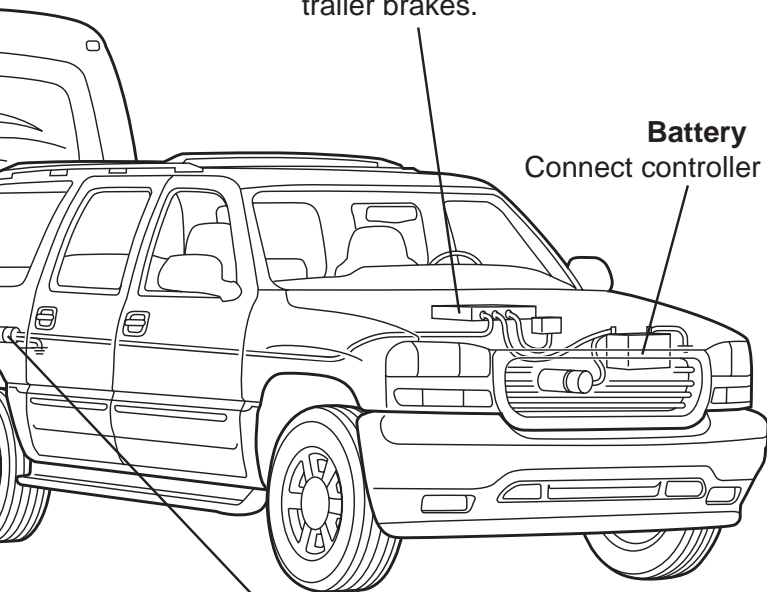
Switches battery power to brakes if breakaway occurs.

**Controller**

Electric brake controller provides power to the magnets to actuate the trailer brakes.

**Battery**

Connect controller directly.



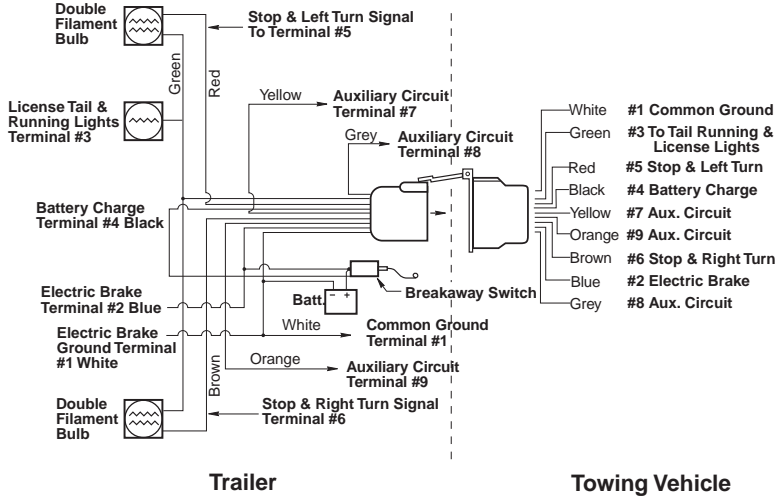
**Connector**

Used to connect and disconnect trailer and tow vehicle.  
(Always ground trailer brakes through connector).

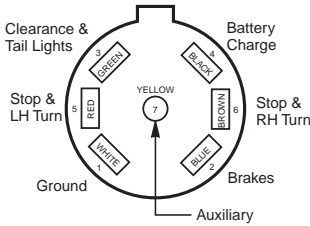




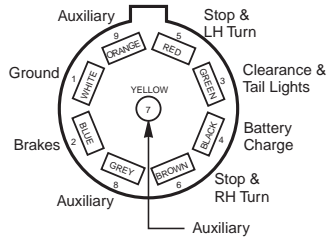
## Typical Trailer Wiring



7-Circuit Receptacle



9-Circuit Receptacle



View Looking into Tow Vehicle Receptacle

## ***How to Use Your Electric Brakes Properly***

Your trailer brakes are designed to work in synchronization with your tow vehicle brakes. Never use your tow vehicle or trailer brakes alone to stop the combined load.

Your brake controller must be set up according to the manufacturer’s recommendations to ensure proper synchronization between the tow vehicle and the trailer. Additionally, you may have to make small adjustments occasionally to accommodate changing loads and driving conditions.

Proper synchronization of tow vehicle to trailer braking can only be accomplished by road testing. Brake lockup, grabbiness, or harshness is quite often due to the lack of synchronization between the tow vehicle and the trailer being towed, too high of a threshold voltage (over 2 volts), or under adjusted brakes.

Before any synchronization adjustments are made, your trailer brakes should be burnished-in by applying the brakes 20-30 times with approximately a 20 m.p.h. decrease in speed, e.g. 40 m.p.h. to 20 m.p.h. Allow ample time for brakes to cool between application. This allows the brake shoes and magnets to slightly “wear-in” to the drum surfaces.

### ***Trailer Wire Size Chart***

<b>Number of Brakes</b>	<b>Hitch-to-Axle Distance in Feet</b>	<b>Recommended Minimum Hookup Wire Size (Copper)</b>
2		12 AWG
4	Under 30	12 AWG
4	30-50	10 AWG
6	Under 30	10 AWG
6	30-50	8 AWG





## ***Synchronizing Your Trailer Brakes***

To ensure safe brake performance and synchronization, read the brake controller manufacturer's instructions completely before attempting any synchronization procedure.

### **CAUTION**

**Before road testing, make sure the area is clear of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Failure to brake safely could result in an accident and personal injury to yourself and/or others.**

Make several hard stops from 20 m.p.h. on a dry paved road free of sand and gravel. If the trailer brakes lock and slide, decrease the gain setting on the controller. If they do not slide, slightly increase the gain setting. Adjust the controller just to the point of impending brake lockup and wheel skid.

**Note:** Not all trailer brakes are capable of wheel lockup. Loading conditions, brake type, wheel and tire size can all affect whether a brake can lock. It is not generally considered desirable to lock up the brakes and slide the tires. This can cause unwanted flat spotting of the tires and could also result in a loss of control.

If the controller is applying the trailer brakes before the tow vehicle brakes, then the controller adjustments should be made so the trailer brakes come on in synchronization with the tow vehicle brakes. For proper braking performance, it is recommended that the controller be adjusted to allow the trailer brakes to come on just slightly ahead of the tow vehicle brakes. When proper synchronization is achieved there will be no sensation of the trailer "jerking" or "pushing" the tow vehicle during braking.



# General Maintenance - Electric Brakes

## Brake Adjustment

Dexter electric brakes that have a self adjusting feature require no manual adjustment. Brakes not equipped with this feature can be adjusted by using the following procedure:

Brakes should be adjusted (1) after the first 200 miles of operation when the brake shoes and drums have "seated," (2) at 3,000 mile intervals, (3) or as use and performance requires. The brakes should be adjusted in the following manner:

1. Jack up trailer and secure on adequate capacity jack stands. Follow trailer manufacturer's recommendations for lifting and supporting the unit. Make sure the wheel and drum rotates freely.

### CAUTION

**Do not lift or support the trailer on any part of the axle or suspension system. Never go under any trailer unless it is properly supported on jack stands which have been rated for the load. Improperly supported vehicles can fall unexpectedly and cause serious injury or death.**

2. If equipped, remove the adjusting hole cover, if present, from the adjusting slot on the bottom of the brake backing plate.
3. With a screwdriver or standard adjusting tool, rotate the star wheel of the adjuster assembly to expand the brake shoes. Adjust the brake shoes out until the pressure of the linings against the drum makes the wheel very difficult to turn.

**Note:** For drop spindle axles, a modified adjusting tool may be necessary.

4. Then rotate the star wheel in the opposite direction until the wheel turns freely with a slight lining drag.
5. Replace the adjusting hole cover, if available, and lower the wheel to the ground.
6. Repeat the above procedure on all brakes. For best results, the brakes should all be set at the same clearance.





## ***Brake Cleaning and Inspection***

Your trailer brakes must be inspected and serviced immediately if a loss of performance is indicated. With normal use, servicing at one year intervals is usually adequate. With increased usage, this work should be done more frequently as required. Magnets and shoes must be changed when they become excessively worn or scored, a condition which can reduce vehicle braking.

Clean the backing plate, magnet arm, magnet, and brake shoes. Make certain that all the parts removed are replaced in the same brake and drum assembly. Inspect for any loose or worn parts, stretched or deformed springs and replace as necessary.

### **CAUTION**

#### **POTENTIAL ASBESTOS DUST HAZARD!**

**Some older brake linings may contain asbestos dust, which has been linked to serious or fatal illnesses.**

**Certain precautions need to be taken when servicing brakes:**

- 1. Avoid creating or breathing dust.**
- 2. Avoid machining, filing or grinding the brake linings.**
- 3. Do not use compressed air or dry brushing for cleaning (dust can be removed with a damp brush).**

## ***Brake Lubrication***

Before reassembling, apply a light film of grease or anti-seize compound on the brake anchor pin, the actuating arm bushing and pin, and the areas on the backing plate that are in contact with the brake shoes and magnet lever arm. Apply a light film of grease on the actuating block mounted on the actuating arm.

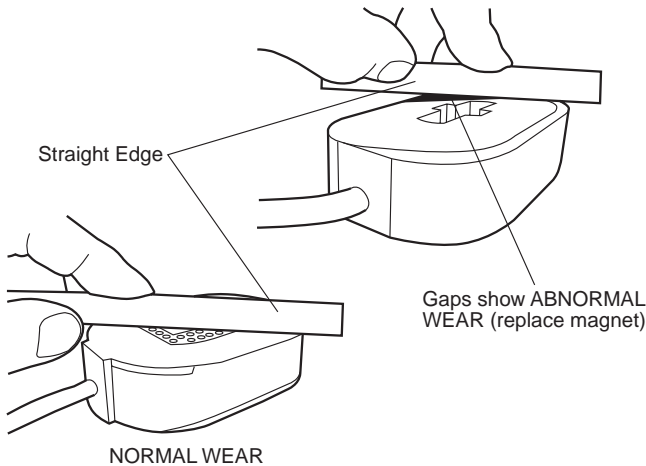
### **CAUTION**

**Do not get grease or oil on the brake linings, drums or magnets.**

# Magnets

Your electric brakes are equipped with high quality electromagnets that are designed to provide the proper input force and friction characteristics. Your magnets should be inspected and replaced if worn unevenly or abnormally. As indicated below, a straightedge should be used to check magnet condition. For best results, the magnet should be flat.

Even if wear is normal as indicated by your straightedge, the magnets should be replaced if any part of the magnet coil has become visible through the friction material facing of the magnet. It is also recommended that the drum armature surface be refaced when replacing magnets (see section on Brake Drum Inspection). Magnets should also be replaced in pairs - both sides of an axle. Use only genuine Dexter replacement parts when replacing your magnets.





## Shoes and Linings

A simple visual inspection of your brake linings will tell if they are usable. Replacement is necessary if the lining is worn to  $\frac{1}{16}$ " or less. Shoes contaminated with grease or oil, or abnormally scored or gouged should also be replaced. Hairline heat cracks are normal in bonded linings and should not be cause for concern. When replacement is necessary, it is important to replace both shoes on each brake and both brakes of the same axle. This will help retain the "balance" of your brakes.



Acceptable  
Hairline Cracks

### **CAUTION**

#### **POTENTIAL ASBESTOS DUST HAZARD!**

**Some older brake linings may contain asbestos dust, which has been linked to serious or fatal illnesses. Certain precautions need to be taken when servicing brakes:**

- 1. Avoid creating or breathing dust.**
- 2. Avoid machining, filing or grinding the brake linings.**
- 3. Do not use compressed air or dry brushing for cleaning (dust can be removed with a damp brush).**

After replacement of brake shoes and linings, the brakes must be re-burnished to seat in the new components. This should be done by applying the brakes 20 to 30 times from an initial speed of 40 m.p.h., slowing the vehicle to 20 m.p.h. Allow ample time for brakes to cool between applications. This procedure allows the brake shoes to seat in to the drum surface.

# Introduction to Troubleshooting

Proper brake function is critical to the safe operation of any vehicle. If problems are encountered with your trailer braking system, the following guide can be used to find the causes and remedies for some of the more common problems. If you are unsure or unable to resolve the problem, please contact your nearest repair facility for professional assistance.

## Troubleshooting

Most electric brake malfunctions that cannot be corrected by either brake adjustments or synchronization adjustments, can generally be traced to electrical system failure. Voltmeters and ammeters are essential tools for proper troubleshooting of electric brakes.

Mechanical causes are ordinarily obvious, i.e. bent or broken parts, worn out linings or magnets, seized lever arms or shoes, scored drums, loose parts, etc. Replace defective parts with genuine Dexter replacements.

Please consult the following troubleshooting charts to determine the causes and solutions for common problems found in trailer braking systems.



### CAUTION

**Best braking performance is achieved with a controller setting that is just short of wheel lock up or slide. Overly aggressive braking which results in wheel lock up and sliding, can cause a dangerous loss of control and result in personal injury or death.**





# Troubleshooting

SYMPTOM	CAUSES	REMEDIES
No Brakes	Open Circuits	Find & Correct
	Severe Underadjustment	Adjust Brakes
	Faulty Controller	Test & Correct
	Short Circuits	Find & Correct
Weak Brakes	Grease or Oil on Magnets or Linings	Clean or Replace
	Corroded Connections	Clean & Correct Cause of Corrosion
	Worn Linings or Magnets	Replace
	Scored or Grooved Brake Drums	Machine or Replace
	Improper Synchronization	Correct
	Underadjustment	Adjust Brakes
	Glazed Linings	Reburnish or Replace
	Overloaded Trailer	Correct
Locking Brakes	Underadjustment	Adjust
	Improper Synchronization	Correct
	Faulty Controller	Test & Correct
	Loose, Bent or Broken Brake Components	Replace Components
	Out-of-Round Brake Drums	Machine or Replace
	Insufficient Wheel Load	Adjust System Resistor and Synchronize
Intermittent Brakes	Faulty Controller	Test & Correct
	Broken Wires	Repair or Replace
	Loose Connections	Find & Repair
	Faulty Ground	Find & Repair

# Troubleshooting

SYMPTOM	CAUSES	REMEDIES
Brakes Pull to One Side	Wrong Magnet Lead Wire Color	Correct
	Incorrect Adjustment	Adjust
	Grease or Oil on Linings or Magnets	Clean or Replace
	Broken Wires	Find & Repair
	Bad Connections	Find & Repair
Harsh Brakes	Underadjustment	Adjust
	Improper Synchronization	Correct
	Improper Controller	Change
	Faulty Controller	Test & Correct
Noisy Brake	Underadjustment	Adjust
	Lack of Lubrication	Lubricate
	Broken Brake Components	Replace Component
	Incorrect Brake Components	Correct
Surging Brakes	Grease or Oil on Linings or Magnet	Clean or Replace
	Out-of-Round or Cracked Brake Drums	Machine or Replace
	Faulty Controller	Test & Correct
Dragging Brakes	Overadjustment	Readjust
	Out-of-Round Brake Drums	Machine or Replace
	Incorrect Brake Components	Replace
	Loose, Bent or Broken Brake Components	Replace
	Faulty Breakaway Switch	Repair or Replace
	Loose Wheel Bearing Adjustment	Adjust
	Bent Spindle	Replace Axle

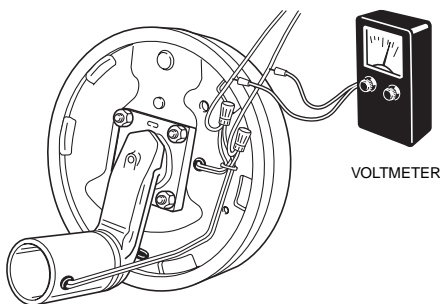




## ***How to Measure Voltage***

System voltage is measured at the magnets by connecting the voltmeter to the two magnet lead wires at any brake. This may be accomplished by using a pin probe inserted through the insulation of the wires. The engine of the towing vehicle should be running when checking the voltage so that a low battery will not affect the readings.

Voltage in the system should begin at 0 volts and, as the controller bar is slowly actuated, should gradually increase to about 12 volts. If the controller does not produce this voltage control, consult your controller manual.



The threshold voltage of a controller is the voltage applied to the brakes when the controller first turns on. Lower threshold voltage will provide for smoother braking. If the threshold voltage is too high, the brakes may feel grabby and harsh.

## ***How to Measure Amperage***

System amperage is the current flowing in the system when all the magnets are energized. The amperage will vary in proportion to the voltage. The engine of the tow vehicle should be running with the trailer connected when checking the trailer braking system.

One place to measure system amperage is at the BLUE wire of the controller, which is the output to the brakes. The BLUE wire must be disconnected and the ammeter put in series into the line. System amperage draw should be as noted in the following table. Make sure your ammeter has sufficient capacity and note polarity to prevent damaging your ammeter.

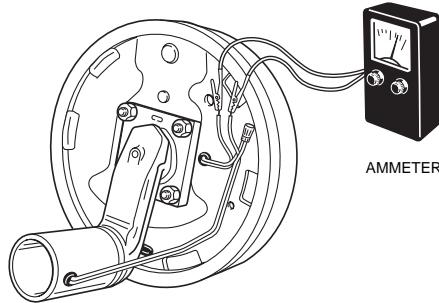


## Magnet Amperes Chart

Brake Size	Amps/Magnet	Two Brakes	Four Brakes	Six Brakes	Magnet Ohms
7" x 1¼"	2.5	5.0	10.0	15.0	3.9
10" x 1½"	3.0	6.0	12.0	18.0	3.2
10" x 2¼"	3.0	6.0	12.0	18.0	3.2
12" x 2"	3.0	6.0	12.0	18.0	3.2
12¼" x 2½"	3.0	6.0	12.0	18.0	3.2
12¼" x 3⅜"	3.0	6.0	12.0	18.0	3.2

If a resistor is used in the brake system, it must be set at zero or bypassed completely to obtain the maximum amperage reading.

Individual amperage draw can be measured by inserting the ammeter in the line at the magnet you want to check. Disconnect one of the magnet lead wire connectors and attach the ammeter between the two wires. Make sure that the wires are properly reconnected and sealed after testing is completed.



The most common electrical problem is low or no voltage and amperage at the brakes. Common causes of this condition are:

1. Poor electrical connections
2. Open circuits
3. Insufficient wire size
4. Broken wires
5. Blown fuses (fusing of brakes is not recommended)
6. Improperly functioning controllers or resistors

Another common electrical problem is shorted or partially shorted circuits (indicated by abnormally high system amperage). Possible causes are:

1. Shorted magnet coils
2. Defective controllers
3. Bare wires contacting a grounded object





Finding the cause of a short circuit in the system is done by isolating one section at a time. If the high amperage reading drops to zero by unplugging the trailer, then the short is in the trailer. If the amperage reading remains high with all the brake magnets disconnected, the short is in the trailer wiring.

All electrical troubleshooting procedures should start at the controller. Most complaints regarding brake harshness or malfunction are traceable to improperly adjusted or non-functioning controllers. See your controller manufacturer's data for proper adjustment and testing procedures. For best results, all the connection points in the brake wiring should be sealed to prevent corrosion. Loose or corroded connectors will cause an increase in resistance which reduces the voltage available for the brake magnets.