Commentary By Bob Nichols

Brake shoe (or pad) edge code myths– Some folks use the code imprinted on the edge of a brake shoe or pad to predict how well they will perform, especially with regard to heavy use in competition (brake fade).This identification code (IAP) was established by SAE J866a so brake shoe manufacturers could indicate the friction formula, friction coefficient, and a manufacturing date. The friction coefficient is 2 alpha characters in the code. This code is a reference for how well a brake shoe material develops friction (C= low friction coefficient to H = high friction coefficient); IT DOES NOT PREDICT HOW A BRAKE SHOE WILL WEAR AND PERFORM IN WET OR DRY CONDITIONS. In fact only the material is tested, not the entire brake shoe. The first letter of the code represents the "Normal temperature" coefficient (temperatures = 200-400 F), the second letter represents the "High temperature" coefficient (temperatures = 300-650 F). Generally the average automobile will have an EE or FF rating (in the middle). There are many ways to gauge performance, quality, and durability of brake shoes and pads but edge codes are not one of them. The edge code does not indicate the wear resistance, toughness, dust resilience, or noise resistance. Additionally, the friction coefficient range of each letter range is considered too wide to be reliable. SAE J-1652 is a new guideline that will test the ENTIRE brake shoe or pad. It is being evaluated and when approved will replace J866a.