Media: Interview With Vice President Dean Weber (Jan. 2013)

Both jobbers and technicians need to educate the consumer. Presenting the facts clearly should result in an easy upsell to a premium line. If they ask about the lower-priced option, let them know it is available, but be sure to explain to them that the brake job will not last as long and the brake pads and rotors are a lower grade and may fade in emergency braking situations. Is this risk really worth the small savings? The labour rate to do the job is exactly the same cost, no matter what parts are used. The only difference is the cost of the premium parts compared to the low-end product. Premium brake pads and rotors may cost more; but the brake job is going to last two to three years, as opposed to one year, it comes with full warranty, and the components will perform at or better than OEM spec.

This approach allows the consumer to make an informed choice, rather than the jobber or installer making an assumption on what level of quality parts to install without the customer's input.

"Premium rotors have become very popular now, mainly because of the affordable price and the needs of the consumer for both a better appearance in 'open wheel,' and also an improved coating to prevent rusting due to the inferior materials being used in offshore manufacturing. Fit is generally not an issue for both friction and rotor categories, and brake pads have shifted to ceramic materials to eliminate noise and dust. Premium quality pads now come with hardware, and a jobber should look for characteristics like 'true' ceramic pads, 'scorched in' for a smoother break-in process, and semi-metallic pads for applications like heavy trucks, commercial vehicles, and fleets," adds Dean Weber of Proforce Automotive.

The proliferation of substandard brake pads and rotors and the lack of a minimum standard are leading the aftermarket brake industry down a path that will soon bring driver safety into question. In fact, there is already a precedent in the United States, where there are lawsuits pointing at sub-standard brake parts as the cause of accidents.

"I believe it will be the insurance industry that finally will drive the need for a standard," says Demirci, "when they begin to turn down claims, saying, 'I'm sorry, we cannot cover you because the brakes on your vehicle are not the same grade or quality that the vehicle was originally equipped with.' When your car has sub-standard brake pads on it as opposed to the original equipment level pads, it's pretty tough to win that argument."

"A standard would be a good move for the industry. We need to ensure customer safety and we need to protect our environment and the health of our technicians by eliminating any brake pads with asbestos. I endorse the SAE's recommendations for testing procedures to be used for the measurement of brake linings, materials, and disc brake pad wear. Vehicles have more horsepower and performance today than in the past – as a result, the brake system has to dissipate more thermal energy – the rotors are essential here, and proper quality standards testing should be the direction of the future," adds Weber.

"The European union has regulations not only on brakes. We have them on the medium duty and the heavy-duty side of it – why can't we just implement it on the light truck and car market as well?" asks Yako.

Fleury agrees. "I think there should be a standard. There are tests available, but they are not mandated by any governing body. This step would definitely level the playing field.

"Right now, virtually anyone can go offshore and bring back pads because the minimum shipping orders are lower now and they can literally peddle them out of the trunk of their car and there is no liability or recourse," adds Fleury.

Given the current murky state of the brake friction and rotor aftermarket and the growing complexity of brake parts, a move to standardized testing for light trucks and cars may not be that far off.