

Steering Column Maintenance

The steering column is probably the most overlooked area in steering system maintenance. Most of the causes of the steering column problems are related to improper lubrication. Some of the common symptoms are as follows:

1. Vehicle will continue to steer by itself after an initial turn is started.
2. Vehicle will wander
3. Vehicle will stay steering wherever the steering wheel is put.
4. Steering wheel will lock up or hang up every quarter of a turn.

Steering Column Checks

Do these steps with the vehicle on the ground and engine off.

1. Pull around the steering wheel about 4 to 5 inches the steering wheel must spring back.
2. If the steering wheel will not spring back install an inch pound torque wrench on the column nut at the steering wheel. Record the readings from the torque wrench steering full left to full right.
3. If the torque wrench fluctuates more than 15 inch pounds from right to left you have a u-joint or timing problem.
 - A. One greaseless u-joint cap or improperly installed cap may cause this problem. The entire steering column may have to be removed to find this problem.
 - B. The u-joints are designed to operate best at a maximum of 25 degrees between the drive shaft and the driven shaft.
 - C. If the steering column is not timed properly it will also cause this problem. On most steering columns there are arrows to show the proper phasing. When no arrows are present, make sure the column yokes are in line to maintain proper timing.
 - D. If proper timing still has not been accomplished rotate the two piece shaft one spline at a time until the torque reading is the same through the rotation of the wheel.
4. If a problem still exists the next step is to remove the steering column yoke off the steering gear.

5. Install an inch pound torque wrench on the gear, If the readings between the gear and the steering wheel, is more than 10inch pounds you still have a steering column problem.
 - A. Check the slip-yoke to be sure it is not frozen tight and that the u-joints are moving properly.
 - B. Check the steering column slip-joint making sure it has movement within itself.
 - C. Check the steering wheel, to see that it is not tight into the steering column housing.