

ARE STEERING SYSTEM FLUID FILTERS REALLY NECESSARY?

You may find this actual true story to be quite interesting: General Motors in the early 1970's found a number of lawsuits being initiated against GM vehicles with the Saginaw steering systems. Of course back then, Saginaw steering components were used on 100% of GM vehicles. Even before the internet, lawyers had a good system of communicating with each other.

The allegation would go like this: At 2:30 in the morning, after the plaintiff left the bar (only having had one beer), the steering "locked-up" and the car went off the road and crashed. In many cases, by the time the lawsuit was filed the wrecked car was no longer available for inspection. But the allegations were that very fine particles (or maybe a big metal particle) would jam the very close tolerance gear valve; locking up the steering; resulting in the accident.

We had an expert engineer witness at Saginaw that was at the disposal of General Motors lawyers to assist them with technical issues. He was called to consult on these types of cases that involved Saginaw parts. What he decided was the following: Saginaw would go out and purchase a test car nearly identical to the one in the lawsuit. Saginaw would then install a brand new OEM steering system; pump, gear, hoses, reservoir, and fluid in that car.

He then made a film (I don't believe there was any video tape back then) showing that car with an open hood. A Saginaw person would go out to the factory floor and actually sweep the floor of chips and debris, placing them in a paper cup. He would then take the cup to the test car; remove the reservoir cap; and dump the cup full of dirt, chips, etc into the pump reservoir. Our expert witness would then drive that car to the location of the civil trial. He would then show the movie and he was always able to report the he found no problems whatsoever in driving the car from Saginaw, Michigan to the court (which could have been hundred or even thousands of miles away).

Amazing, after General Motors and Saginaw won a couple of "lock-up" cases with testimony and proof such as the above, the lawsuits stopped.

Based on the above and inspecting many, many, test steering systems that were driven over 100,000 miles in police cars, taxis, medium duty trucks, etc, I never felt that any type of filter was necessary. The magnet works just fine with no additional restriction to the fluid flow in the system.

Jim