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**Jim Shea's thoughts on replacing an OEM energy absorbing, collapsible steering column with an aftermarket steering column**

I am going to give you Jim Shea's opinion on this matter. Take it for what it is worth.

Energy absorbing steering columns were introduced for the 1967 model year on all GM passenger cars. All GM passenger car steering columns have been collapsible and energy absorbing since that time. General Motors and Saginaw Steering Gear Division spent millions of dollars designing, testing, barrier crashing, and validating original equipment, energy absorbing, collapsible steering columns. This was so the steering column and the vehicle structure working together would provide the maximum protection for the driver in a severe frontal collision and would meet U.S. Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

A rigid design steering column will completely defeat the above design and test objectives. Some aftermarket steering column manufacturers now claim "energy absorbing" and "collapsible" features. However, those steering columns have not been crash tested in actual vehicles for the claimed design. (Steering columns that are copied from the Saginaw design will not necessarily perform the same when subjected to dynamic testing and real world crashes.)

I have no problem replacing earlier (pre 1967) GM solid shaft steering columns with the newer aftermarket columns from Flaming River, Ididit, etc. OEM steering columns before 1967 have no claimed safety features.

Admittedly, vintage vehicles are usually not driven to a great extent. A severe frontal collision would be quite rare. However, I hate to see someone remove a collapsible, energy absorbing OEM steering column and replacing it with a design that has not been validated in real world testing and simulations.

My 2cents,  
Jim