

Power Steering System Description and Operation

The hydraulic power steering pump is a constant displacement vane-type pump that provides hydraulic pressure and flow for the power steering gear. The hydraulic power steering pumps are either belt-driven or direct-drive, cam-driven.

The power steering fluid reservoir holds the power steering fluid and may be integral with the power steering pump or remotely located. The following locations are typical locations for the remote reservoir:

- Mounted to the front of the dash panel
- Mounted to the inner fender
- Mounted to a bracket on the engine

The 2 basic types of power steering gears are listed below:

- A recirculating ball system
- A rack and pinion system

In the recirculating ball system, a worm gear converts steering wheel movement to movement of a sector shaft. A pitman arm attached to the bottom of the sector shaft actually moves one tie rod and an intermediate rod move the other tie rod.

In the rack and pinion system, the rack and the pinion are the 2 components that convert steering wheel rotation to lateral movement. The steering shaft is attached to the pinion in the steering gear. The pinion rotates with the steering wheel. Gear teeth on the pinion mesh with the gear teeth on the rack. The rotating pinion moves the rack from side to side. The lateral action of the rack pushes and pulls the tie rods in order to change the direction of the vehicle's front wheels.

The power steering pressure hose connects the power steering pump union fitting to the power steering gear and allows pressurized power steering fluid to flow from the pump to the gear.

The power steering return hose returns fluid from the power steering gear back to the power steering fluid reservoir. The power steering return line may contain an integral fin-type or line-type power steering fluid cooler.

In a typical power steering system, a pump generates hydraulic pressure, causing fluid to flow, via the pressure hose, to the steering gear valve assembly. The steering gear valve assembly regulates the incoming fluid to the right and left chambers in order to assist in right and left turns.

Turning the steering wheel activates the valve assembly, which applies greater fluid pressure and flow to one side of the steering gear piston, and lower pressure and flow to the other side of the piston. The pressure assists the movement of the gear piston. Tie rods transfer this force to the front wheels, which turn the vehicle right or left.