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BMW 3-Series (92-98) & Z3 (96-98) Haynes Online Manual

25 Front seat belt tensioning mechanism - general information

1996 and earlier models

1 Most models covered in this manual are fitted with a front seat belt tensioner system. The system is designed to instantaneously take up any slack in the seat belt in the case of a sudden frontal impact, therefore reducing the possibility of injury to the front seat occupants. Each front seat is fitted with its system, the tensioner being situated behind the sill trim panel.

2 The seat belt tensioner is triggered by a frontal impact above a pre-determined force. Lesser impacts, including impacts from behind, will not trigger the system.

3 When the system is triggered, a large spring in the tensioner mechanism retracts and locks the seat belt through a cable which acts on the inertia reel. This prevents the seat belt moving and keeps the occupant firmly in position in the seat. Once the tensioner has been triggered, the seat belt will be permanently locked and the assembly must be renewed.

4 **Warning:** *There is a risk of injury if the system is triggered inadvertently when working on the vehicle. If any work is to be carried out on the seat/seat belt disable the tensioner as follows.*

5 On models with manually adjusted seats, free the seat belt tensioner cable from the front of the seat base by rotating the outer cable retaining clip through 90-degrees and pulling it upwards (see illustration) . On completion of work, enable the tensioner by clipping the outer cable back into its bracket, making sure the inner cable is correctly hooked onto the base.

25.5 On models with manually adjusted seats, disable the seat belt tensioner by releasing the outer cable clip from its mounting bracket



6 On models with electrically adjusted seats, the seat belt tensioner mechanism is disabled by rotating the screw situated in the front outer edge of the seat base. The position of the screw is indicated by the sight glass in the top of the base. When the sight glass is green the tensioner is enabled and when it is red the tensioner is disabled. Rotate the screw to disable the tensioner before carrying out the work and, on completion, enable the tensioner by rotating the screw back again.

7 Also note the following warnings before contemplating any work on the front seat.

Warning:

If the tensioner mechanism is dropped, it must be replaced, even it has suffered no apparent damage.

Warning:

Do not allow any solvents to come into contact with the tensioner mechanism.

Warning:

Do not subject the seat to any form of shock as this could accidentally trigger the seat belt tensioner.

1997 and later models

8 The seats on these models are equipped with pyrotechnic (explosive) seat belt tensioners.

9 To disarm a pyrotechnic type tensioner, disconnect the cable from the negative battery terminal. **Warning:** *Failure to disconnect the negative battery terminal on 1997 and later models, which use pyrotechnic seat belt tensioners that are powered at all times, is dangerous. When the battery is connected, the tensioners on these models are fully energized and capable of inflicting serious injury if accidentally deployed.*

10 As insurance, unplug the orange connector under the seat.