

CENTER DIFFERENTIAL

3. Center Differential

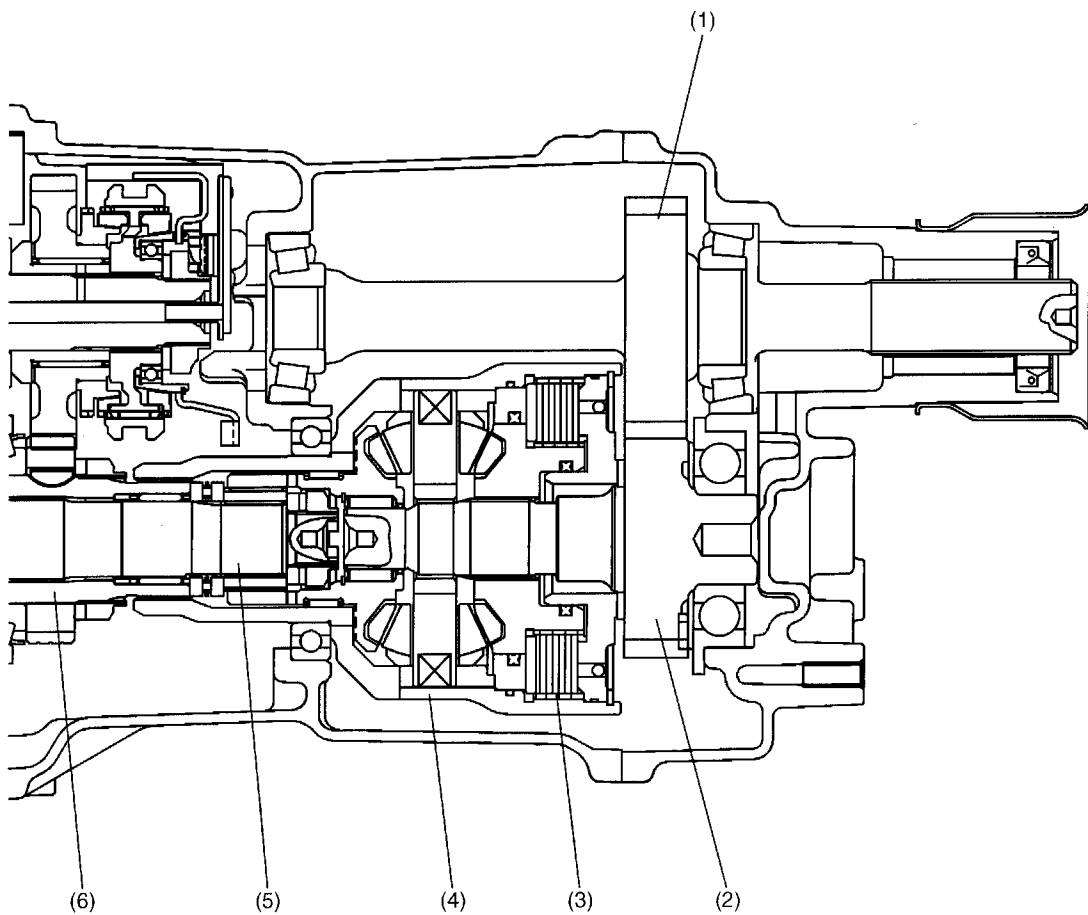
A: CONSTRUCTION

The center differential consists of a set of bevel gears and a viscous coupling.

The center differential has the following two functions: distributing the engine torque to the front and rear wheel drive shafts and absorbing the difference in rotating speed between the front and rear wheels.

The engine torque enters the center differential case from the transmission's driven shaft. The torque is then distributed through the bevel gear set directly to the drive pinion shaft and via the transfer drive and driven gears to the rear drive shaft.

The viscous coupling limits the bevel gear set's differential action when either front or rear wheels spin so that adequate torques are transmitted to the front and rear wheels and proper traction is obtained.

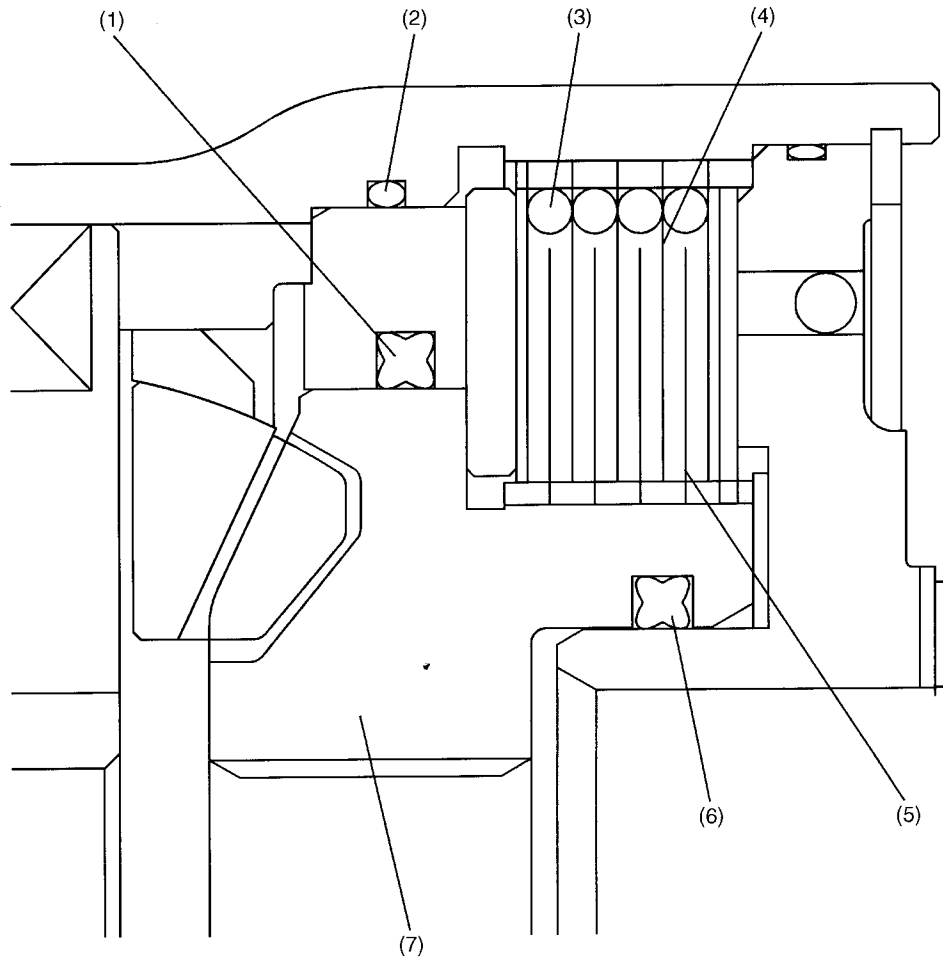


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- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| (1) Transfer driven gear | (4) Center differential with viscous coupling |
| (2) Transfer drive gear | (5) Drive pinion shaft |
| (3) Viscous coupling | (6) Driven shaft |

B: MECHANISM OF VISCOUS COUPLING

The viscous coupling consists of a number of alternately arranged inner and outer plates and air-and-silicone oil mixture filled into a sealed space that is formed by the center differential case and the rear side gear of the differential gear set. The inner plates have their inner perimeters splined to the side gear and the outer plates have their outer perimeters splined to the center differential case. The outer plates are held apart by spacer rings. There are no spacer rings between the inner rings, so the inner rings are movable slightly in axial directions. X-section rings are used to prevent leakage of silicone oil which would otherwise occur if the oil is pressurized due to large difference in front and rear axle speeds.



- (1) X-section ring
- (2) O-ring
- (3) Spacer ring
- (4) Outer plate

- (5) Inner plate
- (6) X-section ring
- (7) Side gear (rear)

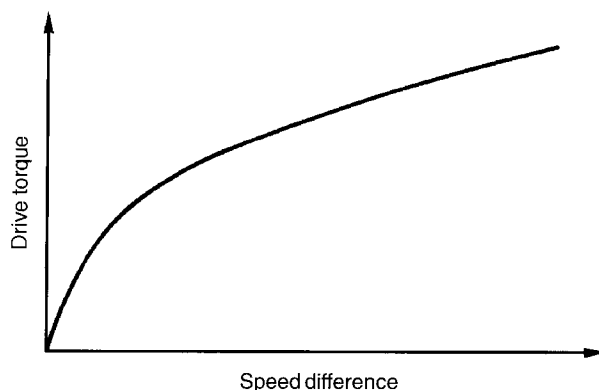
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CENTER DIFFERENTIAL

1. TORQUE CHARACTERISTICS

When a speed difference occurs between the center differential case and the rear side gear, a shear force is generated in the silicone oil placed between the outer and inner plates. The torque is then transmitted by the silicone oil between the center differential case and the rear side gear.

The greater the speed difference, the greater the shear force generated in the silicone oil. The relationship between the torque transmission and the speed difference is shown in the figure below. As can be seen from the figure, the smaller the speed difference, the smaller the torque transmission and the differential action.



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2. HUMP PHENOMENON

Silicone oil is heated and expanded as differential action continues. This causes the pressure of air inside the viscous coupling to increase and the pressure of oil between plates to decrease. As a result, the inner and outer plates are pushed together. This direct plate-to-plate contact causes a non-viscous operation to occur, and this phenomenon is called "hump".

The hump eliminates the rotating speed difference between the center differential case and the rear side gear (or locks the differential), so soon after it has occurred, the internal pressure and temperature drop. The viscous coupling then returns to the normal shear torque transmitting operation. (The hump phenomenon does not occur under normal operating conditions.)

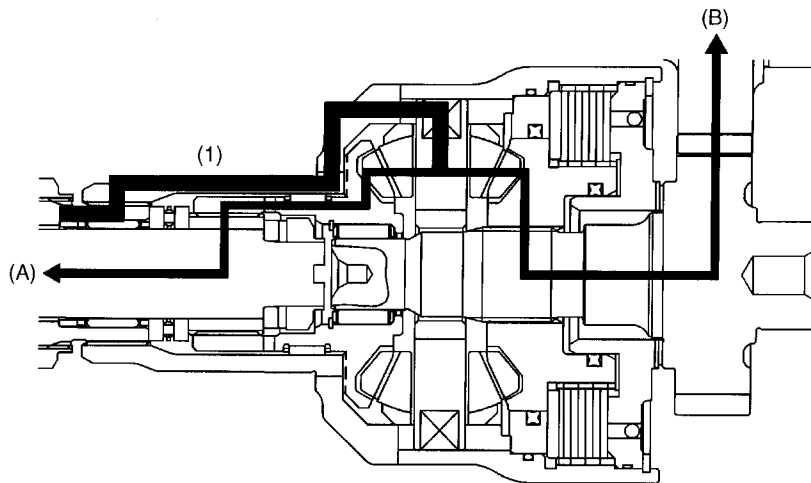
C: FUNCTION

When there is no speed difference between the front and rear wheels, the center differential delivers the engine torque to the front and rear wheels at a ratio of 50:50.

When a rotating speed difference occurs between the front and rear wheels, the center differential operates to absorb it in a controlled way by the function of the viscous coupling.

1. DURING NORMAL DRIVING

During straight-line driving on a flat road at a constant speed, all the four wheels rotate at the same speed. The center differential delivers engine torque evenly to the front and rear drive axles. The viscous coupling does not generate shear torque because there is no relative movements between the inner and outer plates.



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(1) Engine torque

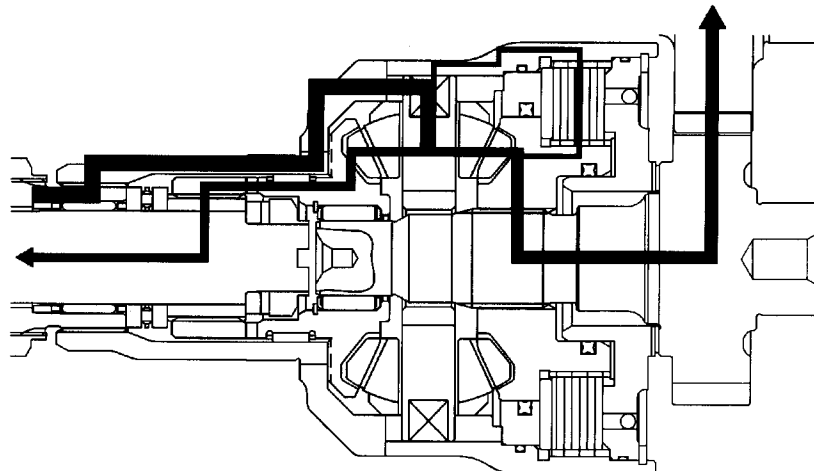
(A) To front differential

(B) To rear differential

2. DURING TURNS AT LOW SPEEDS

During turns at low speeds, rotating speed difference occurs between the front and rear wheels, as well as between the left and right wheels. More particularly, the front wheels rotate faster than the rear wheels. The center differential then acts to absorb the speed difference to enable smooth driving.

Although the speed difference is small under this condition, operation of the viscous coupling causes more torque to be transmitted to the rear than to the front.



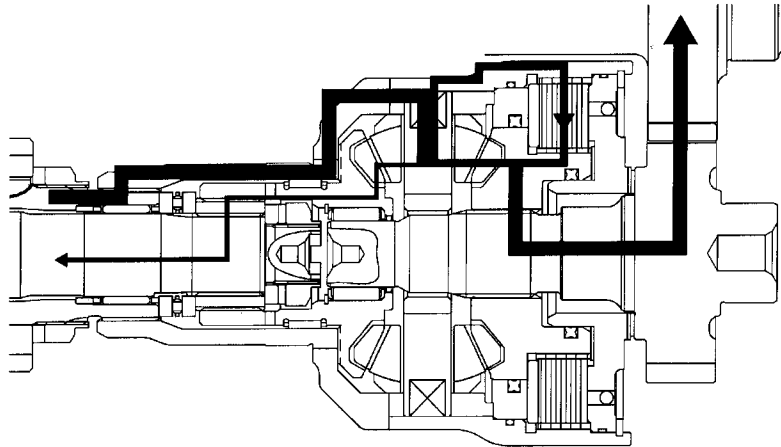
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CENTER DIFFERENTIAL

3. DRIVING ON ROUGH OR SLIPPERY ROADS

- When front wheels are on a slippery surface

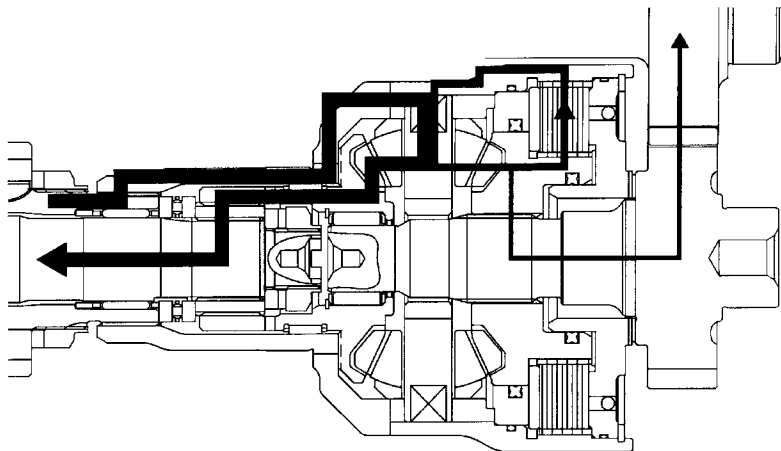
When the front wheels begin to spin, the resulting speed difference between the front and rear drive shafts causes the viscous coupling to generate significant amount of shear torque. As a result, the torque distributed to the rear wheels becomes much larger than that distributed to the spinning front wheels. The traction and driving stability are thus ensured on a rough or slippery road.



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- When rear wheels are on a slippery surface

When the vehicle is accelerated quickly from a standing start with the rear wheels on a slippery surface, the distribution of the vehicle weight on the front and rear wheels changes and the rear wheels start spinning. Due to the resulting speed difference between the front and rear drive shafts, the viscous coupling generates a significant amount of shear torque, now in the direction opposite to that generated when the front wheels are on a slippery surface. As a result, the torque distributed to the front wheels becomes much larger than that distributed to the rear wheels.



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