Idea might revolutionize safety devices

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A simple but clever idea by a British engineer might revolutionize the way safety devices around the world are constructed.

Fayek Osman, who works in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Bath, England, has developed a device that can absorb enormous impact and yet remain intact so it can be used again.

Normally, the impact of a crash on a safety device such as a train buffer will deform it so it must be replaced. Even ordinary stress on devices absorbing less dramatic impacts, such as airplane landing gear, can wear out quickly.

Osman's device consists of a piece of metal in a channel with a bend in it. During a crash, impact forces the metal down the channel, thereby absorbing energy as it travels around the bend toward the end of the channel.

The channel can then be turned around so the next impact strikes the metal at the end of the channel and forces it back to its original starting point.

Osman is seeking commercial backing for his idea, which he believes will save various industries millions of dollars worldwide.

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