

Re: Safe to use WD40 as switch or potentiometer cleaner?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.electronics.repair/2004-08/1769.html>

From: Ray L. Volts (raylvolts_at_SPAMRIDhotmail.com)

Date: 08/21/04

Date: Sat, 21 Aug 2004 02:18:17 -0500

"Franky" <franklin_lo@mail.com> wrote in message
news:9548AEBCBB71231E75@127.0.0.1...

> *Is it safe to use WD40 as a switch (or potentiometer) cleaner on
> circuit boards and in electronic equipment?*

>

> *I know that you can get the proper aerosol spray cans of switch
> cleaner but if I find myself without one of those then can I use
> WD40?*

>

> *Personally I would guess it is not OK as I figure there is always a
> thin layer of oil but several people I have spoken to say that they
> use WD40 all the time.*

>

> *Any views on this?*

As some have suggested, you can temporarily restore a scratchy/dirty pot or switch by just moving it thru its range 5-10 or so times. But, as I said, this is only a temporary fix. I've tried this on hundreds of different kinds of pots and switches over the years and this method just doesn't last long at all for controls that aren't in practically constant use afterward. If you don't use the control often, you'll find the next time you try to use it, it will once again be scratchy.

To clean scratchy pots and switches that have a case hole, I flush them with tuner (or contact) cleaner sprays using a plastic extender tube. I've found these cleaners work very well on the pot wipers and switch contacts over time. These contact restorers all basically do the same thing, which is to clean, lubricate and protect without having to disassemble the control. Of course, if the pot or switch shaft originally had grease on it and the spray removed it, you'll need to replace it -- GC's Lubriplate is thin and easily worked down into the shaft housing.

Some pots are designed to offer heavier resistance to movement in order to appear "smoother" (read high-quality) to the operator. These may employ a special high-viscosity "damping" lube. This is similar to the lube that's

sci.electronics.repair: Re: Safe to use WD40 as switch or potentiometer cleaner?

used on a record player's cue arm to allow it to lower the needle onto the vinyl slowly and softly. It's also used in cassette decks, et al, to make the door operation smoother. It is very thick and should be applied sparingly. This is not readily available; you'll likely have to mail order it.

Pots and switches in high frequency applications may be better served by cleaning with a non-residue cleaner and then lubed with special high-freq. grease (I use GC's Tunerlub).

WD-40 may not be great for pots, but it does last a good while on garage door wheels and the like. Slick 50 spray is a good alternative for garden-variety needs.

WD-40 is superb for removing dried contact cement! I use it to clean up DAP cement after applying laminate (Formica, Wilsonart, etc.). It works better than many other solvents I've tried. I wouldn't recommend it on porous surfaces where it can soak in and cause probs, but on non-porous surfaces such as these laminates it works wonders and it can be cleaned off easily enough.

WD-40 also dissolves the gum backing from price stickers and the like, but I prefer to use Chemtronics Label Adhesive Remover because it foams up and stays in place (handy on vertical surfaces). It also smells a lot better than WD-40.

But I digress...

Use products designed specifically for electronics use and you'll be happier with your repairs in the long run.