

Tools of The Trade!! The Cleaning of Wafer (band) Switches

(By: Mark Gilger, WBOIQK)

There is a right way, and of course there is a wrong way. You can pay me now, or pay me later. Either one of those sayings could apply here.

When the band switch, or other wafer switches, need to be cleaned, you can take a short cut and do a quick cleaning, or you can take a bit more time and do it the “right way”. A quick cleaning would be using one of the many spray type contact cleaners and giving each wafer a good dousing. There are more brands than you can shake a stick at, but the one most popular with a good majority of boat anchor restorers, is DeoxiT D5. This can either be sprayed on, or applied with some type of applicator, like a Q-Tip.



The other method, and the one I prefer to use, is the “Right Way”. Or at least in my mind. I use a multi part method, utilizing a product called Tarn-X , Denatured Alcohol, and DeoxiT. The reason I think my method works so good is that I think of the corrosion, or tarnish that accumulates on the switches over time, as a cancer, or rust on your car. If you don’t get it all removed during the cleaning process, it comes right back a short time later. I’ve found that if you remove it all, it will be many months, if not years before you have problems again.

Tarn-X works very quickly. It often only takes several seconds to clean a switch. The following picture shows the before and after results. It’s applied using a Q-Tip or other small applicator.



Use the following procedure for reliable, long life, positive results.

- 1) Follow all safety precautions when using Tarn-X as specified by the manufacturer.
- 2) The use of Tarn-X should only be resorted to for the worst of the worst. If the switch cleans up using an application of DeoxiT, then the use of Tarn-X is not recommended.
- 3) Apply Tarn-X with a Q-tip to 1 wafer at a time. Go sparingly, and try not dripping it on other components. Don't forget to apply to the contacts that rub across the wafers surface.
- 4) **Immediately** after cleaning a wafer switch with Tarn-X, apply Denatured Alcohol, of good quality using a toothbrush and/or small spray bottle. After brushing, apply another dose of Denatured Alcohol to wash off any Tarn-X residue. Do this before moving onto the next wafer to make sure the switch has been thoroughly washed before the Tarn-X has a chance to dry. I prefer to use a small hair spray bottle, filled with Denatured Alcohol, spraying it at the same time I'm using the tooth brush.
- 5) Use a second tooth brush to scrub the switch down with the Alcohol. Don't intermix the brushes. After the single wafer switch and its contacts are clean, apply Denatured Alcohol using a toothbrush and/or small spray bottle.
- 6) As an option, you can use a can of compressed air and spray all excess Alcohol off the wafers and surrounding components.
- 7) Move to the next switch and repeat procedure.
- 8) Once all wafers have been cleaned in the above procedure, spray a very light mist of DeoxiT on each wafer and rotate switch back and forth several times.
- 9) Use compressed air and blow all excess liquid from the switch and surrounding area.
- 10) Let the radio sit overnight before applying power.

Important Note:

Probably most important, of the above procedures, is the cleaning process that takes place using the Denatured Alcohol. It's important to get as much of the Tarn-X off, as possible, and the Denatured Alcohol does a good job of this.

