



TACTICS & TACKLE

Reel Washdown: Myth Vs. Fact

People go to extremes," Brent Mays confided. "They either overwash their rods and reels at the end of the day or they totally ignore the tackle, hoping the salt crystals will evaporate. By overwash, I mean that they dip each outfit in a swimming pool, take it in the shower, or spray it with a high-pressure hose. In most instances, these measures tend to drive the salt into every corner and moving part."

As a highly skilled reel repairman, Mays spends many of his days restoring poorly-cared-for reels to working condition. "Until you look inside a reel and see what salt can do, you can't appreciate how corrosive it is," he said. "The key to proper cleaning lies in keeping salt out of critical areas so the crystals won't sit there and destroy everything around them."

A number of experts agree with Brent. Penn Reels charges Jim Reynolds with the task of overseeing repairs of company products. He suggests that you tighten the drag temporarily while washing a reel, which helps prevent salt from getting into the washers and causing erratic drag performance.

"Aboard our company boat," Reynolds said, "we follow a simple procedure. After tightening the drag, we wash all our rods and reels with warm, soapy water using a brush or sponge. Then the soap and salt are removed with a fine



Hanson Corroll

Rinsing your reels with a powerful blast of water may actually force salt deep into the inner workings. Instead, experts recommend sponging the gear off with warm, soapy water, followed by a light fresh water rinse. Lastly, towel-dry and apply an anti-corrosion spray.

spray aimed so that it doesn't drive water inside the reel. After hand-wiping the reel dry, we loosen the drag so that the washers are not under pressure during storage."

Fresh water without soap or detergent doesn't do the job. If you simply hose off your tackle, expect to find salt crystals once the water dries. It's no different than washing down a boat without using something to float the salt away; after it dries you can run your hand over any part of the boat and feel the salt still there.

There's more to the story. Once you

have cleaned your tackle with soap and water, wipe it down with a rag containing a rust/corrosion inhibitor, or spray it with a similar product and wipe off the excess. Among the better products on the market for this purpose are Boeshield T-9, Corrosion Block, Corrosion-X, and TW-25B. It's also worth applying an anti-corrosion product if you detect even a minute appearance of salt corrosion or rust. It takes a lot less effort to prevent corrosion and pitting before it begins than trying to remove it later.

Try Salt-X

Although a product called Salt-X has been on the market for about a decade, I recently ran some personal (albeit unscientific) tests on it and was impressed. We had been fishing in Panama for a week and failed to do very much to keep the tackle clean and free from salt. The hot, damp climate didn't help either. When we got home, we lined up all the reels in the garage and sprayed them with a mist of Salt-X, a solution designed to dissolve salt. The instructions tell you

to dilute the product, spray it on or soak the reel in it, and then let the reel air-dry.

The next morning the salt crystals had disappeared and the protective coating seemed to keep rust from starting. I should add that it also removed the salt corrosion from the fittings on our underwater camera. You can decide about Salt-X for yourself or get more information from John Helms at (800) 827-2189. Helms told me that if you do have reels with salt build-up, soak them in a bucket of diluted Salt-X overnight and you'll see noticeable results.



Executive Editor Mark Sosin has written for SWS for over 30 years. He is a member of the International Fishing Hall of Fame and hosts "Mark Sosin's Saltwater Journal" on ESPN.