

## KEEP IT CLEAN

After a few coastal cruises or fishing trips, it's not uncommon for the displays on a boat's chartplotter, fishfinder, radar or Multi Function units to end up covered with smudges, smears and fingerprints. And with manufacturers moving to touchscreen or hybrid touchscreen display technology, the need to keep screens clean will be even more important as boaters and fishermen routinely tap and drag their grimy digits across their boat's numerous LCDs.

Today's color marine electronics displays— particularly chartplotters —are big, bright and clear. However, they won't stay that way with out a little TLC. Who wants the rich detail and shaded contours of your C-MAP MAX or 4D charts obscured by water spots and fish slime? Nobody, of course. Fortunately, keeping your boat's displays clean isn't expensive, doesn't take long and isn't hard to do. However, it's important to remember that you can actually cause permanent damage if you do it the wrong way.

Follow these seven simple steps to keep your marine electronics displays bright and shining:



**Mind your hands.** Just making sure you wash, rinse or at least wipe off your hands before reaching for that knob, button or touchscreen display can go a long way to keeping things from getting dirty in the first place. This is especially true for anglers who've been handling bait or unhooking fish — but any boater has the capacity to smudge up screens with skin oil, sunscreen or just dirt picked up from boat surfaces.

**Don't wipe dry.** Okay, we've all done it — grabbed the tail of our T-shirt, a used napkin from lunch or whatever happens to be handy to quickly wipe off anything from fingerprints to fish scales. Wiping a dry screen this way is a bad idea. Anything on the display — salt crystals, dust, scales — becomes an abrasive agent and can cause permanent scratching to the LCD surface. Remember that whatever is "handy" on your boat is probably already dirty. Don't use paper towels, either. They are made from wood pulp/fibers and are inherently abrasive, so even clean ones can cause minor scratches that add up over time.

**Use the right stuff.** Internet message boards are full of "home remedies" for cleaning marine electronics displays — Windex, vinegar, furniture polish, even metal polish. Chemicals and abrasives can remove the UV coating from your unit's display and/or leave residue. Instead, stick with products designed especially for the job. One excellent product is Electro Wipes by Baja Products (45 wipes plus buffing cloth sell for \$9.95 at [www.TheGPSStore.com](http://www.TheGPSStore.com)). Some electronics manufacturers offer their own branded cleaning



solutions/products, and you can't go wrong using any of these, either.

**Use clean water in a pinch.** If proper cleaning products aren't available, clean, fresh water can be used to remove salt and grime before wiping. Use a fine-mist spray bottle or, in a pinch, gently dribble bottled water over the display from the top. Use a soft, clean microfiber cloth to wipe clean.

**Power down.** Turn your electronics off before cleaning the displays. You'll be able to see and remove all dirt and fingerprints better. In addition, heat from the displays can evaporate the cleaner before it can do its job. This is also a good reason not to clean your electronics in direct sunlight.

**Easy does it.** Don't press down too hard when wiping LCD displays off, as this can cause damage and increase the chance of scratching if the screen or cloth is dirty. Re-apply cleaner or use additional specialized wipes on stubborn smudges, rather than bearing down.

**Go undercover.** Most electronics come with hard protective covers for storage — use them. If you clean your displays at the end of each trip, you'll avoid letting dirt, skin oil or grime harden before the next trip. Pop the covers on after cleaning, and you can start your next trip with clean and clear displays.

By spending a little time and using the right products for the job, you'll protect your investment in your boat's marine electronics — and enjoy many happy seasons on the water.