PUBLISHER'S WELCOME

introduction

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Joe Fugate: Better track cleaning update ...

★★★★★ RATE THIS ARTICLE

1. The La Mesa club uses this track cleaning car arrangement to daily clean their track (they run ~12 hours of trains every day). The lineup consists of one CMX Clean Machine car with mineral spirits solvent and three Centerline cars each with a dry wiper roller to remove the residue.

After my discussion of a solvent's dielectric constant indicating its suitability for track cleaning back in the May MRH [mrhmag.com/magazine/mrh2019-05/publishers-musings], it's time for a bit of follow-up.

First, I have updated the table in that issue with some additions listed in red [2]. Next, it's important to discuss a few considerations on how you use these solvents.

In the image above, you see the long track cleaning car string the La Mesa club uses for their track cleaning task. It's important to note you don't just loosen the "black gunk" and then simply spread it around the layout. You need to *remove* it.

That's why the Centerline cars follow the solvent car – they're removing the loosened black gunk. If you miss that step, your track cleaning efforts will be a lot less effective!

If you don't want to drop $500+ on this track cleaning car string, you can go with one or two Centerline cars to economize.

Or for a more do-it-yourself low budget method with some extra elbow grease, you can do what I do: I use gun cleaning Q-tips and clean the rail heads by hand. They're more robust than ordinary Q-tips and have a long wood handle for those hard-to-reach places.

I use one Q-tip dipped in solvent and then follow up with two wipes of a clean, dry Q-tip to remove the loose black gunk.

If you use a low dielectric constant solvent, you'll find you're not cleaning the track as often, like I mentioned in my editorial. The cleaning by hand approach, should be less frequent! ☑

You can find an up-to-date shopping list for this article here: mrhmag.com/magazine/running-extra/2020-02/publishers-welcome

	Solvent	Dielectric constant
Best	Kerosene	1.8
	Deluxe Materials Track Magic	1.9
	WD-40 contact cleaner	1.9
	CRC contact cleaner & protectant	2.0
	DeoxIT D5	2.0
	Gasoline	2.0
	Neverstall	2.0
	Diesel	2.1
	Mineral spirits	2.1
	Wahl clipper oil	2.1
	Turpentine	2.2
	Carbon tetrachloride	2.2
	No-Ox-IDA	2.3
	Goo-Gone	2.3
	WD-40 (regular)	2.4
	Graphite (microscopic thin layer)	1.8-3.0
Poor	CRC 2-26	4.6
	Automatic transmission fluid	4.8
	Rail-zip	4.8
	Bachmann track cleaner	4.8
	Butyl acetate	5.1
	Butyl cellosolve	5.3
	Ethyl acetate	6.0
	Graphite (thick layer)	10.0-15.0
	Isopropyl alcohol (IPA)	18.0
	Methyl Ethyl Ketone (MEK)	18.9
	CRC QD contact cleaner	20.0
	Lucas contact cleaner	20.0
	Acetone	20.7
	Vinegar	24.0
	Ethyl alcohol (e.g. vodka, wine)	25.0
	Radio Shack electronics cleaner	25.0
	Ammonia solution	31.6
	Propylene glycol	32.0
Worst	Lacquer thinner	33.6
	Glycerine	47.0
	Hydrogen peroxide	60.0
	Water	80.4

2. Updated dielectric constants table.

Non-polar
Semi-polar
Polar