MARINE FLECTRONICS

CPR FOR ELECTRONICS

The other day we came home in a driving rainstorm and when we arrived at the dock, I realized my gear bag had been open the whole time. My "splash-proof" handheld VHF radio got completely soaked. Now, the radio won't even turn on – is there anything I can do to fix it? Cliff Silva of Portland, ME

Since you've already tried turning it on, it's probably toast. When any piece of electronics gear gets water damage, the cardinal rule is don't turn it on before drying it off internally. If you follow the procedure outlined below, you can often save your electronics from a watery grave.

First, disassemble the casing of the item until its electronic guts are



exposed. More disassembly is usually better (removing lens housings, spring-loaded buttons, etc.) as long as you don't risk making a pile of parts you won't be able to put back together. Tilt and/or gently shake the parts to remove as much water as possible, then wrap a toothpick in an absorbent cloth and use it to soak up any remaining moisture. Next, lay the parts out on a table and position a fan to blow across them. If there's an air-conditioning vent

close by, placing the parts under it is even better. Chilled air has extremely low humidity. Let the pieces dry for 24 hours.

Before reassembling the unit, give the parts a gentle spray with a moisture displacer that will also flush contaminants. I recommend DeoxIt D5 (www.caig.com). I've used it to breathe new life into a camcorder that fell off a pier, flooded with saltwater and was retrieved with a crab net a half hour later.

Give the parts another hour or so to dry after applying the spray, then reassemble. Insert new batteries and try hitting the power button. If it doesn't work, try the whole process over again. Your chances of a recovery at that point are slim, but still exist. If a second go-round doesn't do the trick, plan on replacing the item. LR