

Quick Fixes 2012

SPECIAL SECTION 2012

WET ELECTRONICS

Saving your soaked cellphone or computer

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Throwing uncooked rice at the bride and groom on their wedding day is an age-old tradition. But today there's a more modern use for the absorbing grain: It's a quick fix for cellphones, iPods, laptops and other electronic devices that have somehow gotten wet.

No matter how the device becomes soaked, whether it be dropped in liquid, spilled upon, thrown in the washing machine or even sweated on, placing it in a bag of rice seems to be the current popular consensus, with many people attesting that it works.

Motorola Razr user Phillip Innuso says he accidentally dropped his phone in the toilet when he was trying to check it for messages. He says that without hesitating, he retrieved it from the water and powered it down.

"Then I panicked," he says. "I had no replacement and I had grown dependent on (it)."

Innuso says he did some Internet research and came across the bag-of-rice method, which calls for placing your phone in a zip-close bag filled with uncooked rice for several days. He says that when he eventually retrieved it from the rice and turned it back on, it booted up with no problems.

"I made a test call, and it worked properly," he says.

Using silica gel packets is another method that's often utilized. The steps to resurrecting your cellphone with silica gel or rice, according to Jeypriey's Blog, are to first shake off the extra water from inside the device then blow it with air from an electric fan until the exterior is dry. From there, place the phone together with the silica packets or rice into a zip-close bag or a plastic, airtight container. Then secure and close it.

Leave the phone in for two to five days, allowing the silica gel or rice to absorb the moisture. Finally, take the phone out and try switching it on to see whether it still works. Do a thorough check, including typing, placing a call, sending a message and testing your camera and speakers to identify possible problems caused by water damage.

However, sometimes the resulting damage is so extensive that the device needs to be worked on by a specialist. Reuben Felber, a freelance computer technician, says he's worked on a number of computers and iPods that have been involved in some sort of liquid spill. He says removing the battery before trying to repair any wet device is a must.

"Usually, the calls that we get are from people that spill coffee or

beer on their computers," says Felber, who started the company A and R Computers more than two years ago. "All you can really do is take the device apart, clean it thoroughly with alcohol swabs to get any sticky residue off, and set it out somewhere (to dry)."

Felber says it's important not to set the device out in temperatures warmer than about 90 degrees, as heat will destroy electronics.

Because taking a computer apart can be a complex procedure, involving the removal of screws, the keyboard, the screen, the bezel, the drives and the cables, it's often best to enlist the help of an experienced technician. The cost to have it fixed can run about \$150 for a day or two of work, Felber says.

But he adds that if somebody is handy, has the tools and really feels like committing the time it's going to take, that person could try fixing it himself.

"They would probably need to look up a take-apart guide for whatever device they're working on, either on YouTube or Google, which have pictorials or videos," Felber says.

He notes that even after going through the extensive

drying process, there might still be some problems with the functionality of the device. For example, certain components, such as the keyboard or the monitor, could fail intermittently. Felber says that sometimes it might just be best to purchase a new device, especially if the affected one is an old.

"You hope for the best. I always mention to people it's definitely not 100 percent."

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~CONTENTS~

- Quick Results
- Silence the Squeak
- Smooth Sliders
- Removing Stickers from Glass
- Stain Busters
- Cooking and Cleaning
- Just Add Water
- The Persistent Flush
- Kitchen Tips
- Mean, Clean Dishwashing Machine
- Cleaning the Inside of a Washing Machine
- Nature's Pests
- Quick Fix Fashion
- Burned Counters
- Wet Electronics

CLEANING THE INSIDE OF A WASHING MACHINE

Getting rid of dirt and germs you don't expect to get left behind

Sharon Naylor
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How clean is the inside of your washing machine? You might be surprised to know that even though your machine runs regularly with detergent, bleach and hot water, it still may be very likely that it's covered with residue left behind by detergent, fabric softener and items such as lip balms that went through the wash. Hard water leaves damaging mineral deposits inside the machine, as well.

To ensure the cleanest clothes, towels and blankets possible and extend the life of your machine and its parts, be sure to clean the inside of your washing machine regularly.

*Using Washing Machine Cleaner Products

A variety of professional-grade cleaning solutions are available in your supermarket and in home improvement stores. Tide washing machine cleaner, for instance, is formulated to fight odor-causing residues and remove hard-water minerals when run through your machine, of course without any clothing or items in the washer.

Sears washing machine maintenance professionals often suggest specialized washing machine cleaning products. Washer Magic is one such product that, when run through an empty cycle on the hottest water tem-

perature possible, removes buildup, lime, rust and odor-causing particles. This solution may also be used manually (Be sure to wear gloves for safety!) to clean the rubber seal around the door and detergent drawers, two places where a tremendous amount of ugly, gray, germ-y buildup accumulates and may even stain your clothing if left untreated over time.

Most products are recommended for use once a month or more frequently if you have hard water.

*Using Household Products To Clean Your Washer Machine

For a top-loading clothes washer, set your load size indicator to large and the water temperature to its hottest setting. Begin a regular wash cycle, and when the tub is filled with water, pour in 2 cups to a gallon of distilled white vinegar, close

the lid and allow your washer to complete its normal wash cycle. That may be the only step you need, since the vinegar cleans the inside of your tub, the interior mechanisms and the pipes as it drains away.

If you see any remaining spots, moisten a paper

