

WAGGONER CRUISING GUIDE

Your Windless Needs Care Too

Don't Get Caught in A Pinch When it's Time to Aweigh Anchor

Most windlasses will appreciate an occasional cleaning and lube. This doesn't require major surgery, but is essential field-stripping that anyone can do. Use the type of grease recommended in the owner's manual (if you've misplaced it chances are you can download one from the manufacturer's website), and be careful to keep friction clutches and brakes lube-free. Make these six inspections to ensure you anchor will aweigh when required:

- Check your windless periodically to ensure in working order.
 - Inspect for paint nicks and corrosion.
 - Ensure sound foundation.
 - Clean and wax.
 - Inspect the ground tackle.
1. Check your windlass periodically, looking to see if the clutch nut is secure. Vibration and pounding can loosen this nut without any visible signs that something is wrong. Take your wrench and securely tighten the nut. Be firm, but don't force it, or you might strip the threads.
 2. When inspecting the clutch nut, also check the windless for paint nicks, especially in coated horizontal units (e.g., rope capstan and chain gypsy side-by-side). The horizontals usually have aluminum housings, so it's essential to address the problem immediately. Once the painted surface is breached, moisture will work its way under the paint, eventually peeling it off. The remedy is to clean, sand, prime and then paint the aluminum.
 3. Check frequently around the fastenings for leakage, which can lead to water seeping into deck cores. You'll be able to see this better below-deck, where water, finding its way along the through bolts, will leave rust stains on the backing washers or nuts, even if the fastenings are stainless steel.
 4. Many vertical windlasses (with rope and chain rollers stacked) are made of chromed bronze. If left unattended, a salt-baked crusty appearance can develop, which can lead to corrosion. Some good polishes on the market will clean the chrome and put a protective coat of wax on the unit.
 5. Because the windlass is paying out at such a rapid rate, the clutch needs to be periodically cleaned to remove salt and debris.
 6. Don't forget the anchor rode, which is probably attached to its chain leader with a chain splice rather
 7. than a shackle. The splice passes easily over a rope/chain wildcat, but it is prone to chafing if mud, sand, bits of shell or other grit gets between the rope and chain. It's prudent to renew the chain splice if worn.

During the season, use the windlass frequently even if you're not anchoring to keep its gears lubricated; merely crank it over for a few turns every couple of weeks. If the windless sits idle, the oil will drop off the internal gears, some of which are steel and prone to rust. While you're at it, manipulate any moveable parts; clutches, brakes, and chain stripper, to keep them working properly.

Once the anchor is set, always tie off the rode to a cleat with a bridle. Don't leave the windlass to hold the loads and absorb the forces that can develop in the current or a storm. A windlass has a clutch drive, and if you let it take the shock, the clutch will eventually slip, damaging the main bearing and shaft.

Tie down your anchor when underway with a safety device like a chain stopper or a line to a cleat on the foredeck. Even though the windlass power is shut down and the breaker shut off, the anchor can still come adrift. Usually, when this happens, the anchor drops back and becomes fouled in the prop.