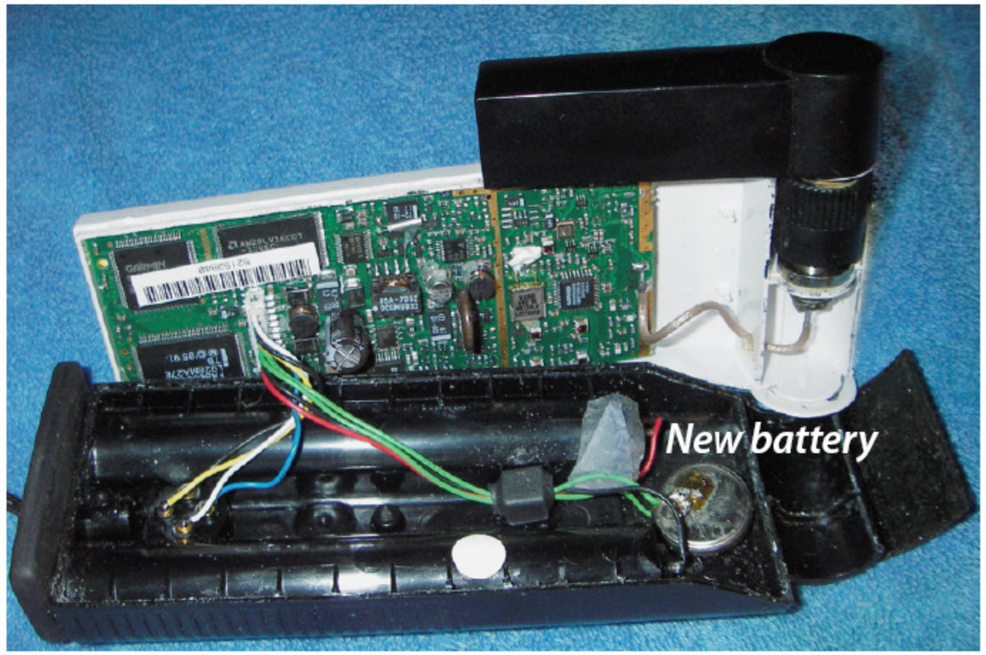
Salvaging Ye Ol' Garmin

Faced with the dreaded message "Memory Battery Low" on his aging Garmin 48, reader Rick McLaren contacted the manufacturer about getting the unit repaired. Although Garmin had fixed some readers' Garmin 48 units, the company responded to McLaren that because the unit had been discontinued for several years, the company had no way to repair it or replace the soldered-in battery. So McLaren took matters into his own hands.

Leaving the batteries, wiring, and screws in place, he cracked open the GPS casing around its perimeter. He then unplugged the wiring to make the battery more accessible. The existing, dead battery—which was soldered in two places and had no marking to show positive and negative—was removed. McLaren replaced the dud with a CR2032 Lithium battery from Radio Shack (No. 23-162), which is about the size of a quarter. He soldered on the new battery. According to McLaren, this was "easier said than done" as the lithium battery will explode when subjected to high heat for too long. He added, "Instead, use lots of rosin, heat the wire (not the battery), flow the solder onto the wire (not the battery), and then touch the wire to the battery."

Once fresh AA batteries were installed, the "Memory Battery Low" message disappeared and the unit was "rejuvenated," according to McLaren. He will seal it closed with silicone caulk, but even with the sealant, we wouldn't want to drop it in the drink.



Advised that his Garmin 48 could not be serviced by the maker as it had been discontinued years before, reader Rick McLaren carried out a tricky DIY repair—tricky because it involved exploding batteries.