

A CLOSER LOOK

The Weak Link: Battery Compartments

The marine environment is one of the harshest for sensitive electronic equipment, so *Practical Sailor* expects manufacturers make an extra effort to protect their marine-grade equipment from dust, impact, and moisture. All three of the devices in this comparison took a different approach to protecting vulnerable points such as data ports and battery compartments. None of them, in the testers' views hit the mark.

The GPSMap 76CSx has a straightforward, metal twist-lock latch that seats the small back cover against its gasket. One potential problem with this arrangement is that the wrist-strap attaches to this latch, preventing it from lying flat in the locked position. A dedicated attachment point for the wrist strap would be a better solution, in our opinion.

Both the Colorado and Oregon series GPS latch with a hard plastic snap-lock that clamps the back covers in place. The Colorado back cover slides in place and snaps tight; the Oregon back cover simply snaps tight. The Colorado fell short here. The cover was not only difficult to fit, but water leaked beneath it, and the snap-lock gave some testers problems. Another concern regarding these products in the marine environment is that

the USB mini-B port is vulnerable to corrosion. Only the GPSMap76CSx still has a serial port interface connection, but that in turn requires a serial-to-USB converter to connect to most modern laptops.

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The three test units took three different approaches to protecting the battery compartment, data card slots, and data ports.

