

Reviving a Headmate?

The Wilcox-Crittenden Headmate 1460 Marine Toilet is one of the least expensive heads on the market today (\$149 at www.westmarine.com), and our recent experience attempting to resuscitate a five-year-old

Headmate emphasizes the point

made in our last head test (September 2000):

If you want long-term reliable service from your head, you have to pay for it.

PS was not a fan of the Headmate back in 2000, and this opinion has not changed.

(Since *Practical Sailor* reviewed the Headmate in 2000, Wilcox-Crittenden was purchased by Thetford Corp. of Ann Arbor, Mich.)

The original Headmate on our test boat was way overdue for servicing. Several hours were spent trying to remove scale build-up in the head prior to installing the standard repair kit, including the requisite valves and seals.

During the course of this procedure, our tester made five calls to the Thetford service number. Four times, he was put on hold for five to 10 minutes, and four times he was disconnected. A fifth call yielded someone knowledgeable, and, after much back-and-forth to make sense of the installation instructions, the head was put in service again. We suspect that most people simply give up, throw out their partially-serviced Headmate, then purchase another head.

During the three months that the resuscitated Headmate was in service, the valve cover never stopped leaking, and the pump became harder and harder to push. Eventually, the handle snapped off while pumping. Having lost all emotional attachment to the Headmate, our tester decided to retire it.

