

The Old Shoebox Newsletter

Adventures in modern technology by Marlo E. Schuldt

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Monitor Cleaning Alert!



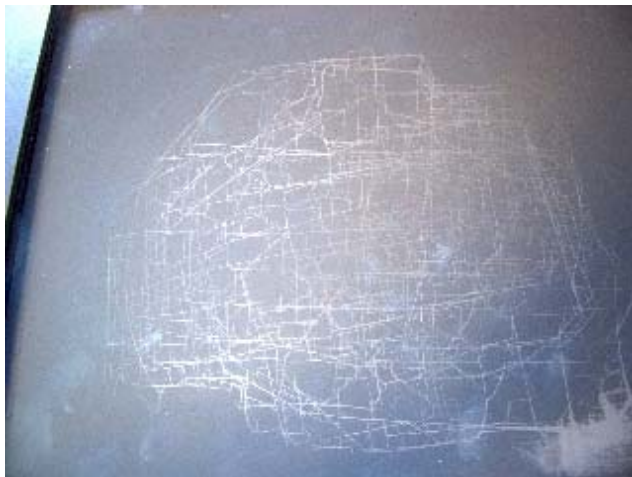
Monitors get dusty and covered with finger prints and need to be cleaned on a regular basis. However, this simple little task can spell BIG Danger to your monitor and cause real damage to the antiglare coating.

A few years ago I spent the extra bucks to purchase an expensive 19 inch NEC Diamondtron monitor. It has worked flawlessly and been an outstanding monitor in both graphics, brightness and clarity.

About a month ago that all suddenly changed and some phantom scratches appeared out of nowhere. At first I thought maybe I had scratched the monitor while moving my desk. I thought maybe a cardboard box had been touching the front of the monitor and scratched it when I was moving the desk across the room.

I started to notice more "scratches" each day and thought that I was just starting to fixate on these little irritations and how really careless I'd been while moving the desk.

Each day I would mumble and berate myself at being so careless in the way I had handled moving my expensive monitor each time I saw a new scratch. One



day I carefully moved my fingernail across the display and thought I could actually feel the "scratches."

I continued to notice more of these annoying scratches since there was a brighter light coming through the scratch than the surrounding area. This became very annoying. Soon my wife, son and others were asking what was wrong with my monitor and wondered how I could stand to look at it each day for hours at a time.

Comments like these started to work on me to the point that I began to search the internet to see if I could find any information and hopefully a remedy to my worsening monitor scratches. It was then that I decided that the antiglare finish on the monitor was actually starting to crack and separate. NOT COOL! I wasn't happy. At least I hadn't really scratched it.

All the suggestions sounded like a lot of work and very "IFY" so I continued to get more irritated each day because all I could see were more scratches when I looked at the monitor. I have a dual monitor system and the LCD looked so much better with no scratches.

I started getting pricing for a Samsung 20 inch LCD to match my other 'scratchless' monitor. The good news / bad news was it was going to cost me about \$239.00 to get a new LCD.

I finally decided to call NEC support. They were very helpful and of course the monitor was about 3 months out of warranty. However, the warranty would not have helped because NEC does not warranty the glass (with the antiglare coating) in front of the monitor.

I thought that was strange but it gave me a big hint that I had stumbled into another one of **Marlo's Mine Fields**. I was sooooo right!

The first question the tech asked was if I had used Windex or some other cleaner that contained ammonia. I thought I knew better than to use any cleaner but a soft cloth and water. The tech and I pretty much verified the worst - damaged and cracking antiglare coating. He could not recommend a solution. At least not one that a tech could recommend without any liability to NEC.

So it was back to checking prices on the new Samsung 20 inch replacement. I didn't really want to do that because I had my eye on a really cool new external hard drive with a built in LCD (more on that after I purchase and give you all a report).

OK - here's a photo of my pathetic NEC. It didn't look this bad when it was turned on. This photo was taken with the monitor facing up toward the light so it's much more obvious at this angle than when turned on.

My wife had the best description. She it looked like a city or road map. What a strange shape - just about like the circular area that a squirt of Windex would produce! I think we have found the culprit - Windex.

I then decided that I didn't have anything to lose so I began my very scientific effort to salvage the monitor. Besides, I had to attempt this BEFORE I dared tell my wife that we needed to purchase a new monitor.

My Many Failed Attempts

I tried almost every toxic substance known to man! Don't laugh - here's a list of things that did not work.



Acetone - very bad choice for many reasons including the fact that it can etch the glass and burn out your lungs in a poorly ventilated kitchen (my favorite work area to my wife's disdain).

Paint Stripper / Remover - smells terrible, can ruin almost anything it touches including tables, floors, and the plastic around the monitor. I was lucky and very careful so the kitchen floor and counter were saved.

I tried two different types of remover and it only took off a tiny bit of the black coating after a lot of rubbing and scrubbing which produced painful squeaks almost as bad as scratching your fingernail down a blackboard.

Paint Thinner. No difference. Don't light a match!

GOOF OFF. Did a tiny bit with lots of rubbing but no real effect. At least the trip to Lowe's to get it put some fresh air into my lungs.

OK here's where you get to laugh out loud and wonder what kind of nut case is writing this . . .

Peppermint Extract. Why not give it a try. It's pretty powerful and nothing else was working! At least it made a great air freshener and the room smelled more like outdoors than the gym full of people exercising.

Butter. My sister suggested baby oil and since we didn't have any baby oil I thought butter was close. Note this was real butter and therefore better for my health and nontoxic!

Sandpaper. Not really but I really, really wanted to just go after it since this was like ice skating over a coating that was stronger than the glass it was coated on.

So ask yourself this. How could a couple of squirts of Windex do such damage? Weird, don't you think? I don't know when this happened. Maybe someone snuck in late one night trying to get even with me for something I did when I was a testy teenager.

Windex. Of course it didn't do anything or help remove the coating. That only happens when you are aren't looking and if you don't know that Windex, or any other cleaner with ammonia, can spell death to your monitor.

Fire Brite Glass Cleaner. Very scary stuff. It has lye in it with some other toxic and human harmful stuff.

So you are probably asking why I have all this bad stuff around the house. Simple, we have been doing some remodeling so that explains the paint removal stuff. OK, the stuff with lye - I have a fancy little gas fireplace with glass to see the fire. Even natural gas coats the glass with black over a winter heating season.

Wallpaper Remover. Ok. The list stops here and I didn't try it because I had decided that anything that was water based probably would just be a waste of time and just another way to put some more toxic substances into my body.

So why am I telling you all this? I hope you will not risk your health attempting to use any of these substance and worse of all, you will spend all this time and money

and it still won't work. You can then spend money with a therapist specializing in rage reduction.

Is There a Happy Ending? **YES**

You will probably have another good laugh and hope you do! The day before, my wife said that I should try the fireplace cleaner as she passed through the kitchen.

I'm surprised her thoughts weren't washed out by all the mumbling and squeaking glass sounds emanating from me and the glass on the monitor. Who knows, maybe the squeaky sound was actually the monitor squeaking under all the pressure and unusual punishment it was getting.



Fireplace Cleaner For Glass

I wasn't really excited to use this cleaner since I already knew from cleaning the fireplace that it was more like using liquid car polish. I also thought it would also just make a slick mess on the glass.

To my sheer amazement the black coating started to come off with a little scrubbing and a paper towel.

This stuff worked so much better than the paint remover it was simply unbelievable.

This was going to be my last attempt before spending the big bucks on a new monitor.

Best of all, it wasn't as toxic or dangerous to use, smelled much better and worked so much faster.



Results

My monitor looks beautiful! It is almost as bright as my LCD which is a very pleasant surprise. Yes, it is very glary but controlling the room light helps with that. I may buy an inexpensive antiglare glass monitor filter that is made for monitors to reduce the glare.

What Cleaner to Use?

So I've been punished enough and learned my lesson even though I can't ever remember using that blue bottle of Windex. I want to rationalize and think that my wife must have snuck in and cleaned my office and monitor. I guess we will never know. Maybe the coating on my NEC monitor just wore out or something like that.

When cleaning, if in doubt use a soft cloth and warm water to be safe.

There are special cleaners that are made for monitor cleaning. After what I went through, any cleaner that costs less than \$230 is a real deal not to mention how many hours I spent rubbing the glass and smelling toxic fumes.

The special monitor cleaner shown was used by my geek son when he worked for a company that repaired laptops. Do a search on Amazon.com for Klear Screen.



Cautions

I'm not suggesting you try this and make NO GUARANTEES that you will get the same positive results. You are on your own. I'm sure that monitor manufacturers probably use different antiglare coating mixtures which means that this may not work for you.

Never attempt to take your monitor apart!

Your monitor is like a great big battery and could shock you to the point it could stop your heart. GET THE MESSAGE! DEAD!

You could really get hurt trying to take the monitor apart so don't so we can still be good friends for years to come !!!

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