



Wheelchair Electronics and Fluid Exposure: What You Need to Know

Throughout the normal lifespan of a power wheelchair, a certain degree of exposure to various fluids is not uncommon. An active wheelchair user will get caught in the rain and drive through puddles. Even the most conscientious user who is incontinent will have accidents. Spills of juice, pop and water occur. However, when these incidents occur and fluids come in contact with the wheelchair electronics, it is of the utmost importance that they are cleaned up IMMEDIATELY. While the basic construction of the controller does offer fluid protection, controllers are not designed to be waterproof. They are not intended to come in direct contact, repeatedly, with any type of fluid. For additional maintenance information, please refer to your Owner's Manual.

Indications that the controller should be examined and/or replaced due to potential fluid ingress:

- ❑ Evidence of corrosion on lower cross members or mechanical/metal elements
- ❑ User with a history of incontinence or other urinary issues such as the use of catheter bags or absorbent seating materials
- ❑ Direct evidence of salt water, urine or other fluid exposure including deposits on lower areas, motors or the seating area of the chair that are chalky, yellowish, white or crystalline in nature.
 - Soft drinks like Pepsi or Coke, fruit juices and urine are especially corrosive and over time can cause significant damage on direct exposure to electronics
 - Pets may also play a role in contamination due to spraying or marking activities
- ❑ Evidence of a strong or unusual odor
- ❑ Continued complaints from the user indicating that the power wheelchair will not hold a charge, cannot fully charge the batteries or the batteries are dying very quickly even after obvious fixes such as battery or charger replacement have been performed.
- ❑ Unusual chair behavior or operation when driving. Obvious fixes such as motor or brush replacement have been performed and have proven ineffective.
- ❑ A protective shroud that is missing or not properly in place. Many chair types utilize decorative shrouds that also provide some level of protection against fluid contact. As such shrouds should always be in place.

As stated in Invacare's power wheelchair owner's manuals:

"Wheelchairs should be examined during maintenance for signs of corrosion (water exposure, incontinence, etc.). Electrical components damaged by corrosion should be replaced IMMEDIATELY. Wheelchairs that are used by incontinent users and/or are frequently exposed to water may require replacement of electrical components more frequently."