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Get a grip on your seat

Entrepreneur creates toilet accessory to prevent sliding

A loose toilet seat is not generally a health hazard, unless perhaps the toilet seat is on top of a flagpole.

"It doesn't hurt anything," Jeff Nielson of Novi is saying, "but it's annoying."

I thought I was the only one who wondered why the bolts that hold the plastic seat to your porcelain toilet seem to lose interest every six months. I was incorrect.

Based on an in-depth statistical sampling – Nielson and his buddy Charlie Streeter of Beverly Hills, having lunch at the Plaza Deli in Southfield – David Dowling is going to sell boxcar loads of Yukon Seat Grips.

Dowling, 56, a builder and developer from Northville, has put up everything from condos to a tomato-packing plant the size of Lincoln Park. He does historic restorations, he almost did a casino once, and yet "every time I turned around, toilet seats were coming loose."

"I thought, 'If I can build a subdivision, I surely can keep a toilet seat from moving.'"

So he started experimenting, and voila: He's ready to saturate the market with Michigan-made, \$2.99 four-packs of adhesive-coated washers that make toilet seats put down roots like redwoods.

Extensive toilet research

It's been two years since Dowling set out on his mission. Along the way, he learned many new things: most toilet companies don't make their own seats; entire companies are devoted to crafting those plastic strips of cheap items that hang from shelves at grocery stores; and a big square chunk of rubber is called a bun.

His research led him to 1-inch squares of compressible rubber from a company near Alpena, treated on both sides with a pres-



NEAL RUBIN



Dowling

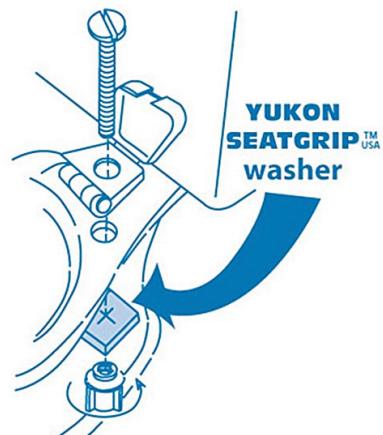


The Yukon Seat Grip keeps your toilet seat from coming loose and sliding around beneath you.

sure-sensitive adhesive at a factory in Monroe, and attached to toilet-shaped cardboard display pieces at sheltered workshops in Detroit and Novi.

The washers fit on the bolt beneath the toilet, bonding to the porcelain and the tightened nut. Dowling, a burly guy with a voice made for radio, demonstrates the concept as he sits on a standard chair. No matter how he moves, the rubber holds its grip, allowing the seat to move impercep-

How it works



Step 1: Remove the nut from the screw and remove the toilet seat.

Step 2: Clean the ceramic surface, remove the backing from the washer, and dip it into water to activate the adhesive.

Step 3: Install the washer as illustrated. The adhesive will set when tightened.

tibly and then tugging it back into place.

Named for his Royal Oak construction company – which in turn was named for his dream of retiring to Alaska, which his wife politely vetoed – the Yukon Seat Grip won a Retailers Choice Award at the 2009 International Hardware Show in Las Vegas. Dowling is dickering with a major toilet seat manufacturer and an even more major home goods store, and his toilet accessory appears ready to plunge into the retail whirlpool.

From the bottom up

With the help of a friend in the maintenance business, Dowling field-tested the Seat Grip at places that didn't even know they were involved.

He also placed it at 38 metro retailers, most of them hardware stores.

If yours isn't among them, try www.yukonseatgrip.com.

"We just got another 24 in today," says Glenn Young of Jean's Hardware in Farmington Hills. "Some people already know about it; a lady came in the other day and bought the last three or four."

"Other times, someone will say, 'I've got this toilet seat, and it's slipping around. Do you have a product?'"

Indeed he does, and he can tell customers that Dowling built his brand the right way – from the bottom up.

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