

The First Law of Dropped Screw Dynamics

Ham Radio corollary to the well-known law of the universe,
“battered toast always falls butter-side downward.”

Richard Feynman, the well-loved outspoken American theoretical physicist, known for his work in quantum mechanics, was he, I believe, who said, “There are two classes of people in the world, those who understand the full implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (entropy) and those who don’t.”

Entropy – all systems tend toward disorder – is easiest to see in ham radio in the way screws and nuts jump out of your fingers when you are working on a radio project. Clearly, they are the best handiwork of the Second Law. I put it this way, “Screws and Nuts have a highly perverse mind. I have been keeping my eye on them now for some time, and believe me, I know. Here are the rules of screw entropy at your workbench:



1940 QST Cartoon

IF YOU DROP ONE

- It will always roll farther than you think.
- If there is something it can roll under, it will.
- It rolls in the opposite direction of the sound of falling.
- If it falls without making a sound, you’ll never find it.
- When it hits, it seeks for a hiding place that you “just can’t quite reach.”
- If you try to find it with a magnet it will be made of brass or stainless steel.
- If it falls on a carpet it buries itself deep in the pile.
- If you watch it fall, it knows you are watching, and this time will forego its evil intentions.
- If you remove one, it won’t be where you laid it on your workbench when you go to put it back.
- All screwdrivers in reach, when you want to put it back, will be one size too large or small. (Screws and screwdrivers are in cahoots)

- You will find it in your shoe when you leave the room.

DROPPED FROM A LADDER OR TOWER

- Big bolts and nuts will always hit and damage something, and favor the newest Mercedes, Lexus, or Cadillac in the parking lot.
- They will always bounce just outside your property.
- They love flower beds and dense ground cover.

JUNK BOX COROLLARIES

- If you need four screws for a project, there will only be three in your junk box.
- If you need a 1 in. screw, the longest in your junk box will be $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
- If you need a 6-32 nut, all the nuts in your junk box will be 8-32.
- All screws in you junk box will be slot-blades if you need a Phillips
- Your local hardware store is always out of the size you need.

CONSPIRACY DEMONS

- Solder hardens 1ms after a component is too hot to hold onto.
- If you spill something on your workbench, the only paper in reach to wipe it up will be your schematic.

Readers: send your own screw(y) rules to John Portune W6NBC,
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