



Cobalt accessory Decoders: Warranty and related issues

The "Cobalt Accessory Decoder" warranty is 12 months

Who and what does the 12 month warranty apply to?

The Warranty applies to the original purchaser only. It is not transferable.

As with all warranty, it is up to YOU as a retailer to confirm that the unit was purchased from you by the claimant or that he is the original owner. Private E-bay purchases are specifically excluded.

We trust you, but if you do not know the customer, recall making the sale, cannot validate it, or, if it was purchased elsewhere, then you should require proof of purchase before offering any warranty support.

IF the customer cannot provide that information, of he/she is not the original purchaser you can:

- Reject the warranty request but offer to send it for repair at his/her cost.
- Request that he deals directly with us (email warranty@DCCconcepts.com)

IF this is a good customer, we leave your approach in your hands, but please DO be sure to read our "warranty or not" introduction before you do so. We are able to be helpful and supportive, but only if the product is complete, undamaged physically and totally complete.

The "Cobalt Accessory Decoder" warranty return issues (an overview)

This what we usually find when we investigate problems with accessory decoders:

- (1) Analysis of what has died on the circuit boards shows some clear trends... Of course there are genuine faults as well, but the most common cause of parts failure is actually accidental shorting of the back of the PCB on metal surfaces, and that is NOT warranty!
- (2) As with other things, MOST so-called warranty returns come from very few customers: In fact more than 1/3 are "no fault found" & more than half of the rest are actually NOT warranty failures.
- (3) Most users love the way they work, especially our solenoid decoders and they have no problems.

Every now and again there are issues, while inevitably, a few customers have multiple problems.

This "Multiple failure" pattern is rarely warranty and immediately points to wrong power supply, bad wiring quality or wrong use or connection of switch inputs- and that is usually allied to careless handling & failure to read or to respect the manual as the most likely root cause of their problems.

- (4) **Addressing is a vexing problem: We test with many brands and they work with ALL of them, every time when we test - but sometimes customers have problems.** MOST of these are caused by trying to follow the DCC system instructions for setting accessory decoders, which will usually NOT work. (DCC system makers really only know how THEIR brand of accessory decoders should be addressed)

We use a simple direct addressing approach which is standards approved.

The DCCconcepts Accessory decoder is attached to the track bus, put into "learn" mode and then all the modeller has to do is act as if he or she is actually changing the point at the number they want it to be.

Being in learn mode, the decoder hears and remembers that address, so all that is then needed is to return it to run mode.

- (5) **MANY Digital product problems are caused by entry level DCC control system design, in particular from train-set brands.** Also, Z21, E-link, Elite and others can have some issues related to addressing.

Often just changing the poor quality power supply of the DCC system will fix problems...

but unless you learn or know about such things, how can you advise or help customers? (SO, if users do have address setting problems, ask us. We can usually give some practical help and some clear advice)



Cobalt accessory Decoder issues: What to do, how to do it!

Continued...

- (6) **Dead on one channel.** If it wasn't for the fact that EVERY output is tested by being addressed and operated at least twice before packing we would be less certain... but because we DO test at that high level, we know absolutely that every channel of every unit works when we sell them.

Of course, nothing is perfect and things can go wrong ...and be warranty - but it is truly rare.

MOST dead channels are really caused by wiring or accidental shorts: This most often manifests itself as a customer claim that "One output channel is dead" or "It is getting hot on one channel".

Causes can be many: perhaps a strand of wire left on the PCB when they wire them, careless wiring with bridging strands of copper between two terminals, sitting the PCB on a conductive surface etc...

Old DC habits cause errors too. Trying to use too much DC-thinking in common wiring with digital isn't wise, and we know of at least one modeller who left an active CDU in-line with his switch wiring that was connected to an accessory decoder, guaranteeing every output would be killed the first time he used it!

It can also be a BAD soldering Iron. Many, many "old" and a few low cost new soldering irons are not only not ESD safe (safe to use on electronics) - they actually have mains voltage leaks which can happen because of internal insulation breakdown or even an improperly wired mains plug. It's dangerous too.

(Accidentally shorting by putting it on a conductive surface has been identified as a "Fixable problem". To reduce possible future customer error, all new models & new production of existing models are now very well protected with a layer of insulating rubber on the bottom surface).

To be fair to all on this: It isn't easy to know what is or what is not warranty here, so we can look at it and decide if you aren't sure. Most of the time it is not, but in the interest of good relations we can be a little relaxed about it providing its an odd case, not several decoders/outputs damaged by one customer.

- (7) **Dead on MORE than one channel? This just isn't at all likely to be a real warranty issue!**

We say its unlikely because this kind of failure is clearly caused more often than it "just happens". Frankly - ONE output is a possibility but because we test 100% of outputs, several dead just can not happen.

Be cautious with warranty if more than one channel is dead. The outputs are not linked internally other than for their power input, so one output cannot affect another UNLESS power input voltage/wiring is wrong or if the customers switch wiring is somehow wrong.

Old DC "common wires" and leaving CDU's in switch or power input wiring are far more likely errors. And... These may indeed be accidental user errors but carelessness is definitely NOT warranty!

- (8) **MANY that we see sent back because they supposedly have problems actually work perfectly.** This also, unfortunately, points to some other issues, such as lack of product knowledge or not reading manuals by the user before connection, Plus over-hasty acceptance of returns without checking by the retailer, and lack of questioning of modeller techniques or "teaching" by retailers.

Sadly, sometimes they have just been sold the WRONG decoder in the first place!

OK - so what IS warranty and what is not with Accessory decoders?

- (1) **Its probably warranty:** If only one output is dead, you have covered possible customer issues and it won't work to specification after you've tested it with a good DCC system - ie: NCE/Digitrax/ESU/Lenz.

- (2) **Re testing:**

- Always turn off rail-com in any test units as even brands promoting rail-com acknowledge that it can interfere with addressing. Take care in choosing a test unit: Some units such as the Hornby E-link, Hornby Elite and Z21 have Accessory decoder addressing problems that eliminate them as good for testing anything that works to DCC standards).
- Test with direct connection to the track bus and use only our addressing instructions.

If you learn about our products, look after customers and test before you return, we'll always help!



Cobalt accessory Decoder issues: What to do, how to do it!

(3) What does is "not working to specification mean"

- (a) If the accessory decoder doesn't accept an address using OUR addressing instructions with a DCC system that meets DCC standards properly. (check: It's usually system or user error).
- (b) If the accessory decoder addresses OK and it's connected properly but cannot change an appropriate point motor or does not work consistently/reliably, it is usually warranty.
(there can be exceptions, so if you are not sure, ask warranty@dcccconcepts.com)
- (c) If any of the on-board switches does not work properly, and it is not damaged. it is warranty.
- (d) If its just ONE output dead, it can be warranty, if more than 1 is dead, it's mostly user error.

Example: the units we see user problems with most are our first generation AD-S solenoid decoders.

Once power is applied, the CDU is charged. With the CDU charged, if an AD-S 2 or AD-S8 decoder is put down carelessly onto anything conductive on the bench such as a ruler, tools, or onto the metal track, or even a slightly conductive or damp surface it may discharge the CDU into sensitive parts such as the chip that manages the related channel. This is of course NOT warranty. We are however also sensitive to the fact that users may not understand that they are at fault so we allow a small amount of latitude in our decisions.

Suggestion:

If they've damaged one channel of an 8-way unit, you think that it's warranty and want to settle it fairly, then don't simply replace the 8-way unit. The best "fix" is to supply them with a 2-way version of the same accessory decoder type.

They will then end up with a real "win" with 9 working decoder outputs and cost is controlled!



Summary:

Most returns we receive are actually NOT truly warranty. We do however understand that often your customer may not realise or accept that it was his or her fault, no matter how hard you try to explain.

So...

We are prepared to be generous quite often...

However, there really are limits, so please do always try to make balanced decisions and DO test items that your customers claim are faulty to at least try to confirm the fault really IS warranty (or perhaps an honest error) before allowing warranty and asking us to replacing the item.

We will always deal with polite and honest calls for help more generously than claims that try to cover up reality... or that are made with a negative or loud approach.

- Question customers gently to learn about how their problem happened so you can help them.
- This will go a long way to make things happier all round, as teaching cures many problems!
- Please don't forget to feed back all of the information we need to check any warranty claims.
- Contact us at any time if we can help.

How to contact us? Phoning is fine – we are at GMT + 8 hours and I usually attend the office 10~5 weekdays and 12~5 weekends. +61 8 9437 2470. Email : warranty@dcccconcepts.com.

If you email us please include their email address along with your summary of the problem.

*Also please include your phone number if you think it will help * OR * Ask your customer to email us and include your Email address and contact details as well as their own.*

(We really need to keep YOU in the loop so that learning can happen ready for future questions)