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GD Itronix VR-2 Laptop Computer

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As much as you long time readers know that I dislike depending on things that need batteries or carefully controlled conditions to work, we all have to admit that – in today's world – computers seem to be needed for everything. Certainly they can make our jobs easier given their capabilities. That convenience is entirely dependent on their reliability and, in the field, their reliability is related to their ruggedness. General Dynamics is the first company I've had step up to allow me to abuse one of their laptops for the purpose of testing it and reporting it to this community of users.

Now before I get much into the info about the General Dynamics Itronix VR-2 laptop computer I want to be clear about this: there is another major manufacturer of ruggedized laptops who has contacted me with regard to writing a review of their product. When I asked them for a T&E laptop to "abuse" prior to writing it up I was told (paraphrased) "no way".

Hmmm... So, you want me to write a review of your laptop but you're not confident enough of its capabilities to let me beat it up THE WAY YOU SAY USERS CAN before I write it? Alrighty then. But not General Dynamics. Prior to testing I enjoyed a phone conversation and interview with them and made it abundantly clear that I intended to do what they told me I could. Their response? "That's fine." That first picture at the top shows you just how ugly things are about to get.

The second picture (immediately to the right here) shows it getting ugly. The rep from General Dynamics told me that I could pour any non-corrosive liquid into the keyboard - up to 12.6 ounces (because at that point it runs out) and let it sit for up to ten minutes before rinsing it out with warm water. As you can see, I picked something that can be fairly sticky - even after only ten minutes: Orange Juice. Just for the record, that's pulp free not from concentrate Simply Orange orange juice - about ten ounces of it. As you can see, I wasn't shy about pouring it into the keyboard.

The watch on the table, although not visible in clear detail in the photo, was included to keep track of time. Although General Dynamics said ten minutes I decided to go only five. I felt that was abusive enough. Additionally, once the time was passed I was told I could use warm water to rinse the thing out. So, not only did General Dynamics "man up" but they told me I could pour that liquid into it, rinse it out, and drop it all I wanted from a height up to 30'.



As you can see from the third picture it definitely got filled. Now while you contemplate that let's talk about what else I did with it. The laptop itself has the typical contemporary appearance and a built in handle. Every open point in the back of the laptop has a rubber plug to fill it securely. Two USB ports are available and the laptop is equipped - as is standard - with an internal wireless LAN card.

The handle swivels up and down in the back to work with different mounting systems or to move it out of the way of any wired you may need to connect. The one thing the handle CANT fix is how well YOU hold on to it. THAT is why the computer is designed to be dropped from up to 30" - that's about how high it is off the ground when the average person is holding the handle. It's also about the right height in case the laptop gets pushed off a table by accident or the arm of a sofa. Did I drop it? Just a few times. Ten to be exact. I made a point of dropping it five times while walking along as if normally. The other five times were from odd places and things - like off the arm of the sofa, pushed off the kitchen table, inside my backpack when I dropped it and two other miscellaneous drops that were staged. Throughout my drop testing I made sure it landed on several different surfaces from padded carpeting to the kitchen tile floor to the gravel driveway. By the time I'd finished the ten drop tests I was ready to test it's liquid capacity - hence the photos included here.



In this close-up you can see just how much OJ is sitting in that keyboard. As I said, it sat for five minutes. Afterward I rinsed it out and after the initial rinse it was still working! So, ten drop tests and ten ounces of OJ for five minutes. That's what they SAID it would take and still keep working. General Dynamics was confident enough to put their money where their mouth was and actually send me one to do this to. Having done this I can tell you: THIS is a laptop I believe will take the abuse the marketing paperwork SAYS it will. Those other guys? I'll believe it when they send me one and tell me to do this.

So, if you're looking for a ruggedized laptop, check them out. Like all such laptops, they ain't cheap - priced in about the \$3K range. But if they can put up with this stuff do you think they're worth it?

Stay Safe!