

Tensioning Tracks - Grease Fitting Adjustment

Many Derette mini skid steer loaders use a grease-fitting tensioner system for track adjustment, a common method for compact track loaders. The key to proper tensioning is achieving a specific amount of sag in the track to maximize component life and prevent de-tracking.

Required Sag

The ideal track sag for a compact track loader like the DRT320T is generally recommended to be about 1 to 1.5 inches (25 to 38 mm) between the track and the mid-point of the rollers. This measurement should be taken when the machine is lifted slightly off the ground.

Step-by-Step Tensioning Guide

Checking the Tension

1. Support the machine: Use the bucket to gently lift the front of the machine off the ground to relieve pressure on the tracks. Do not rely solely on the hydraulics for support.
2. Measure the sag: Using a tape measure, check the distance between the bottom of the central roller and the inside of the track. The ideal sag should fall within the 1" - 1.5" range.

Adjusting the Tension

The track tension is adjusted by adding or releasing grease through a tensioner valve located near the front idler wheel.

To Tighten the Track:

- Locate the access panel or cover plate for the track tensioner mechanism.
- Use a grease gun to slowly pump grease into the grease fitting (zerk).
- As you add grease, the idler wheel is pushed outward, increasing the tension.
- Continuously check the sag measurement until it falls within the recommended 1" to 1.5" range.

To Loosen the Track:

- Loosen the large nut that holds the grease fitting. On some models, this might require a 19mm or 32mm wrench.
- The grease will slowly release, reducing pressure and allowing the track to slacken.
- Retighten the nut once the desired tension is achieved.

Important Considerations

- Do not overtighten: Pumping the track full of grease until it won't take any more can cause premature wear on components like the idler and sprocket, and can even damage seals or snap the track.
- Consult the manual: While these handy general guidelines exist, always refer to the specific machine's Owner's Manual for exact manufacturer specifications to ensure optimal performance and longevity.
- Regular checks: Check track tension daily or as part of a regular maintenance routine to prevent issues like thrown tracks or excessive wear.
- Pro tips: Invest in a cordless electric grease gun from a reputable brand (here's a [Milwaukee unit](#)), add a locking [grease fitting coupler](#), and buy quality grease like this [Shell product](#). Grease all the fittings on your machine every 10 hours (5 in wet, muddy conditions) and check your track tension at the same time - your machine will last for years if you take care of it.