McLAREN
Manufacturer of Tracks and Tires

# How to Put Tracks Back on a Mini Excavator


Mini excavators are fantastic tools for a wide variety of jobs. They can maneuver into tight spots and perform plenty of tasks — unless their tracks fall off. When a track comes off of a mini excavator, it can be a frustrating experience, especially if it happens repeatedly. Loose tracks can lead to detracking and premature wear and tear, along with expensive replacements.

Thankfully, you don't need an expert to put the track back on, and keeping the track from loosening in the first place only requires a little maintenance. Learn more about what to do when a track comes off a mini excavator and how to put tracks back on.

## How Often do Mini Excavators Lose Tracks?

Mini excavators can lose their tracks more or less often depending on usage. A heavily used machine will lose tension more quickly than one that sees light use. Certain environments can also contribute to tension loss and make an excavator more likely to lose its tracks. Harsh terrain can also affect the tracks' tension and cause it to pop off more frequently.

Following appropriate maintenance and keeping a close eye on your components can help you detect any losses in tension and help you prevent losing tracks.

# Signs Your Tracks May Be Coming Loose

So how do you tell if your tracks are getting loose? Fortunately, mini excavators provide you with quite a few signs to alert you of this condition. Below are some of the telltale signs that your mini excavator tracks are getting loose.

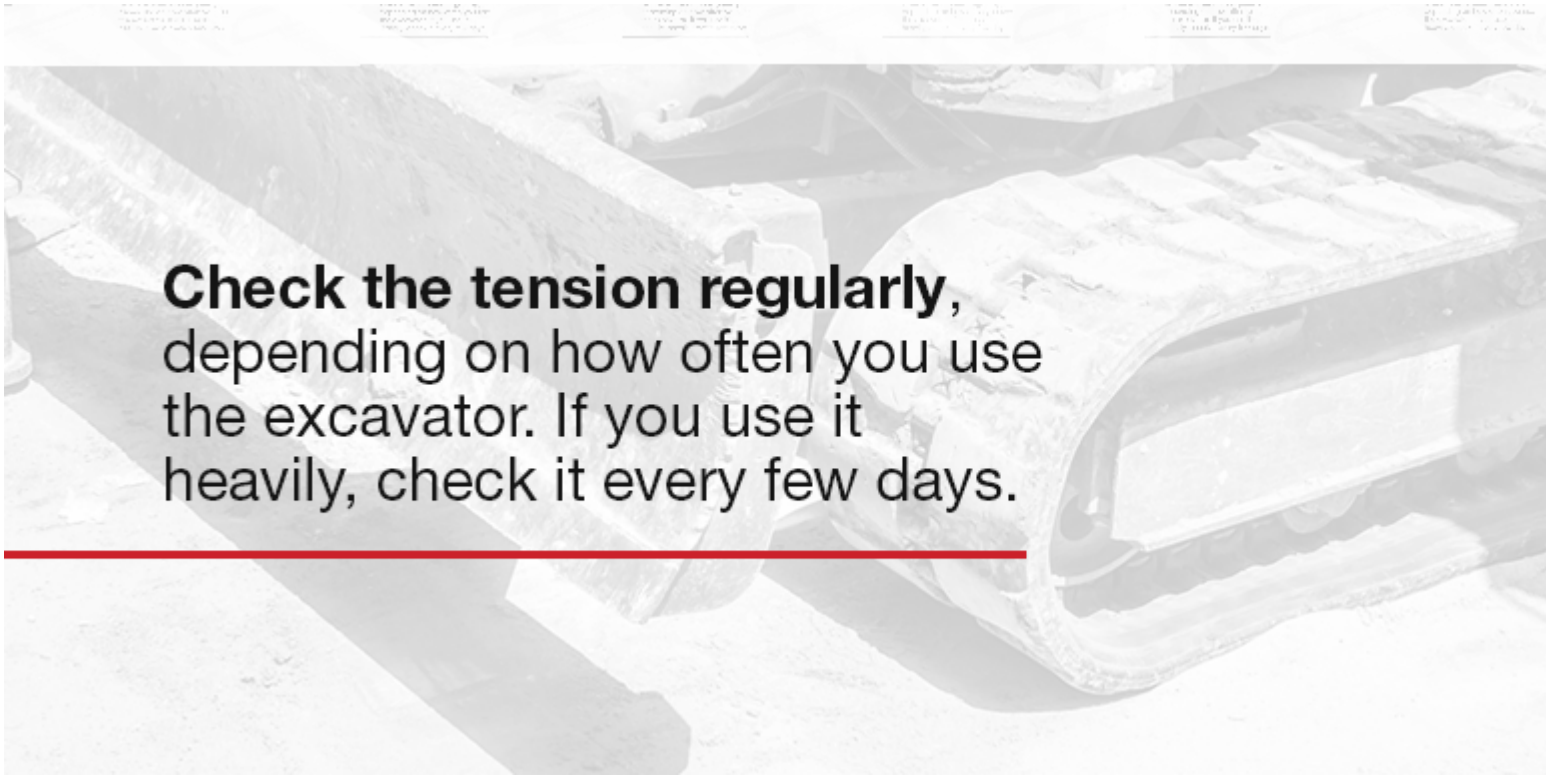
**1. Sprocket Issues**

The sprockets take care of the rotation of the track. They typically interlock with and move it around, but if they start to skip over lugs, you may have an issue. If they aren't interlocking appropriately, the track can come off. The skipping is a sign that your track may be loose or your sprocket is worn. Keep an eye on the condition of the sprockets.

**2. Lost Tension**

As you may expect from something made of rubber, tracks stretch with use. Check the tension regularly, depending on how often you use the excavator. If you use it heavily, check it every few days.

To check the tension, lift the tracks off the ground by moving the boom to one side and pushing it onto the ground. Then, examine the distance between the middle roller and the track. Check manufacturer specifications for a specific length to look for. An inch between roller and track tends to be average. If the distance is too wide, the wheels need tightening. Paying attention to track tension can help you extend the excavator's life and keep components in good condition.




**3. Missing Lugs**

Missing lugs can spell trouble for your track tension. The lugs may come out from sprockets slipping against them or if they are damaged. Look at the condition of the parts regularly to make sure they aren't affecting the tension of your tracks. Replace any missing lugs right away.

**4. Cracking**

Usage will affect the rubber on the outside of the tracks. Certain environments, like rocky terrain, can more quickly cause cracks to appear, and so can heat or sun exposure. Once cracks show up, you should replace your tracks. High-quality rubber can better resist cracking, and storing your mini excavator out of direct sunlight can help.

**5. Deterioration**

Deterioration can similarly cause premature wear on your tracks. If they are exposed to excessive heat, damage or sunlight, you may find stress marks or even rotting rubber. If your tracks begin to deteriorate like this, it's time for a replacement.

Fortunately, many of these problems are preventable with regular maintenance of your compact excavator . We'll get into track maintenance tasks later, but first, let's take a look at what happens if your tracks do manage to come off of your mini excavator.

# How to Put Tracks Back on Your Mini Excavator

Putting the tracks back on a mini excavator doesn't require any advanced knowledge, just a little elbow grease — and some real grease, of course. Thankfully, it's a relatively quick process, though you'll probably need a friend to help you out.

You will need:

- **A socket set**
- **Grease**
- **A grease gun**
- **Pry bars**

**Here's how to fix your tracks:**

1. Setup: Raise the side of the track you are trying to fix by pushing the boom into the ground on the side you're working on. If your excavator is in an uneven location, you can use the boom to help you "walk" it to level ground.
2. Remove grease: Open the panel above the tracks that contains the grease fitting or zerk. Use a wrench to remove the top fitting. Grease should start to flow out, releasing tension in the tracks. Clear out the grease. The track should be almost completely slack.
3. Move track: Use your pry bar to pull the track over the wheel. Rotate the track so it locks onto the wheel. Here's where you may need a second person to help you out, as the tracks are heavy.
4. Regrease: Hook up your grease gun to the fitting and pump grease back in to increase the tension until the tracks are appropriately tightened according to manufacturer specifications.
5. Attach panel: Reattach the panel and you're ready to get back to work.

That's all it takes to get your track reattached to the mini excavator so you can keep moving. If you think your machine might be configured in a unique way, it may help to check the owner's manual for more information on where certain components are, such as the grease fitting.