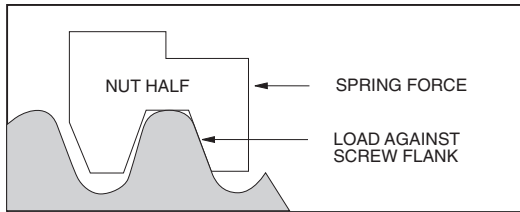
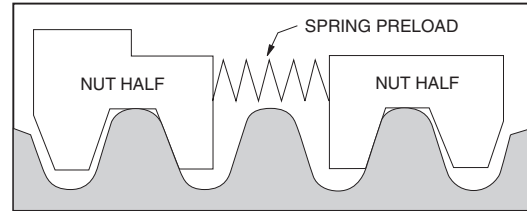


Axial Take-up Mechanism

The standard method for taking up backlash is to bias two nut halves axially using some type of compliant spring. (Wavy washer, compression spring, rubber washer, etc.)

The unit is very stiff in the direction in which the nut half is loaded against the flank of the screw thread. However, in the direction away from the screw thread, the nut is only as axially stiff as the amount of preload which the spring exerts.

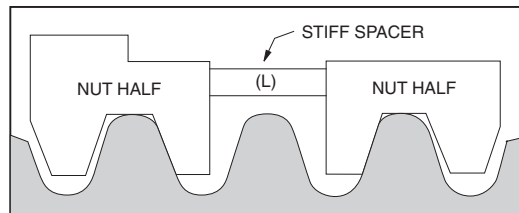


For example, if the maximum axial load to which the system is subjected is 50 lbs., the amount of spring preload must be equal to, or greater than, 50 lbs. in order to maintain intimate screw/nut contact. The problems arising from preloading in this manner are increased drag torque and nut wear.

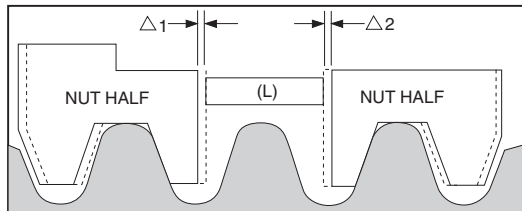
Obviously, the higher the load at the screw/nut interface, the higher the required torque to drive the nut on the screw and the more susceptible the unit is to nut wear.

An alternate method replaces the spring with a stiff spacer sized to fit exactly between the two nut halves.

There is no excessive preload force at the interface and the unit is capable of carrying high axial loads in either direction with no backlash.



This is fine initially. However, as use time increases, wear begins on the nut threads causing a gap to develop between the spacer (L) and the nut halves.



This gap ($\Delta 1 + \Delta 2$) is now the amount of backlash which has developed in the unit. This backlash can be removed by replacing the stiff spacer with a new spacer equal to $(L + \Delta 1 + \Delta 2)$. This process, although effective, would be extremely costly and difficult to implement on a continuous basis.

The Solution

What is needed, then, is a stiff spacer which will continually expand to accommodate the wear which occurs during use.

This is done by creating a spacer threaded at one end with a complimentary nut torsionally biased to advance when a gap develops.

The thread at the end of the spacer is a fine helix such that an axial load will not backdrive the nut once spacer growth has occurred.

The preload on the unit is only the amount necessary to turn the spacer nut on the spacer rod and is independent of the external system loadings. We thus have a self-wear compensating unit which has extremely low frictional drag torque yet high axial stiffness.

