What is a Toy Hauler?
Determining RV Values
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What is a Toy Hauler?
I’m sure you have seen them around, but what exactly are these things called toy haulers?

Beware of your Tow Ratings
Manufacturer published tow ratings don’t always add up, find out why.

Selecting the Right Size Inverter
Thinking about buying an inverter, but you’re not sure what size inverter to get? Discover everything you need to know in this article by Don Wilson.

Determining RV Values
Curious about how RV values are determined? If so, check out this informative article by Greg Gerber.

RV Speak - the “D’s”
Learn how to speak RV speak. This month we cover some RV terminology for the D’s.

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The laptop we would've used to keep in touch with the kids.

The guy from Ed's Towing. Spent three hours with him.

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Hello Fellow Campers,

I was born, raised and lived in North Central Pa. until I joined the Army and left home. Through the years I made the journey back to Pennsylvania too many times to count. During each of those trips I would pass by one of the most significant locations in American history, Gettysburg, Pa. I always told myself that one day I would take some time to stop and visit the surrounding historical area.

This spring our first RV trip of the season was to Gettysburg, and it was well worth the wait. What I truly love about RVs and RVing is that your RV can be a private guesthouse for relatives when they come to visit, a weekend getaway to your favorite campground or a cross-country history lesson for you and your kids. It’s whatever you want it to be and best of all it’s fun and safe.

Happy RV Learning,

Mark

www.rvconsumer.com
RV Education 101 has a brand new RV video site designed to help educate you on RV how-to topics, RV products, RV tips and much more.

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Learn about your RV the easy way at RV101.TV
I remember the first time I laid eyes on a toy hauler. My initial thoughts were “What were they thinking?” But innovation and change are what help shape and define the RV industry. After giving the concept some consideration it all started to make sense.

Many years ago the RV consumer voiced their opinion about taking toys along with them on camping trips. You couldn’t tow a trailer with another trailer for the dirt bikes or ATVs. Hence the toy hauler was born. During the early years it had many names: The Sport Utility Trailer or (SUT), the Sport Utility Recreation Vehicle (SURV) and of course the Toy Hauler.

Whatever the name, they would soon take the market by storm. Originally toy haulers arrived on RV dealer’s lots looking similar to a conventional travel trailer, but with a big door on the rear of the trailer. The door would serve double-duty as a ramp to load and unload all the toys.

These trailers came with basic living quarters in the front of the trailer and cargo space in the rear. Soon manufacturers raised the rear roof of the trailer to accommodate an overhead drop down bed for additional sleeping arrangements.

Most offered cooking facilities, dining areas, bathrooms, and sleeping arrangements like conventional travel trailers.

Before long RV manufacturers realized buyer’s for this new type of RV weren't your typical campers. When you have toys like dirt bikes and ATVs you go places most folks don’t normally go. You go out in the desert, and off the beaten path.

Manufacturers started adding larger wastewater tanks, fresh water holding tanks and generators making the toy hauler fully self-contained. Slide-outs were added for additional interior living space and many options were available to help the owners enjoy these out of the way places they love to visit.
Toy Haulers are here to Stay

Before long toy haulers captured a fair share of the RV marketplace and the attention of other RV manufacturers. This new found popularity soon evolved from the conventional travel trailer model toy hauler into fifth wheel and motorhome versions of toy haulers. Prices went up, but so did the amenities. Now you could take your toys out in the middle of nowhere and still feel as though you were sitting at home in your living room.
As time went on toy haulers were not just intended for the weekend dirt bike or ATV enthusiasts. They became popular among race car owners and horse lovers too. Since they are available in anything from conventional trailers to high-end motorhomes, prices for toy haulers can range from $15,000 to let's just say very expensive! **RV 101**
Q&A with Mark

Question: Hi Mark, What are the best products and methods for re-caulking your RV roof and how often should the maintenance be done?

Answer: Good question. Let me begin by saying that it is important you use sealants compatible with the material your RV roof and other products you are sealing are constructed out of.

If you have the RV owner’s manual for your RV it will usually specify sealants you can use, and at what intervals you should perform routine roof cleaning and maintenance on your RV. This is extremely important because in many cases the RV warranty can be voided if these inspection and maintenance intervals aren’t performed.

With that said let me tell you a product I personally use to seal and maintain RV roofs. I use Dicor 501 LSW Self-Leveling Sealant. This sealant is used in the RV industry by original equipment manufacturers and for aftermarket use. It is compatible with EPDM and TPO rubber products, galvanized metal, aluminum and fiberglass roofs.

To stay current with what’s happening in the world of RVs between magazine issues visit our Blog. We post informative RV tips and information a couple times per week. There is also an option to follow the Blog via e-mail. Just look on the right sidebar and when you sign up you’ll be notified every time we make a post.

RV Quick Tip

When cleaning a rubber roof never use cleaners containing petroleum, harsh abrasives, or citrus ingredients. Rinse the sides, front and back of your RV before rinsing cleaners from the roof to prevent streaking or damage to the finish on your RV.
Truck manufacturers are notorious for publishing tow ratings that sometimes seem too good to be true. It’s because, in what I refer to as the “towing wars”, each manufacturer wants to come out on top to boast that they have the “best-in-class” tow ratings. The big question is can these inflated ratings put the RV consumer in jeopardy when they attempt to tow the amount of weight a manufacturer says the vehicle can safely tow?

Several years ago I took issue with a Ford commercial I saw on TV when Ford made the claim their F-150 could safely tow 11,000 pounds. You can go here to read how that unfolded. I also posted an update to the article here.

I am not bashing Ford, but recently a concerned Ford truck owner wrote to me asking for help in determining what the correct tow capacity was for his 2011 Ford F-250, 6.7L diesel, crew cab, short bed 4x4 truck. It seems that after reviewing Ford towing guides, information published on the Ford media site and talking to Ford dealership representatives he was more confused now than he was before.

Up for another towing challenge I decided to take the plunge and see what I could figure out.

During my initial research I reviewed two different Ford trailer towing guides published for the 2011 model year Ford vehicles. Interestingly the maximum loaded trailer weight rating (MLTWR) for the truck in question was different in both guides. No wonder he is confused about the truck’s towing capacity. One towing guide published a MLTWR of 15,700 pounds and the other published a MLTWR of 14,400 for the same exact truck.

As I dug a little deeper I discovered the towing guide with the higher towing capacity was created on 09/03/2010, and the towing guide with the lower towing capacity was created on 04/20/2011. With the aforementioned towing wars between the big three automakers one has to wonder if maybe the tow capacities were inflated for the purpose of being “best-in-class” when they first introduced the 2011 model year trucks.

This is a statement published by Ford early in the 2011 model year, cited from a media.ford.com article titled, 2011 Ford F-Series Super Duty Regains Towing Leadership with Production Upgrades; Leads in Customer Satisfaction
DEARBORN, Mich., Feb. 7, 2011 – Production begins this week on Ford F-Series Super Duty trucks with upgraded towing capacity. The beefed-up frame and hitch return the industry's best-selling heavy-duty truck to the head of the pack in conventional trailer towing. Higher-strength steel in a frame crossmember and an upgraded trailer hitch give the truck the additional towing capacity.

This begs the question if the higher-strength steel in the frame raised the towing capacity why was it lowered in the revised towing guide published in April, 2011?

What I found even more interesting is the fact that in the 2012 Ford towing guide this same truck’s towing capacity increased from 14,400 pounds to 15,200 pounds. I wonder what actually changed on the 2012 model to add another 800 lbs. of towing muscle back into the mix!

Putting all this aside for now my best guess is a Ford truck buyer is supposed to follow the information found in the towing guide with the latest revision date when attempting to determine a correct towing capacity. If we go with that conclusion we are back to a 14,400 pound MLTWR for a 2011 Ford F-250, 6.7L diesel, crew cab, short bed 4x4 truck.

When a vehicle manufacturer publishes the MLTWR for a vehicle it is the maximum weight of a fully loaded trailer that particular vehicle can safely tow.

In defense of the vehicle manufacturer the MLTWR is based on standard options that come on the vehicle, no cargo added to the vehicle and a tongue weight of 10-15% for conventional trailers or 15-25% pin weight for 5th wheel trailers. It normally includes 150 lbs. for the weight of the driver. Any additional options, aftermarket equipment, passengers, cargo and hitch weight added to the truck must be deducted from the published MLTWR.

The owner of the truck in question purchased the truck with intentions of towing a 5th wheel trailer. In a nutshell three top towing concerns for a 5th wheel trailer are:

1) You don’t want to exceed the truck’s gross vehicle weight rating, GVWR.
2) You don’t want to exceed the truck’s rear axle weight rating, RAWR.
3) You don’t want to exceed the truck’s gross combined weight rating, GCWR.

What I found to be very interesting in this particular situation was how this published tow rating just didn’t seem to add up. In an attempt to determine a safe hitch weight for a 5th wheel trailer the truck’s owner took 15% of the 14,400 pound MLTWR.
He was being conservative at 15% since the majority of 5th wheel trailers manufactured have a hitch weight in the 18-25% range. With that said, 15% of 14,400 lbs. is 2,160 lbs. When we add the 2,160 lb. hitch weight to the 7,492 lb. curb weight the truck is only 348 lbs. under the GVWR. When you add one passenger and the 5th wheel hitch you are over the truck’s GVWR. Is it feasible to assume the average truck owner will only add one passenger and a 5th wheel hitch to a crew cab pick-up when you go camping?

Let’s see how the truck in question weighed in.

When the truck headed to the scales the owner had one passenger, a full tank of fuel, and an optional sunroof and retractable bed cover added to the truck. The truck weighed in at 8,260 lbs. The front axle weight was 5,000 lbs. and the rear axle weight was 3,260 lbs.

To keep this simple, I’m going to add 200 lbs. for the hitch, 100 lbs. for additional cargo and the estimated 15% hitch weight of 2,160 lbs. to the 8,260 lbs. scaled weight and see what happens. When added together the truck’s GVW is 10,720 lbs., exceeding the GVWR by 720 lbs. This also puts the RAWR at 5,720 lbs. which is very close to the 6,000 lb. limit the axle is rated for. In this situation the truck is overloaded and cannot tow a trailer with 2,160 lbs. of hitch weight.

So why can’t this truck, rated to tow 14,400 lbs. tow a 14,400 lb. 5th wheel trailer with 15% hitch weight?

That is the big question! It’s understandable that you couldn’t tow the trailer if the owner adds lots of additional weight to the truck, but in this scenario it should be able to tow close to the capacity it is rated for.

Now the question is how much can this truck actually tow and still be safe?

To get the numbers within the truck’s GVWR I had to drop the 5th wheel trailer weight to roughly 9,500 lbs. This would give us a 15% hitch weight of 1,425 lbs. and when added back into the truck’s scaled weight it totals about 9,985 lbs., which is still too close to the vehicle’s GVWR in my opinion.

So, as you can see when you purchase a tow vehicle the published towing capacity can be misleading. You are under the impression your truck can safely tow 14,400 pounds when in reality it can barely tow 9,500 lbs. without possibly risking personal safety or potential damage to a component on the truck.

I would still like to know how the same 2012 model year truck had an 800 lb. increase over the 2011 model year truck.
I guess we’ll have to see what Ford has to say about it.

This is an unfortunate situation for any truck buyer. To avoid this from happening to you I recommend you add the weight of the truck (making sure it is accurate) and any additional options, aftermarket equipment, passengers, cargo, and the hitch and hitch weight of the trailer you are considering purchasing. If the total amount of weight exceeds the RAWR or GVWR it is not safe to tow. Something else I always tell buyers is to add the trailer’s GVWR to the truck’s GVW to see if it exceeds the GCWR. If it does it is not a safe match.

Pay close attention to any footnotes when using trailer towing guides and make sure the towing guide is up to date and accurate before making the decision to purchase a tow vehicle. If you are confused about tow ratings many RV dealers have knowledgeable individuals who can assist you. Remember it's better to find the trailer you want first and then shop for a truck that can safely handle the weight. RV 101
In 1999, when RV Education 101 was taking baby steps, a friend and colleague of ours was working on his own business venture out of his garage. That person is Chuck Woodbury and his business would soon be known to RVers everywhere as the RV Bookstore.

Unbeknownst to either of us at the time we would work closely together over the course of the next decade. Fast-forward to 2012 and to a conversation we had when I caught up with Chuck a few weeks ago.

This is how the conversation unfolded:

**MP:** Hi Chuck, I’m glad we finally had an opportunity to sit down and chat. 

**CW:** Me too Mark. Thanks for having me. 

**MP:** I thought our readers would be interested in hearing how you got into RVing, and eventually started a successful RV related business. If you don’t mind I’ll just ask you a few questions. 

**CW:** Fire away. 

**MP:** Okay here we go. How were you first introduced to RVs and the RV lifestyle?
With that money I set out to become a freelance magazine writer. I did okay, but never made enough to do more than cover my costs. In 1990, I started Out West, an "on-the-road" tabloid newspaper that I published quarterly. It got a lot of publicity which resulted in a book deal and a contract to write for the New York Times Syndicate.

**MP:** That’s very interesting. Sounds like you got hooked on RVing at an early age. Where do you enjoy camping and what are some of your favorite RV memories?

**CW:** I prefer to camp in public campgrounds; those in National Forests and National Parks are my favorites. That's why I have always had a relatively small RV. My current motorhome is 24 feet. It fits everywhere. I stay in RV parks, but I typically use the time in those places to catch up on writing or attend to business stuff. I seldom use the amenities.

My favorite RVing memory as an adult was in 1994 when the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association hired my wife, daughter and me to spend three months traveling around the United States in our motorhome promoting "Camping with Kids" to the media. My daughter Emily was 2 1/2. We visited about 30 states. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday we would sit in campgrounds and wait for the media to show up to interview us -- TV and newspaper reporters mostly. But the other days we could go where we wanted as long as we showed up at the next media stop on time. So we wandered a lot of back roads, ate in funky cafes, and visited as many roadside attractions as possible. It was an incredible time -- a paid road trip. I wish I could have those three months back.

My favorite recent RV trip was in a small rented campervan in Iceland. What a beautiful, exotic place! The ring road around the island is about 900 miles. There are more campgrounds per mile by far than in the United States, and the citizens are crazy about camping and RVing.

**MP:** Wow, I traveled extensively with the military but all my RV trips have been in North America. An RV trip in Iceland must have been loads of fun. Something else I think our readers would enjoy is your Roadside Journal Blog. When did your interest for quirky roadside attractions first develop?

**CW:** I've always been interested in offbeat stuff. I have no idea why. I was just born that way. If I hear about the "world's largest," or the "world's smallest," I head off to see it. If I could be anyone in history I would be Robert Ripley of 'Ripley's Believe or Not' who traveled the world looking for weird and amazing things.
I love finding and photographing funny signs along the road and talking with unusual, unique people. My favorite person in all my years of RVing as a writer was meeting David Wimp in Riverton, Wyoming, who was counting to a million on a small desktop calculator.

He'd punch in one number, add one to that and on and on. He'd get colored paper from the local Kmart, cut it and roll it in strips for the machine. He'd place the colorful rolls on a bookshelf. He eventually counted to five million, then backwards. I wrote about him for Out West and for the New York Times Syndicate which sent the story around the world.

**MP:** I know we both started our RV related businesses about the same time. It's hard to believe 12 years have passed since then. Can you tell us how RV Bookstore and the RV Travel e-newsletter all began?

**CW:** I started RV Bookstore in my garage in 1999 with a half dozen books. I'm not sure why I started it except that some good RV domain names were available and I was able to grab RV bookstore. My daughter and I would stuff the envelopes and I'd run to the post office late every afternoon. At first, we'd only get two or three orders a day. But the business grew. Today, we have a 2,000 square foot warehouse and stock more titles about RVing than anyone else.

I started [RVtravel.com](http://RVtravel.com) and our other websites about the same time as the bookstore. In 2001, a buddy of mine decided to start an email newsletter about the Tour de France. I thought, well, if he can do a newsletter so can I. We bet a case of beer over who would have the most subscribers at the end of the year. I won by a landslide. He still owes me the beer. The [RVtravel.com newsletter](http://RVtravel.com) is now in its 11th year and going strong with a new issue every Saturday morning.

**MP:** Well Chuck I won't hold you up any longer. Thanks for sitting down and talking with me today and I wish you continued success and safe RV travels.

**CW:** Thanks Mark and I wish you the same.

Chuck Woodbury has explored America by RV for nearly three decades. In the '90s he published the quirky travel newspaper Out West, and he was an "on the road" writer for the New York Times Syndicate. His RVing adventures have been profiled on ABC News, CNN, NBC's Today Show, and in People Magazine, USA Today and in hundreds of newspapers. Nowadays, he lives near Seattle where he drinks massive amounts of coffee and travels often in his motorhome, runs RV Bookstore and publishes his weekly RV Travel newsletter.
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In an industry where size is everything – larger engine, smaller accessories, and lighter weight -- it’s easy to make inaccurate assumptions and create undesirable problems for yourself. Unfortunately, in my line of work, I have witnessed many instances of undersized inverters being used by operators in an effort to save a buck. When operating below recommendation, the electrical system is far from efficient and can prove troublesome.

So ... the million dollar question for this edition of Tech Doctor is: What size inverter SHOULD I have in my system? And the obvious answer is ... well, it’s really NOT so obvious! The truth is, this decision all depends on exactly how you want and/or intend to use your inverter. Let’s consider some questions to help you understand how to make the best choice for your unique application.

How much load (electronics/appliances) do you want to run when disconnected from shore power?

It’s important to look at the wattage draw of ALL of the appliances, plus to leave some room for future additions. If you have a 1000W A/V system, for example, and install a 1000W inverter, you’re probably asking for problems. You see, inverters are rated for their optimum performance under optimum conditions. If the inverter gets hot, or the battery voltage drops, the inverter’s ability to feed a constant 1000W may be compromised.

Also, surges in power draw (such as turning on a motor) can affect the ability of the inverter to maintain proper output. Consider this example and accompanying formula. If you are going to plug-in two devices simultaneously, add up the total wattage of both devices, and then add at least 50% more to account for peaks or spikes in the power draw.

(1) Monitor 100 watts
(2) Portable lights 100 watts

Recommended size of inverter:
200 watts (100 watts + 100 watts) + 100 watts (0.50 X 200 watts) = 300 watts.

Obviously if you know for sure that two loads are never going to run at the same time, your calculation can include the higher draw load exclusively. My advice? Use common sense here, but always err on the side of the inverter. After all, nobody wants to have to remember to turn off the entertainment center when using the microwave to pop the popcorn! If there is any possibility of the loads running concurrently, include both in your calculations.

What are other important considerations?

Some loads, like motors or other inductive loads, have an extremely high demand at start-up, some as high as 5-times their rated power (check with appliance manufacturer for more information).
Most inverters have a fairly high surge rating which is their ability to feed short-term high power to get these loads started.

There’s no sure-fire way of knowing the appliances surge demand, without testing, since such data is not labeled. While high frequency inverters are cheaper and more efficient, low frequency inverters can surge better, and for a longer period of time. However, depending on your load mix, it may be better to use a larger, high-frequency inverter than a smaller, low-frequency inverter to provide instant start-up current for some loads, plus available power to run all loads at once.

**What is a sine wave inverter? Does it have to do anything with inverter sizing?**

It is not directly related to inverter sizing, however you must take into account the type of electronics and appliances you want to run using the inverter. Let me briefly explain the two types of inverters.

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Don Wilson has worked in technical capacities in the automotive, RV and marine fields and for the military since 1989 and has extensive experience in designing and troubleshooting onboard electrical systems. A former customer service manager dealing with electronic issues, Wilson currently serves as a technical instructor for the RV industry’s RVIA Trouble Shooters Clinics and is a full-time sales application engineer for Xantrex Technology. This article was published with permission of Xantrex.
The question comes up a lot, "How much is this RV really worth?"

And for the answer, most RV dealers and RV owners turn to the appraisal guides developed by NADA -- the National Automobile Dealers Association. But, how does that esteemed group determine what a particular make and model RV is really worth?

It's a complicated process that doesn't fit into any simple mathematical algorithm, said Lenny Sims, vice president of operations for NADA Appraisal Guides.

The first thing NADA does is extract transactional data from the marketplace. They get direct feeds from auction sites across the nation. So whenever a vehicle sells at auction, NADA knows what sold and what the price was.

"We are probably the only entity to get that volume of quality information in the front door," said Sims.

Another way to get information is by asking, and NADA turns to about 250 RV dealers from across the country who sit on an advisory board. They are periodically given surveys and questionnaires to complete to provide data on used RV sales from their own lots.

“These dealers offer us information on the RVs they took in trade, including the year, make, model and mileage," said Sims. "For motorized units, they tell us what they allowed in trade and what they put into refurbishing the unit so that it could be sold again, and at what price it was sold.”

Next, the NADA staff reviews inventory websites to look up the asking prices of various RVs. That gives them a good idea as to what the average retail price may be.

**Taking economic conditions into account**

However, Sims said several economic conditions are taken into consideration before determining the published values. NADA looks at current interest rates, consumer confidence levels, seasonality and how it can affect pricing, and the inventory pipeline -- especially the level of inventory on dealer lots. The more inventory on the lot, the more likely prices will need to drop to complete a sale.

"It's a pretty complex process, but it is what sets us apart from other providers," said Sims. "The average market data analyst in our company has 12 years experience in factoring these numbers.”

Some people might think that all those numbers can be plugged into a computer system which can analyze the data and arrive at a final figure in seconds.
That would be a mistake, said Sims. "There still needs to be a human element to the process. Someone has to actually touch the data and evaluate its relevance to the market," he explained.

For example, major RV brands have lots of transactional data from which to draw sales figures. However, NADA doesn't see that kind of information for smaller or regional RV manufacturers.

"At that point we have to deal with some of it as a multiple listing service which looks at comparable Brand X to evaluate the other RV in terms of quality, build and equipment," said Sims. "We are always looking at how the values are shifting. In fact, it is a daily process."

But, three times a year, the line is drawn and the data is published in appraisal guides distributed in January, May and September. Although the team is aware of major shifts in market value of units, NADA doesn't try to make as drastic adjustments to RV values as one might think.

"The market has been more volatile in the last year or two, but we don't want to get too crazy with random updates," said Sims. "That's the equivalent of being a day trader versus investing for the long haul."

**Maintaining market stability**

NADA tries to maintain market stability by avoiding huge fluctuations in RV values that would only lead to confusion when trading in units or financing loans. Ask any Canadian dealer who has to determine the value of RVs on his lot when the dollar fluctuates wildly. It is not easy and often leads to problems where used units can be worth more than brand new units.

"We have lost some clients in the past who feel it is better to get data that is updated more frequently, but that eventually gets them in trouble," Sims explained. "The values we publish don't fluctuate that much from issue to issue. We look at current conditions but also develop trendable prices that are good for four months."

"Still, the science isn't without its challenges. An RV might be worth more at the start of a buying season than it would be at the end. If there is a lot of inventory on dealer lots -- and manufacturer lots -- that will certainly make it harder to hold values. And when manufacturers release new models, it can have ripple effects not only on their other brands and previous model years, but on competitive models as well, said Sims.

"If a dealer has 10 - 2011 models on his lot and the 2012 units show up, it doesn't necessary devalue the older models," he explained
"It could be that the 2012 models are virtually the same as the 2011 models, especially if there is little or no increase in price."

However, if the 2011 model travel trailer had a retail price of $20,000 and the 2012 unit shows up valued at $20,500, then dealers will likely have to lower the 2011 units to make them more attractive to buyers.

"Everyone generally wants the newest, latest and greatest models," said Sims. "When situations like that arise, then it is possible the 2011 unit will experience a significant drop in depreciation in one fell swoop.

"If manufacturers are releasing models in timely, consistent fashion, then the dealers can plan for their arrival," he added. "But, if he is expecting a new model to come out in October, and it shows up on his lot in August, then it really messes up his business planning."

Many variables come into play
There are way too many variables in determining an accurate value, which is why careful attention has to be paid to what's happening in the market now, what will happen next month and where the market will be six months from now, Sims explained. "While it is good to see what has happened in the past, it doesn't really plug into an algorithm. All of us are projecting values," he added.

"Whenever we publish a new appraisal guide, the values posted are reliable for that four-month time frame, but we are still projecting values.

"I don't think anyone can say it is possible to accurately represent where the market is at a particular day in a particular part of the country, but we try to be as accurate as we can," said Sims.

The RV market witnessed the perfect economic storm in the past 18 to 24 months, which made it extremely difficult to track what was really going on in market values. Last year, several auction sites were reporting that used units were being sold at wholesale for more money than NADA had valued them. That's why it's important to project where values are expected to be within a few months from the date the guides are published, Sims explained.

The law of supply and demand can also greatly influence the value of units, but not in the way many expect. Sometimes prices rise because not everything is depreciating in value, Sims explained.

"The market is ever changing. We could see a significant spike at one auction one week, and the new week the whole thing fell out of favor," he added. "That's why we need to be good at trending values rather than reacting to what's going on in the market on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis."
"It could be that the 2012 models are virtually the same as the 2011 models, especially if there is little or no increase in price."

**The challenge posed by FEMA units**

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing NADA appraisers as well as RV dealers can be seen in the problem of assigning values to FEMA units.

"It's very complicated," said Sims.

There are basically two different types of FEMA units on the market. The first are the white label basic emergency living units that were built without any holding tanks, which often makes them easy to identify, Sims said.

But, there are also a significant percentage of RVs that were tagged as certified units. They were on dealers' lots when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, which allowed those units to be immediately mobilized as "FEMA units." They remain certified, quality units, said Sims.

"The problem is that the certified unit was built for recreation use. I don't know if manufacturers build all RVs for full-time use. But, the FEMA families put a lot of pressure on those units in that they were used in a far greater capacity than they were intended to be used," said Sims.

Now that they are coming back into the market, it is creating confusion regarding the unit's actual value.

"The data we receive does not reflect whether a particular unit was used in a FEMA situation," said Sims. "Some dealers are doing a legitimate job of disclosing that the units were used by FEMA families. But some interesting things are being done with the trailers that may be misrepresentative of their original use. The units are being sold at low prices, which is having an effect on the market, but not necessarily on the published values."
"If we see 100 transactions on a particular trailer and the range of those transactions come in between $10,000 and $15,000, but we had a handful come in with the same year and model, but were sold at $5,000, we would toss that data out," he added. "By taking out the higher and lower price ranges of units sold, we eliminate any anomalies in the data."

**Historic rise in RV values**

Sims said the question he is hearing most frequently today concerns the value of used units. "I have people telling me they have been our customers for 20 years and have never seen values of up. They want to know if it is correct or if there is a problem," he explained. "We tell them that we've seen increased demand and prices in the used market that we have never seen before."

NADA pays close attention to the prices, and Sims said their data show used RV prices are trending upward as demand increases because dealers are still having difficulty getting the floorplan financing they need to stock a wider selection of new units on their lots.

The bottom line is that all published values are set only after they have been meticulously evaluated based not only on complex mathematical formulas, but through human oversight of actual market condition. As a result, Sims said, the values NADA publishes in their guides are the most accurate on the market.

It's a level of confidence, he added, that dealers and RV owners can take to the bank.

For more information about NADA appraisal guides visit [www.nada.com](http://www.nada.com)

*This article was published with permission from Greg Gerber. Greg is the editor of RV Daily Report. Founded in 2009, RV Daily Report is an aggregator of RV industry news impacting RV dealers, RV manufacturers, RV suppliers, campgrounds, RV parks and RV owners.*
Wiper Blade Maintenance
Check the condition of your windshield wiper blades before you leave on a trip. This is one of those things we don’t think about until the next time we need them. Periodically clean the wiper blades with windshield washer fluid.

High Water Pressure
Water pressure at campgrounds can be extremely high and can cause damage to your RV plumbing system. Always use a water pressure regulator when you hook-up to the campground water supply. Always connect the water pressure regulator directly to the campground water source. This way you regulate the water pressure where the water pressure originates. It’s also a good idea to turn the water supply off if you’re going to be away from the campground for extended periods of time.

Awning Protection
Awning tie downs help to protect your patio awning, but you should never leave your awning out during bad weather, or when you’re not physically at the campsite. Wind and rain can damage your RV awning very quickly and it can be expensive to repair.

Reporting Campground Problems
Campgrounds have camp hosts and campground managers who are available on site. If you have a problem with another camper or a campground staff member you need to address the problem with the camp host or manager and let them resolve it.

Pet Safety
Take updated photos of your pets with you on camping trips. If they should get lost you can use the pictures to assist in finding them.
If you ever get the opportunity to visit Gettysburg, Pa. it is well worth the trip. Our first RV trip of the season was to North Central Pa. and this time I made a point of spending some time in Gettysburg. What a humbling and historic experience it was. The Battle of Gettysburg was the turning point in the Civil War. Over 51,000 soldiers would be killed, wounded, captured or missing during the three day battle that took place around Gettysburg from July 1-3, 1863.

Standing on the exact battlefield where confederate and union soldiers fought for what they felt was a just cause was surreal. Being a soldier from another era made me contemplate how I would have reacted to the way wars were fought in 1863.

By the end of the war there would be over 700,000 soldiers killed, wounded or missing. The Civil War shaped our nation resulting in who and what we are today.

Walking through the cemetery or reading the Gettysburg Address brings a reality to the sacrifices made by our forefathers so we could enjoy the freedom we experience today.
We stayed at the Gettysburg KOA during our visit and we were extremely happy with the campground and the weather throughout our stay. The KOA was located just a short drive from the attractions and offers daily bus tours (in season) to the Gettysburg battlefield and other great sites. As with most other KOAs there was a well-equipped store, playground, pet playground & great sites.

The campground had clean restrooms, a swimming pool, camping cabins, bath houses and laundry facilities. The hosts, staff and owners were friendly and very helpful too. Gettysburg is a great place to visit and whether you are out enjoying the sites or at the campground there is lots to do and see.

The Gettysburg KOA is centrally located to Hershey Pa., the Amish country, Washington D.C, Antietam & Baltimore, Md. This KOA makes a great home-base for planning some terrific day trips to all the surrounding areas. If you’re a Harley-Davidson fan don’t miss out on a factory tour of the York Harley-Davidson facility right down the road in York, Pa.

For more information on the Gettysburg KOA visit www.koa.com

JUST RV IT!
When you know how to use your RV you can really enjoy your RV. Take a minute to check out our RV training DVDs or if you prefer an instant download video we have that too.

Campground Etiquette Tip

Washing Vehicles

Often times when we’re at a campground I see people washing their RV and other vehicles. I too, am frustrated by all of the dead bugs on the front of our RV when we arrive at the campground, but before you drag out the bucket and hose check with the campground staff to make sure it’s okay to wash vehicles. Some parks pay a high price for their water.
Deep Cycle Battery – Often referred to as the auxiliary battery or house battery, it is used to supply 12-volt DC power to the appliances and accessories in the RV. Unlike an automotive starting battery, deep cycle batteries are designed to hold a charge longer and be discharged repeatedly. The RV battery is charged when the motorhome is running, or in the case of a trailer, when the tow vehicle is running if a charge line was wired in to the trailer plug. It is also charged when the RV is plugged into a 120-volt power source and by an onboard generator when it is running.

Delaminating – When the fiberglass panel separates from the luan backing used to construct fiberglass sidewalls on an RV. This is usually caused by water damage.

Demand Water Pump – The onboard water system that operates with a 12-volt demand pump. When you have potable water in your fresh water holding tank, and the pump is turned on, it pressurizes the onboard water system. When you open a faucet and the water pressure drops, the pump cycles on and off to maintain a constant pressure.

Diesel Pusher – A motorhome with a rear mounted diesel engine, often times referred to as a pusher.

Dinghy – A term used for the vehicle you are towing behind a motorhome.

Dry Camping – Camping in an RV without any utility hook-ups (water, electric, and sewer). You can still use all 12-volt appliances and accessories as long as the deep cycle battery(s) has a charge. You can also use the onboard water system with the 12-volt demand pump and if you have a generator you can use the 120-volt appliances and recharge the auxiliary battery(s). This is what makes an RV fully self-contained.

Dry Weight – Dry Weight (DW) or Unloaded Vehicle Weight (UVW) is the actual weight of the RV as built at the factory. The DW does not include passengers, cargo, fresh water, LP gas, fuel or aftermarket accessories.

DSI- Direct Spark Ignition (DSI) is a system used to ignite the burner on a propane appliance with the touch of a button. It is commonly used on RV refrigerators, furnaces and on some water heaters.

Ducted A/C and Heat - When the A/C and heat is supplied throughout the RV using a ducting system. A/C is ducted in the ceiling and the heat is ducted in the floor.
Surge Guard

Campground power pedestals are notorious for power fluctuations, surges and spikes. When this happens your expensive RV appliances and electronic equipment can be damaged within seconds. The solution to these RV electrical problems is the Surge Guard by TRC. TRC's power protection devices are designed to protect your RV's electrical system and sophisticated electronics from the dangers electrical power can present.

Modern day RVs come equipped with sophisticated and sensitive electronic equipment and circuitry. You have entertainment centers, appliances like microwaves and refrigerators, satellite dishes and in situations like ours office equipment like computers and printers.

Power companies do a good job supplying 120 volt AC power for all our electrical needs. But inevitably the day will come when this power supply will surge, sag or spike. This is never truer than when you are at the campground. The number one culprit for power surges in RVs is from the campground power supply. These power fluctuations can result from old or faulty wiring, weather conditions or too high of a demand being placed on the campgrounds electrical system.

Regardless of the reason, when you plug your RV power cord into the campground power supply you are gambling with the fate of all the electrical equipment in your RV. TRC’s Surge Guard family of power protection devices provide bumper-to-bumper protection for your RV against high and low voltage, open neutral, miswired power pedestals and electrical surges. There are portable and hardwired Surge Guard models available for both 30 amp and 50 amp RV electrical systems. The surge guard continuously monitors for voltage and amp draw and reverse polarity, including a miswired pedestal and elevated ground voltage. These models are compact, weather proof and easy to use. Watch the video
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