Prepare your RV For Hot Weather Camping

RV Refrigerator Efficiency

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Prepare your RV for Hot Weather
Performing a few easy preventive maintenance checks can help prepare your RV for traveling and camping in hot weather. Find out what they are here.

RV Refrigerator Efficiency
Discover some tips and tricks on how to maximize your RV refrigerator’s efficiency.

Don’t Do What That Guy Did
Check out some common mistakes RV owners make, and find out what you can do to avoid making the same mistakes yourself.

DEPARTMENTS

Editor’s Desk

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Are you RV educated? Find out by playing this crossword puzzle on RV awnings.

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It’s time to hit the road in the RV!

We just returned from a combined business/personal RV trip. It’s always a little disappointing when you return home from a trip and park the RV; but you can always look forward to planning and taking the next RV trip.

We have several RV trips planned already, including a cross-country trip to Las Vegas. It’s part business and part fun mixed together and I can’t wait to go. Most of our trips are shorter, due to other obligations, so we are looking forward to spending more time in the RV.

Prior to taking any trip, especially in hot weather, there are things that should be checked on the RV. That is the focus of this month’s issue. Enjoy the e-magazine, and if you have RV friends and family tell them to subscribe, and to like us on Facebook ~ Mark
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This helps accomplish two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV, and to make their entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. Browse the product catalog now
I talk about Preventive Maintenance (PM) all the time, and for good reason. It is maintenance you perform on your RV before a problem exists. If you can detect and repair a coolant leak when it is just dripping you can prevent an overheated engine and the expensive repair bill that comes with it.

Preventive maintenance checks are easy to do. They consist of cleaning, inspecting, lubricating, adjusting and servicing your RV. These simple checks can prevent problems associated with mechanical breakdowns, and the malfunction or failure of a component or system on the RV.

With hot weather on the way I thought it was appropriate to concentrate on some easy hot weather PM checks you can make on your tow vehicle or motorhome before heading out on a trip.

**Let’s start with chassis maintenance**

**Note:** Don’t confuse PM with scheduled maintenance. Scheduled or routine maintenance is performed in intervals normally based on time, mileage or hours. Scheduled maintenance is designed to keep your vehicles in top operating condition and prevent untimely breakdowns and repairs.

It is essential that you read your owner’s manual and warranty information in regards to who is responsible for what when it comes to scheduled maintenance. Scheduled maintenance that is required by the manufacturer and not performed can sometimes void your warranty.

**Chassis Hot Weather Preventive Maintenance:**

Check all fluid levels: engine oil, transmission, power steering, brakes, windshield washer. Top off levels according to owner’s manual guidelines. If a fluid level is low locate and correct the problem prior to using the vehicle.

Check the air filter: A dirty air filter
can lower fuel economy by 10%. A clean air filter lets the engine get the airflow it needs to operate properly, especially in hot weather. Replace the air filter as required.

**Check for any leaks:** Inspect the engine compartment and underside of the RV for any signs of leaks.Leaks of any type can lead to costly repairs and untimely breakdowns. Catching a leak early can save time and money. Identify the source of the leak and have it repaired before using the RV.

**Check radiator coolant:** Check the radiator coolant reservoir level, condition and concentration. Never remove any radiator cap when hot or under pressure. The reservoir is usually a see-through plastic reservoir with minimum and maximum level indicators on the side of the reservoir. Add coolant as required. Follow the manufacturer’s recommendation for proper type and concentration of coolant to use. Follow the guidelines for flushing and refilling the coolant. **Note:** New coolant is good for the vehicle’s engine in both hot and cold temperatures.

**Radiator & heater hoses:** Coolant hoses deteriorate from the inside out. Inspect all hoses for wear, cracks, soft spots, brittle areas and leaks. Inspect hose clamps for secure mounting. Have any damaged hoses replaced. **Caution:** Inspect radiator and heater hoses when the engine is cold.

**Belts:** Inspect all belts for wear, glazing, fraying, cracks and proper tension. There are different types of belts used on engines and different belt tension requirements. As a quick check use your thumb to press on the middle of the belt between the pulleys. There should be about ½ inch to 1 inch of deflection. Have any damaged, worn or stretched belts replaced. Belts with automatic tensioners do not require adjustments if the tensioner is operating properly.

**Lights:** Make sure all lights are clean and operating properly. Check the headlights (low & high beam), running lights, turn signals, brake lights and emergency flashers. Check all lights on any vehicle or trailer you are towing. Carry spare bulbs and fuses for the lights. Repair or replace as required.
Windshield wipers & blades: Inspect the operation and condition of wipers and blades. Don’t wait until the wiper blades are worn and brittle. Replace wiper blades at the first indication of poor operation.

**Tip:** Cleaning the wiper blades will extend the life of the blades. You can use windshield washer fluid on a clean rag to clean wiper blades.

Chassis & Coach Batteries: Constant charging depletes electrolyte levels in lead acid batteries, and hot temperatures make this condition worse. Inspect the electrolyte levels and add distilled water as required. Add water until the level reaches the split-level marker in each cell. Inspect all battery cable and terminal connections. Keep all connections clean and tight.

**Caution:** Lead acid batteries contain sulfuric acid which is extremely corrosive and can cause severe burns or even blindness. The hydrogen gas that batteries produce when they’re charging is very explosive. When you work around batteries you need to wear safety glasses and gloves, remove all jewelry and do not smoke or use any open flames.

Tires: Using a quality inflation pressure gauge check and inflate tire pressure to the tire manufacturers recommended pressure for the load. Always check and inflate tire pressure when tires are cold, before traveling. Inspect all tires for signs of uneven wear and for checking or dry rot on the sidewalls. If one tire shows signs of wear faster than another tire it can indicate a problem other than normal wear. Have any tire wear or damage inspected by an authorized service center. Do not operate the RV with tires that show signs of damage.

**Check your emergency kit:** At a minimum it should include a flashlight, extra batteries, jumper cables, first aid kit, basic hand tools, and warning devices.

**Coach Hot Weather PM:**

Test the refrigerator in the A/C & LP gas mode. Do not over pack the refrigerator. Allow room for air circulation in the refrigerator compartments. Install a thermostatically controlled refrigerator vent fan to maximize the refrigerators efficiency.

Read my article on page 11
Test the roof air conditioner(s) for proper operation. Clean or replace A/C filters.

Strategically park your RV to take advantage of any shade. This can make the refrigerator and roof A/C operate more efficiently.

Install some type of roof vent covers to allow ventilation inside the RV.

Check all awnings for proper operation.

Check the operation of the generator when it is under a load. Check the generator engine oil & all filters. It may be necessary to change oil with the manufacturers recommended oil viscosity for hot weather operation. Read How Here Always inspect the generator exhaust system prior to operating the generator.

Check all appliances, electric and gas, for proper operation.

It might be necessary to add more chemicals when treating the black tank during hot weather camping.

Check the fire extinguisher, smoke alarm, carbon monoxide and LP leak detector for proper operation.

Take all precautions when traveling with pets in hot weather. Never leave them inside a hot RV. Give them plenty of fresh water and ventilation.

A little preventive maintenance can go a long way. Remember the lack of preventive maintenance and scheduled maintenance can result in emergency maintenance. Emergency maintenance is maintenance or repairs required when you least expect it due to component, system or mechanical failure. This is something we can all do without!

~RV 101
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RV Refrigerator Efficiency

I receive a lot of questions about how to make your RV refrigerator work more efficiently. RV refrigerators, for the most part, are efficient. In many cases it is something the owner does that makes the refrigerator less efficient. Before we talk about how to improve your RV refrigerators efficiency we need to have a basic understanding of how an RV refrigerator works.

For starters keep in mind that your RV refrigerator is different from the one in your house. Your RV refrigerator doesn't use a compressor, or any moving parts for that matter. It works off of the principle of absorption. Instead of applying cold directly the heat is drawn out, or absorbed. The theory is, when there is an absence of heat there is cold. Your RV refrigerator uses heat, either from an electric heating element or LP gas flame. The heat starts a chemical reaction and then through evaporation and condensation causes it to cool. It also works off of gravity, freezing the top compartment first and then dropping down to the refrigerator compartment.

There are several things we can do to help the refrigerator do its job more efficiently. First and foremost the RV must be fairly level for the refrigerator to operate properly.
Older RV refrigerators required more precise leveling, but even the newer models need to be close to level for optimum performance. Eventually a cooling unit operated out of level will be permanently damaged. Traveling with the refrigerator on will not cause problems because the liquids and gases in the cooling unit are constantly moving around; they don’t collect and stay in areas of the cooling unit like they can in a stationary, out of level refrigerator.

The initial cool down process can take four to six hours. You should turn the refrigerator on the day before you plan to leave, and before you put any food in it. When you do load the refrigerator the food you put in should already be cold, and the food put in the freezer should already be frozen. Putting cold food in the refrigerator, rather than adding warm food, lets the refrigerator work less to cool down.

One common mistake made is to over-pack the refrigerator. There has to be space between the foods to allow for air to circulate throughout the compartment. In most situations you will have access to a store where you can buy food. A three to four day supply should be enough.

To assist with air circulation you can purchase an inexpensive, battery operated refrigerator fan. Put the batteries in and place the fan in the front of the refrigerator compartment blowing up. The fan will improve the efficiency by circulating the air and it will reduce the initial cool down time by 50%.

The heat created by the cooling process is vented behind the refrigerator. Air enters through the outside lower refrigerator vent and helpsdraft the hot air out through the roof vent. Periodically inspect the back of the refrigerator and the roof vent for any obstructions like bird nests, leaves or other debris that might prevent the heat from escaping.
Another good idea is to install a 12-volt, thermostatically controlled refrigerator vent fan at the back of the refrigerator, or at the top of the roof vent, to assist with drafting the hot air away from the refrigerator. If you are mechanically inclined these fans are fairly easy to install, or you can have your RV dealer install one for you. Either way it’s worth it. The fan removes the heat built up behind the refrigerator improving the refrigerators performance by up to 40%.

The outside temperature also affects the operation and efficiency of your RV refrigerator. When it’s cold out you can lower the temperature setting and when it’s hot out you can raise the setting. Some refrigerators are preset by the manufacturer. Extreme hot weather will directly affect the refrigerators efficiency. When it’s really hot outside try parking your RV with the side the refrigerator is on in the shade. Periodically inspect and clean the refrigerator door gaskets and check for a good seal.

Try to limit the amount of times you open the refrigerator or freezer doors and the length of time you leave the doors open. Every time the door is opened it loses a few degrees. On a hot summer day it won’t take long to lose all of its cooling capacity. Last but not least you should always have a thermostat in the food compartment, food will begin to spoil at temperatures above 40 degrees.

RV absorption refrigerators do a great job for RVers. It will do an even better job, and last longer, if we apply these simple tips to make its job easier and less demanding. ~ RV 101

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In other news our brand new RV101 YouTube Channel is growing quickly with nearly 80 RV videos already posted. A new RV video will be released weekly throughout 2016, so take a minute to visit and subscribe to get notified every time a video is released.
It doesn't matter if you are a new RV owner or a seasoned veteran, we all make silly mistakes at some point in time. I usually encourage the use of checklists to help avoid making some of the more common mistakes RV owners make from time to time. When you use a checklist it’s not as easy to forget or overlook a certain step or procedure. But you can’t have a checklist for everything you do in your RV.

With that said, in no particular order I want to offer some common mistakes RV owners make in an effort to prevent the same thing from happening to you.

One common problem RV owners experience is odors coming from the black water holding tank. Most of the problem is associated with the way the RV toilet and black water holding tank is designed. RV holding tanks have a vent pipe going from the tank to the roof of the RV. The problem is holding tank odors accumulate in the tank and can’t really be vented outside because there is no air pressure to help force the gasses (odors) up and out of the roof vent.

When the air pressure is higher inside the holding tank, than it is inside the RV, the odor escapes into the RV by way of the toilet when you flush it.

Some of this can’t be prevented but there are a couple things that help. One is to use plenty of water. The water level in your holding tank will help control odors. You need to get in the habit of adding more water to the holding tank whenever you flush the toilet. It is important to keep the water level above the contents of the holding tank to help control odors. And of course holding tank treatments help too.

Another problem is people don’t add enough water after they empty the holding tanks. You need to know what size holding tank you have and make sure you add enough water to completely cover the bottom of the tank, at a minimum, every time you empty the tank.

In addition to holding tank treatments helping with odors there are aftermarket roof vents that can be installed on top of the vent pipe coming from the black water holding tank. These vents are designed specifically to help pull the gasses from the tank and vent the gas and odor outside. Typically the do-it-yourselfer can install one of these vents in less than an hour. Another option is to have it installed by your local RV dealer.
Another common problem is when you extend or retract slide-outs in your RV and something gets in the way and ultimately gets crushed.

If your RV has slide-outs you may have already experienced this. On motorized RVs the driver’s seat can be the culprit. You start to extend or retract the slide-out and the next thing you know it’s hitting the seat. On one occasion I accidentally crushed the packet my RV owner’s manuals are stored in, and on another occasion the clothes hamper got in the way of the slide-out.

The only advice I can offer is to check and double check everything in the slide-outs path prior to extending or retracting any slide-out. Don’t forget to check the area outside prior to extending the slide-outs! (see photo)

Next on my list is forgetting to turn appliances off before connecting or disconnecting from electricity. This can be a costly mistake too, especially if it damages the air conditioner. Always make sure all of the appliances in the RV are in the off position prior to plugging or unplugging the unit into electricity.

Another good habit to get into when you connect or disconnect from the pedestal is to make sure the circuit breaker is turned off prior to plugging or unplugging the power cord. ~ RV101

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Top 5 Mistakes RVers Make & How To Avoid Them
Of The Month

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Meet Mo-Mo, our newest RV family member. Mo-Mo is a 9 year-old Boxer we recently rescued from the local shelter. She has stage 2 heartworm disease and other complications, but is doing good with her treatments. It is a long process but we think in another 3 months she will be fully recovered. **This is a picture of her first RV trip when I sat her down to explain the rules of the RV.**

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Media Kit
Our goal with RV Consumer E-Magazine is to provide you with helpful information to make all of your RV experiences more enjoyable. I left my position as an RV Sales and F&I manager in 2000 to work RV Education 101 full time.

We produce RV educational videos & DVDs and publish books and e-books on how to safely & properly use and maintain your RV. The reason I left my job was because of my concern about the lack of educational and safety awareness material available to the RV consumer, in other words you.

My wife Dawn left her position in RV sales to help start the company, and is our Sales and Marketing Director. We currently have a 35-foot Type A motor home and travel with our three dogs Roxie, Gracie & Mo-Mo. If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit www.rveducation101.com

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