SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

TRANSMISSION TEMPERATURE GAUGE

The transmission temperature gauge in my 1989 American motorhome no longer works, and I am trying to replace it. I have tried to contact the gauge manufacturer but unfortunately without success. If I cannot obtain an exact replacement part can I replace it with a similar unit. Any help would be much appreciated.

Unfortunately manufacturers of items such as this come and go and unless you can find someone who just happens to have a spare sitting at the back of a shelf you will almost certainly have to replace it with a different make.

Luckily there are many transmission temperature gauges available, and you should have no problem locating one that will work. Look for: 1) the correct size, if you plan to use the same mount, and 2) the same temperature range, since you're accustomed to those readings. You will have to change both the sender and the gauge to give accurate readings, but that would be wise even if you found an identical replacement. You probably can use the existing wiring though.

Those who don't have a transmission temperature gauge, engine oil gauge, or other gauges will be interested to note that some neat mounting pods are available for console, dash, or B-pillar installation. Adding them to your coach could be a very worthwhile project.

HOLDING TANK SMELL IN AMOTORHOME

I own a 27 foot American motorhome. After driving with a full black-water tank for about an hour, the smell throughout the motorhome from the bathroom is terrible. Is there a solution to this?

Your problem is quite common, and it's not all that difficult to remedy. When a trailer or motorhome is driven, it's very easy to develop a low-pressure condition (slight vacuum) inside the vehicle. If any window is left cracked open, for example, or a roof vent is left slightly ajar, the effect of the wind moving past that opening is to create a low-pressure situation inside the unit. The vacuum is going to draw air inside the unit from any available opening or route, such as through an outside access hole for a power cord, etc.

Your black-water tank is vented to the outside, via a pipe that extends through the roof to the outside air. What's happening is that as the interior of the rig develops a vacuum, some waste tank vapours are being drawn into the vehicle through the toilet because the vent pipe allows for replacement air to be drawn into the tanks as the vacuum pulls the vapours into the rig. Thus, the odours you've noticed.

The best solution is to be sure all of your vents and windows are tightly closed for travel. You might also want to check the seal around the toilet flush mechanism, as the smell could indicate the seal has gone bad and needs to be replaced. Finally, make sure you've used a good quality brand of holding tank chemical.

NOISY FUELTANK

We purchased a brand new 30ft American motorhome in 2001 and after a few teething problems it has been almost trouble-free except for a noisy fuel tank.

We have heard, particularly in warm weather, a loud booming noise coming from the fuel tank. Obviously this has concerned us greatly as we do not know what is causing it. Should we be concerned and how can we stop it.

Many motorhome owners have reported that they have heard a tremendous boom coming from their fuel tank several times a day. I experienced the same problem with my petrol tank expanding and contracting. Then it was suggested that I should check the fuel cap to make sure that it was venting properly. I found that it wasn't venting so I replaced it and have not had the problem since. Fuel tanks should always be vented, either via the cap or by other means.

Another problem created if the tank is not vented can be failure of the fuel pump to deliver enough fuel due to a lack of air coming into the tanks. It's possible to overwork the fuel pump and possibly collapse the tank. In any event, after driving some miles without a vent, there will be less fuel delivered to the engine, and the results are fairly predictable.

FORD 460 ENGINE PARTS

We have owned our current motorhome for over ten years and are finally considering trading it in for a newer one. We have found a 1995 Winnebago Adventurer that we really like. However, I'm reluctant to go ahead, because it is powered by a Ford 460 V-8 engine. Can I expect to have problems with repairs, since Ford no longer manufactures this engine? I've heard conflicting tales of the reliability of this engine/chassis. If we did purchase the Adventurer, is there anything you would recommend installing on it to make it better, such as the Banks PowerPack?

According to the Ford Motorhome Customer Assistance Center service centers are well prepared to service and supply parts for coaches equipped with the Ford 460 V-8 engine. This engine was upgraded to the V-10 because of increased government emission requirements. Both engines are comparable in torque and horsepower, but the V-10 has higher torque. I'm not aware of any particular problems with either engine. The Banks PowerPack system opens the exhaust and air intake systems to allow the engine to 'breathe' better and gain torque and horsepower.

TOWING WEIGHTS - How Much is Too Much?

I have recently read an article in the motorhome press on the 1994 Ford F-Super Duty Chassis stating that the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) 'continues to be 17,000 pounds, with an 8,000 pound towing capacity'. I am concerned about exceeding 2000 pounds of tow car behind an MC-5Awith an 8V 7.1 litre engine. What is a sensible maximum weight for a car towed four wheels down and not equipped with an automatic braking system?

Ford states that when it comes to pulling a towed vehicle behind a motorhome chassis, its gross combination weight rating (GCWR) figure is dependent on the towed vehicle having its own braking system. This requirement necessitates a system such as the M&G Car Braking or Auto Stop braking systems. Thus, the limiting factor then becomes the tow bar, base plate or ball. Usually the ball or coupling on the base plate will be rated at 3500 pounds, although a few will go as high as 5000 pounds. Experienced towers advise that 3500 pounds is the maximum that should be towed and this includes vehicles equipped with supplemental braking.

In the UK only trailers under 750kgs gross weight may be towed without a supplemental braking system. If you tow a car behind your RV you should always use a braked A-frame. The first time I towed my 4x4 with the brake cable disconnected the A-frame broke away from the mounting point on the car, so be warned.

HOT STARTING CHEVY DIESEL

I own a 1993/4 Rockwood Regent powered by a Chevy 6.2 litre diesel. Sometimes, when the engine is hot after a long run it refuses to start which refuses to start when it is hot. The engine turns over fine but refuses to 'kick in'. Can you help?

The 6.2 diesel did suffer from starting problems when hot. Usually the starter motor would not turn at all until the engine had cooled. This was caused by its proximity to the exhaust manifold and even though there was a heat shield between the two it still got very hot and seized. This problem and not 'firing up'are usually overcome if you allow the engine to cool for a short while before trying to start it.

If the problem gets any worse then I suggest you have the engine checked out by a competent person.

LETTER TO SPANNERMAN AND ARTICLES FOR ARVM
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