

SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

BRAKE CHECKUP SUGGESTION

Owners of coaches equipped with air brakes and spring brakes should have their brake systems thoroughly checked at least once a year. This inspection should include a brake adjustment to ensure that the automatic slack adjusters are working correctly and are not frozen, as well as to make sure the brake chambers are not weak from rust. Also, make sure the holes in the top of the spring brake for caging bolts are plugged so dirt and moisture do not enter the spring cavity.

The brake button must be pulled out while a coach is rolling slowly on gravel or grass and make certain that both rear wheels skid when the parking brakes are applied. This is to ensure that one or both coil springs in the spring brakes are not broken. If you merely jack up the wheel with the spring brake applied, you cannot duplicate the pressure needed to hold the coach on a steep hill.

This information should ensure that all coach owners have an almost worry-free holiday, knowing that their motorhomes will be parked right where they left them, even on a hill.

DIRTY RUBBER ROOF

We are finding it extremely difficult to clean the rubber roof on our RV. When we first bought the RV new in 1995 the roof was white and blemish free but as the years have gone on it has got dirtier and black marks have started to appear. We have found that trying to clean the surface to make look like new to be near impossible. Should we think about using a rubber roof paint to protect it and make it look better.

Rubber roofs unfortunately do get dirtier as they get older but normally this will not affect the waterproof qualities of the material. I would suggest that you give your roof a really good clean with a rubber roof cleaner and then protect it with either a rubber roof treatment or even a proprietary auto wash and wax.

If you treat the material with care it will last for years so do not use harsh brushes or other abrasive cleaning implements when cleaning it. The use of roof paint should only be a last resort if you find the rubber roof is beginning to crack and allowing water to get underneath the surface.

PROPANE PROBLEMS

About a year ago The heater in my 1989 28ft Ultrastar coach starting making popping noises while igniting. After about an hour it stopped firing and blew only cold air.

Later on, a similar thing started in the water heater which also ceased working. After some thought, I came to the conclusion that the propane regulator might be faulty so I replaced it. I found water/moisture in the old one. After a few weeks the same thing happened

again, so I took off the new regulator and dried out the moisture, and it worked fine. Now I realise that I must have some water in the propane tank. I have made numerous telephone calls to specialists for advice regarding how to get rid of the water. Unfortunately no solutions were forthcoming.

I am thinking about draining the tank but am not sure how to do so safely. I finally found a propane company that said they could help to remove the water. Since that time I have not had any problems for a few weeks then the symptoms returned. I have asked several experienced RV travellers about this, and no one so far has had this experience. Some people say that the moisture comes from the bulk propane tanks.

I have bought propane in many places in the UK and Europe. My last propane fill-up before the trouble started was in France. The freeze up of the regulator occurs at approximately 42 degrees Fahrenheit and below. I would like to find out whether a dryer filter is available to install in-line before the regulator, or if there is another remedy other than going to back to the propane company who helped us once or twice a year. I cannot believe that I am the only one among thousands of RVers who buys 'wet propane'.

I am not aware of a dryer for a propane system, if any reader knows of such a system, please let us know.

Although unusual, water in propane does occur from time to time. The most complete cure is to purge the tanks until all the water is water. Removing the tank and the service valve from the tank and emptying out the water will accomplish this. Upon reassembly, a small quantity of alcohol should be added to dispel the small amount of water remaining. Simply adding alcohol to the propane is a shot in the dark, since the amount of water and the exact quantity of alcohol needed are not known. Of course, purging the propane tank and adding alcohol should be done only by a qualified propane facility.

GRILLE CONCERNS ON A TREK

After trying several ways of increasing the power in my 1995 24ft Safari Trek, I found that the Chevrolet 454 engine requires 360 square inches of air intake at the grille. I did not have nearly that much. After cutting away the wall blocking the grille, the performance was greatly enhanced. If any other owners of the Trek are having problems with shortage of power or overheating, they might look into this simple remedy.

The chassis manufacturers quote that 530 square inches of grille opening are required for this engine. The term grille opening means 'opening', not small holes in a solid grille.

Large objects such as spare tyres and bicycles should not be mounted in front of the grille or radiator. Bug screens should be

avoided if possible, but if one is necessary it should be of the same density as the usual screen. The temperature gauge should also be monitored closely for possible higher operating temperatures.

Aflexible airtight seal should be in place between the upper radiator support and the body, and between the vertical sides of the radiator and the body. The sealed area will ensure that the 'ram air' going down the road flows through the radiator.

START UP KNOCKING

We have an American motorhome which is powered by a Chevy 6.2 V8 diesel engine. When we start it up from cold or when it has been standing for a 30 minutes or more there is a knocking sound from the engine. We have had the engine thoroughly serviced and checked over and have been assured there is nothing wrong with it. Why is there this knocking sound and should we be concerned about it?

Engine knock on cold startups has been a fairly common complaint on GM V-8s for some time now. What happens is the oil pump seems to lose its prime after the engine sits for a while, usually overnight. GM's policy in the field seems to be that if the knock occurs for less than 10 seconds there is no problem.

Always ensure that you have the correct genuine GM oil filter specified for your engine fitted and that you use good quality engine oil as recommended in your engine handbook. Pay special attention to the ambient air temperatures that you are operating the engine in. Colder temperatures require a thinner oil but on the other hand warm climates require that you use a thicker oil. Consult your engine handbook for details of the recommended oil to use. Using cheap oil and filters will only lead to possible problems and even premature failure of your engine.

One last bit of advice which will ensure that your engine gives you many years of service. When starting from cold do not rev the engine above a tickover until it has thoroughly warmed up. If you have a turbo fitted it is good practice to allow the engine to cool down a bit before turning it off. Pulling up and switching off immediately does not allow the turbo to slow down and cool off. The bearing on turbos are usually lubricated with oil from the engine and so when you switch the engine off the flow of oil ceases but the turbo will still be turning and usually extremely hot.

LETTER TO SPANNERMAN AND ARTICLES FOR ARVM
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