

SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

AIR BAG PRESSURE

I have a 31-foot motorhome that is built on a Chevrolet P-chassis which has air bags in the front coil springs. What inflation pressure should be in the air bags and what is the maximum pressure recommended?

It depends on the front gross axle weight rating (GAWR) of your motorhome. The higher the rating, the higher the inflation pressure. That's how the Chevrolet air-bag-assisted spring works. All too few owners make proper use of the air bag and think just a metal spring or just an air bag would be a better design.

According to the Chevrolet Motorhome Chassis Service Guide, air-bag inflation pressures should be maintained at 10 psi minimum to avoid chafing and damaging the air bag. Under load, 40 to 50 psi is recommended for a 4,300-pound GAWR, 50 psi for a 5,000-pound GAWR, 70 psi for a 5,300-pound GAWR and 90 psi for a 5,500-pound GAWR.

The GAWR for your chassis is listed on the manufacturer's certification label that is located somewhere near the driver at the left front of the motorhome. If your ride height is low at the recommended pressure, your front axle is probably overloaded. This should be of concern, because it may be a sign that other front-axle components are overloaded, including the tyres.

CHASSIS BATTERY DRAIN

I have read a number of articles in various magazines about chassis batteries going dead due to mystery electrical drains. I recently exchanged my motorhome and then experienced the same problem.

After a lot of detective work I tracked the problem down to the carbon-monoxide/LP-gas detector which was wired to the chassis battery and not the coach one.

I corrected the problem by rewiring this detector. It's now connected to the coach battery and isolated with the coach battery-disconnect switch when the motorhome is in storage

That's a quick fix. I am surprised to learn that the RV manufacturer had wired a house item to the chassis battery. Most motorhome owners have some kind of a battery disconnect on their house battery, but few do the same on their chassis battery.

Another source of chassis battery drain is the dash mounted radio and also the cigarette lighter which many RVers plug their mobile phone into for charging. To check out which items are connected which is fairly straightforward. Firstly isolate, or disconnect your coach battery, and then switch on the various items, one by one. If they still operate then it is a sure sign they are connected to the chassis battery.

You can either reconnect all the regularly used items and 12 volt outlets to the coach battery or you could install a small trickle charger, such as a 'Battery Mate', which will

keep the chassis battery topped up from the house battery.

It is always a good idea to isolate your coach batteries when the RV is not in use.

WATER FILTERS

We spend a couple months every year touring Europe, particularly France and Spain, both of which we really enjoy.

We have never hooked our motorhome to the campsite water supply because of the usual fears of what we might unleash into our intestinal tracts.

There are a bewildering number of water filters advertised in RV magazines and catalogues, but none of the ads seem to answer our specific question - will the filter make the water safe to drink? Or is there a filter that will make the water at least safe enough to put into our freshwater tank for toilet-flushing and hand-washing without forever polluting the tank?

You ask a very good and timely question. This same question comes up time and time again even from RVers touring the UK where, generally, the water is safe to drink even if the taste is not so good.

Several filters advertise a fineness and chlorination that will remove the harmful bacteria. Such filters will remove just about anything else that will make water unsafe to drink. However, if you want to be doubly sure, you should consider a reverse osmosis filter for your drinking water but these are not cheap.

CHANGING FROM CROSS PLYS TO RADIALS

Last year, just prior to leaving for Spain for the Winter, I decided that I would change all the tyres on my motorhome to radials. Upon inspection I realised that the existing cross ply tyres were not tubeless so I would have to have tubes fitted with the radials. I changed all seven tyres over to radials and set off for Spain in the knowledge that all the tyres were brand new and that I should have a trouble free journey there and back. Unfortunately, however, I was wrong and after suffering a puncture in nearly all the tyres I felt it was time to investigate the problem. Upon inspecting the inner tubes I found that they were the old ones which the tyre company had re-used. My question is should the old inner tubes be re-used even if similar tyres are fitted?

It is always advisable to fit new inner tubes with new tyres as the old tubes will mould themselves to the inside shape and imperfections of the tyre over a period of time and as no two tyres are identical they may be overstressed when fitted to a new tyre and eventually fail.

Under no circumstances should tubes that are designed for use with cross ply tyres be used with radial tyres. The result you have already experienced and luckily it did not, in your case, cause a major blow out at high speed. I would suggest you take the matter up with the tyre company as they should certainly know better

STICKING LEVELLING JACK

I have a 1999 American motorhome fitted with HWH levelling jacks one of which sticks during retracting. It was working fine last summer, but after sitting through December and January it now sticks down. The jack goes down fine, but is very slow going up and has to be pushed the last two inches. Do you have any suggestions as to what might be causing this problem?

There is more than one possible cause of this problem. Because you mention that the jack can be retracted the last two inches with hand pressure, I wouldn't suspect a bent jack. The winter's storage period shouldn't have caused this condition either.

To narrow this down somewhat, proceed as follows: Level the coach and then store the jacks. Be sure to leave the switch ON for the complete retraction cycle. Inspect the jacks to verify your "low" jack.

Caution: Do not press the display panel's OFF button immediately after the panel's JACK DOWN lights extinguish. When possible, allow the panel to shut itself off, which it will do after several minutes. The reason is: If you cycle the key to OFF (or cycle from ignition to accessory or vice versa), you will cut power to the panel prematurely. You must avoid any premature closing of the jack system's "retract solenoids" because this will trap excess hydraulic fluid between the jacks and the pump's fluid reservoir and the jacks will not be able to retract completely.

To eliminate the cause being a restriction in the hydraulic fluids return circuit, loosen the hydraulic hose fitting at the jack and observe the jack. If the jack returns, you've narrowed the problem to something other than the jack - possibly a hose, a hose fitting or a velocity valve.

Caution: When retightening the hose fitting on the jack, tighten the fitting finger tight, and then, using the wrench, tighten the nut approximately one third of a turn. This connection is a flare fitting and it's easy to damage the fitting if it is over-torqued.

Summary: If the jack didn't return, the problem exists inside the jack. It could be hanging up due to a swollen seal or possibly foreign material inside the jack. I'd recommend contacting HWH Corporation (the levelling-system manufacturer) for information on returning the jack for rebuilding. That would be more economical than a total replacement, and turn around time is usually quick. HWH can be contacted online at www.hwhcorp.com.

LETTER TO SPANNERMAN AND ARTICLES FOR ARVM
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