

SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

BRAKE FAILURE

I have a Fleetwood Bounder on a 1999 Ford chassis equipped with a Triton V-10 engine. It broke down 48 miles from home on its maiden voyage. The problem was the unit between the transmission and the driveshaft; some sort of a brake. I think. Can you explain what this is, how it works and what could have caused it to go bad?

It's the parking brake. Both GM and Ford standard and heavy-duty chassis come with a drum brake between the transmission and the driveshaft because they have disc brakes on all four wheels. Disc brakes do make good parking brakes. Even new motorhomes have failures, and that's why manufacturers have warranties. It always takes a little time to work out the 'bugs' before everything works smoothly. Many GM driveshaft brakes are applied automatically when the transmission is shifted to 'PARK' and Ford driveshaft brakes are applied manually with a foot pedal. While parking-brake failures are rare, there are a number of things that can cause such a failure. Your local motorhome Service Centre should be able to find the problem and fix it.

CHEVY P30 BRAKE PROBLEM

I own an American motorhome built on a Chevrolet P30-chassis that currently has 40,000 miles on it. At Less than 1,500 miles, the shift lever was extremely difficult to move when in PARK. The local Chevrolet dealer adjusted the detent and the shift lever then moved easily, but the arrow indicator did not line up correctly. At 2,000 miles, the transmission went into second gear and locked up.

I limped into an RV park. The next day I had the transmission checked at the Chevrolet dealership and was told that the shift detent was off and that the electronic transmission had gone into "default" mode. I was instructed to merely stop, turn off the engine, and restart if it ever happened again. It has not happened again.

What has been a recurring problem is the fact that the "automatic apply parking brake" engages when the shift lever is placed in reverse, and the engine is hot (but not boiling over). For example, when I pull into an RV park and leave the engine running while I disconnect my car, then try to back into a space, 80 percent of the time the parking brake will engage. Needless to say, when it engages the coach will not move. I then have to either drive the motorhome around to cool down, or turn it off and wait. When cool down occurs, everything is normal.

I know the problem is heat related, and I suspect that it is electrical and that what is happening is that the parking brake is getting a signal that the transmission is being put into PARK when in reverse, thereby allowing the brake to engage. I basically understand

the system, but all I have is the Chassis Service Manual and I do not understand much about the electronic transmission – can you help?

This is a tough one to answer without the details of what exactly has been done to the coach, but we'll give it a try. The gear selector (PRNDL) switch is inside the transmission, so the transmission temperature can affect it. To check it out, it's best to ask a dealer to plug in a diagnostic code reader. This will allow the technician to download fault codes from the transmission.

The other problem with the gear indicator can be the input switch for the parking interlock system, which is inside the coach. That switch is not subject to extreme temperature due to its location; it most likely needs adjustment. Another possibility is a binding shift cable. All too often such cables drop down near an exhaust pipe, and heat takes its toll on the cables.

TYRE AVAILABILITY

I own an American motorhome which is fitted with Michelin 8R19.5 X7A tyres which we have heard are longer made. As they were original equipment on my motorhome, which is based on a Chevrolet P-chassis, I would like to continue using this make.

If these tyre s are no longer available what replacements are out there for this tyre? Can these replacements be mixed with the 8R19.5, or do they have to be paired with each other? Is there a difference in the load rating, aspect ratio, height or circumference of these replacements? Thanks for any forth coming help.

The Michelin 8R19.5 XZA tyre is alive and well. The reason you have heard it is 'no longer available' is because it is no longer available in Load Range D, which was the OEM load range on many Chevrolet P-chassis.

The Michelin 8R19.5 tyres are only available in Load Range F, but they work just fine when they are properly inflated for the individual wheel loads. You can trade a tyre down in load range, but you cannot trade one up. In other words, you can make a Load Range E or D tyre out of a Load Range F tyre by simply reducing the air pressure, but you cannot make a Load Range E or F tyre out of a Load Range D tyre by increasing the pressure.

There are alternative tyres available for most P-chassis motorhomes and I would suggest you contact one of the UK American Tyre specialists.

REFRIGERATOR/HOB COMBUSTION PROBLEMS

On a number of occasions I've read that soot deposits can form in the exhaust of your refrigerator, particularly if it runs on gas a lot. I have read the handbook (always the last resort) but this doesn't give any guidance as to how, only that it should be done.

Also, I have a sooty hob burner (the other two burn completely clean). I'm

told this is due to insufficient air getting into the mix but I can't find any means of adjustment.

The flue tube of an RV refrigerator can get very dirty which will eventually cause combustion problems which will lead to poor cooling and odors in the fridge. Propane, when burnt, produces a fair amount of water vapour which causes rust to form on the walls of the flue. This rust usually falls to the bottom of the flue, helped by the movement of the RV whilst on the road. However, if your RV is parked up for a period of time, with the refrigerator operating on gas, the flue can become dirty and in extreme cases become partially blocked.

To keep your refrigerator working to maximum efficiency you should give the burner and flue a good clean at least once a year. It is wise to have the gas jets and gas pressure on all your appliances checked by a qualified technician every year.

To clean the flue tube, first loosen the burner assembly, drop it down, and cover it with a rag so no debris from the flue will fall into it. Lift out the spiral baffle on its support wire from the flue top. Working from the top of the flue, clean the tube with a suitable flue brush. Also clean the baffle before reinstalling it. In some refrigerators it is not possible to reach the top of the flue tube to remove the spiral baffle. In this situation, cover the burner with a rag and then use air pressure from the bottom of the flue to loosen the rust and dirt.

The problem with your cooker hob burner may be caused by a dirty or worn gas jet or the air inlet shutter, if fitted, requiring adjustment.

The burner flame is adjusted by means of air shutters. If the air shutters are set too far open, the flame will lift away from the burner head and will be difficult to light. If the air shutters are set too far closed, the flame will look hazy and the distinct cone will be missing.

Open the air shutters to increase the air-to-gas mixture ratio until the flame has yellow tips but does not lift away from the burner head. Then close the air shutters until the yellow tips of the flame are eliminated. This provides the maximum flame efficiency without flame blow-out.

If you cannot achieve a satisfactory flame on all your burners then get a qualified technician to check it over for you.

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