

# SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

## RUBBER ROOF MAINTENANCE

We have owned our 1990 American for many years with relatively few problems, but I have a question about rubber roof longevity. I regularly clean and treat the roof with the recommended chemicals. However, I have been told that I should coat the entire roof with one of those rubber paint products to extend its life. Will these products really extend the roof's life, or should I replace the roof?

You don't indicate that you are having any problem with this roof, and if that is the case, it speaks well for the maintenance you've performed. The best source of information for any product is usually the manufacturer, in this case Alpha Systems. They recommend simply regular washing with mild soap (not strong detergent) and lots of water. Use a medium-bristle brush to remove stubborn stains such as mildew, but take care not to damage the material. Another major supplier to the RV industry, Dicor, recommends essentially the same thing. They say that you can use a light concentration of bleach and water on their EPDM roofs for mildew stains when necessary, but do not allow this mixture to come into contact with the graphics on the coach. Neither manufacturer recommended a paint or coating. Never ever use any product that contains petroleum distillates, as these can damage and penetrate both the rubber roof and the adhesive. Always follow the intervals specified by the manufacturer for cleaning. Lacking this information, clean whenever there is a sign of mould, mildew, or other deep stains. Roof systems in warm, damp environments will likely require maintenance approximately four times a year, in more arid climates an annual cleaning would probably be sufficient. For repairs or damage, use only those sealants and adhesives recommended by the manufacturer.

## NOISY FUEL TANK

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.

## FORD 460 ENGINE PARTS

We have owned our current motorhome for well over ten years and are finally considering trading it in for a newer one. We have found a 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.

## 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 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](http://www.hwhcorp.com).

## HEAVY OIL CONSUMPTION ON CHEVY CHASSIS

We recently purchased a used motorhome which has a Chevrolet P-chassis with a Vortec petrol engine. The chassis is still under warranty.

After our first trip out in the motorhome I checked all the fluid levels and noticed that the engine oil level was low and so I topped it up with about four pints of the recommended oil. After the next trip I checked the oil level again and found it to be low. I have checked for oil leaks but there appears to be none.

Should we take the motorhome back to the dealer immediately so that he can check this problem for us and also get them to carry out a full engine service.

Is it normal for these engines to consume so much oil and if not what sort of tests can be performed so that the cause can be identified?

All engines use a certain amount of oil but yours would appear to be rather excessive. If the engine is burning the oil then you should see a fair amount of blue exhaust smoke.

To be sure that you do have a problem it would be best to check the oil level carefully when the motorhome is parked-up on level ground. Top up with a good quality oil and then after 200 or 300 hundred miles repeat the check in the same place if possible. If you find that you are definitely using or losing oil then get your dealer to give the engine a thorough check over.

If your dealer cannot find the problem then you should take the motorhome to a specialist GM repair centre. If you believe that your engine is still under warranty make sure that you take all the relevant paperwork with you so that a warranty claim can be submitted if any major work is required.

## TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

If you have a technical question that you would like answering please send it to: SPANNERMAN, ARVM, MONTROSE, CROWN HILL, GREAT DALBY, LE14 2ER. Fax. 01664 481400 Email: [apbleisure@btinternet.com](mailto:apbleisure@btinternet.com)