

SPANNERMAN ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

RV BATTERY DRAIN

Earlier this year we replaced all of our RV batteries. The next day our two chassis batteries were flat. Days before we left for our 5-month sailing holiday we took our RV to a local American car electrical specialist. They could not find any electrical drain on the chassis batteries. Their suggested that we should fit a battery isolator switch. What would cause this small battery drain?

Firstly I would recommend that you do not fit an isolator switch to the chassis batteries as many of the engine management systems require a constant 12 volt supply.

Secondly if you have a radio and or an alarm fitted these will drain the battery over a period of time so I suggest you disconnect them temporarily and see if the battery drain is still there. Also check to see if you have any accessories plugged into a cigarette lighter socket that is connected to the engine batteries. Also check that the electric step is connected to the House batteries.

WATER IN AIR FILTER

We have a 1999 Southwind powered by the 1999 6.8-litre Ford V-10. With this engine, as we have found out, there is a problem with the air filter filling with water when it rains. This could be quite a safety issue, especially if the filter were to fill up while the motorhome is on the motorway or in heavy urban traffic. I have contact the Ford RV hot line several times and they always say the fix will be out next month. We would appreciate any help you could give us on this matter.

I have been advised that a minor modification to the air cleaner housing is now available. The repair consists of replacing the current air cleaner with a new gasket and shield kit. Due to the configuration of the air cleaner system, most units will not require the kit. If the vehicle has a loss of power or stumbles while driving in rain, contact your dealer for inspection and possible modification.

CAN YOU DRIVE A LARGE RV ON A COACH LICENCE?

We are in the process of bringing a 38ft Holiday Rambler home to the UK, after touring the States for the past 16 months, and we have just been told that we have to have an 'LGV' licence to drive it in Europe. Is that the case? I hold a PCV Class D (large coach) licence which I assumed would entitle me to drive a large motorhome in Europe.

Unfortunately your Class 1 PCV Licence will not be valid for you to drive your 38ft Holiday Rambler in this country or Europe. Your licence is a category D and to drive the vehicle over here you will require at least category C (Large Goods Vehicle over 3,500 kgs). If you wishes to tow a car or trailer which weighs more than 750kgs you will require a Class C+E licence (Large Goods Vehicle over 3,500kgs with a trailer in excess of 750kgs).

As from 1st January 1997 you have to pass

two driving tests to get category C+E added to your licence. The first test is for category C (rigid vehicle) and the second for category C+E (rigid vehicle plus trailer). Large vehicles, including motorhomes, which exceed 7.5 tonnes gross weight (MGW) require drivers to hold a class licence

For further details of driving licence categories and the Law relating to trailers visit the DVLA website - www.dvla.gov.uk

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.

MORE GEARS - PLEASE

I own a 34-foot 1984 American motorhome on a Chevy P-30 chassis with a tag-axle and MOR/ryde suspension. I really love this coach and have done many upgrades. What I'm looking for are more gears, not only for climbing inclines but also for gearing down when descending those same inclines. I've been told that an auxiliary transmission was not made to gear down on downhill inclines. A mechanic suggested I install a two speed rear axle. He said the installation is relatively easy and should not therefore be very expensive and this would give me more gears, and would be perfect for climbing or descending any incline. He also said the cost of buying a two-speed rear axle would be far less than an auxiliary transmission. Before I take his advice, I would appreciate your opinion. I travel frequently in mountainous areas and need extra gears.

There are two types of two-speed axles: vacuum and electric. Both have dual-range gearing; however, they can leave your coach in neutral if the shift is not correct. I would suggest, before you spend the time and money on a two speed axle, that you check with someone who has a lot more experience on this matter than I have.

CRUISE CONTROL THAT WILL NOT CRUISE

I own a 1998 C-class motorhome, based on a Ford chassis, that is equipped with an electronic cruise control. Normally when we engage the cruise control everything works fine but every so often it will not engage at all. It does seem that there is no problem when we are not towing but as soon as we put our car on the back the problem returns.

Is there some fundamental problem with the cruise control or is there a simple explanation?

I. Statham, Leicestershire

Cruise controls are designed to switch out when the brakes are applied and are usually connected to the brake light circuit. If the brake lights come on, for whatever reason, then the cruise control will sense this and switch out. On some of the very latest motorhomes the throttle is controlled by an electronic module and the throttle will close when the brakes are applied.

You say that you do not experience any problems with the cruise control when you are not towing and that the problem seems to reappear when you tow your car. I suspect that brakes on your car are operating before those on the motorhome which causes the brake lights on the motorhome to illuminate and therefore the cruise control will switch out.

The brake cable on the A-frame should be adjusted after the car has been hitched up to the motorhome and preferably when both the car and motorhome are on a level surface. The brake cable should be adjusted so that the car brakes only operate when the tow hitch compresses under normal braking. A little trial and error may be required to get it right.

On every trip when towing your car it pays dividends to pull up after a few miles and check that the brakes on the car are not binding. There have been quite a few incidences of brake fires on towed cars in the last few years. Some of these have proved quite expensive after the car had experienced extensive damage.

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: ableisure@btinternet.com

Whilst every care will be taken to ensure the accuracy of answers the Magazine will assume no responsibility for any effect from errors or omissions.