

RV Consumer e-Magazine

April 2014

Volume 4

Issue 4



DISCOVER

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**TIME TO HIT THE
ROAD**

**but is your RV ready for the
2014 camping season?**

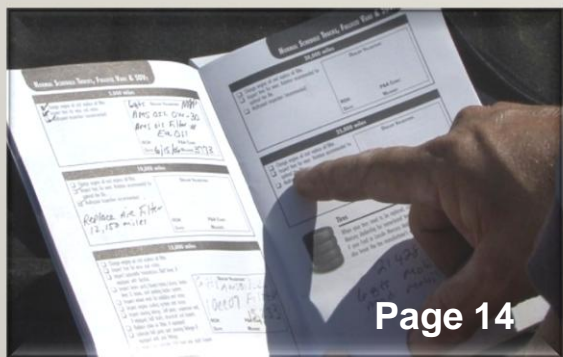
**PLUS THE EVOLUTION
OF RV SLIDE-OUTS**

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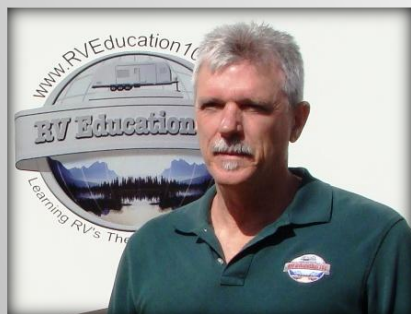
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Last month we had a serious problem with the company we use to format our publication into a flipbook style magazine. We pay for this service and expect professional results so our readers can enjoy a functional well presented digital publication.

We decided it was in our, and your, best interest to move to another service provider. We searched until we found a company that offered a professional service with more features and capabilities to make your reading experience the best it can be.

This month's issue is chock full of helpful RV articles, RV videos and interactive material like our RV play & learn crossword puzzles.

Enjoy this issue of RV Consumer and have a wonderful 2014 camping season. ~ *Mark*

RV Consumer Magazine

150 Bay Ridge Rd.
Harrells, NC 28444
910-484-7615

www.rvconsumer.com

Publisher: RV Education 101

Editor: Mark J. Polk
mark@rveducation101.com

Contributing Writers:

Marketing Director: Dawn Polk
dawn@rveducation101.com

Advertising Information:
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RV Spring Preparation

By Mark Polk



The 2014 camping season is here, is your RV ready for it?

When I park our RV after the last RV trip of the season I look forward to this time of year rolling around again, time to go camping. Last winter I got a little lazy and put the RV in storage knowing there were some maintenance related issues that would need to be addressed this spring. When you combine those items with routine spring preparation checks you need to dedicate some time to getting the RV ready to go camping.

If you follow my work at all you more-than-likely have heard me use the term preventive maintenance. I spent an

entire career in the Army teaching young soldiers the value of preventive maintenance, and a second career passing the same valuable lessons on to RV owners. For those of you not familiar with the term, preventive maintenance is maintenance you perform on your RV, automobile, house or anything else *before* a problem exists. Preventive maintenance checks are designed to prevent or identify potential problems that could lead to mechanical breakdown, malfunction, or failure of a component or system on your RV. It consists of cleaning, inspecting, lubricating, adjusting and servicing your RV.

To go one step further with my explanation I like to tell folks that a lack of preventive maintenance and / or scheduled maintenance will eventually result in emergency maintenance. For example, if you don't check the air pressure in your tires (preventive maintenance) the under-inflated tire over heats and prematurely fails resulting in (emergency maintenance). And emergency maintenance usually leaves you stranded along side the road. Not exactly how I want to spend my first RV trip of 2014!

Preventive maintenance is the backbone of a good maintenance program. Preventive maintenance is really nothing more than common sense maintenance. If you're going to take a thousand mile trip in your automobile common sense tells us at a minimum to check all of the fluid levels, tires and lights on the vehicle.

Unfortunately lots of folks assume all of the fluid levels are okay, that there are no leaks and the tires look like they are inflated properly so why check them. These assumptions are why we have unexpected breakdowns.

Now consider an RV. It's larger and heavier than your automobile and its not just the chassis you need to be concerned with, it's the entire house sitting on top of the chassis. The good news is the average RV owner can perform the required preventive maintenance and prevent untimely breakdowns and costly repairs.

To assist with your RV spring preparation here is a checklist from my best-selling e-book, [Checklists for RVers](#)

If your RV was winterized it will need to be de-winterized and I recommend sanitizing the RV water system too. [Watch Sanitizing Video on You Tube](#)

- ✓ With the water system sanitized turn the water pump on to pressurize the system and inspect for any water leaks.
- ✓ Check the operation of the toilet.
- ✓ Remove any tape or protective covering that may have put over LP gas vents or outside vents to keep insects or rodents out.
- ✓ Check any mousetraps you may have put out. Open all doors and compartments and check for rodent intrusion and water damage.
- ✓ Wash the unit thoroughly. This is a good time to inspect the roof and body seams, and window sealant for cracking that would allow water to enter the RV. Consult your local RV dealer for sealants compatible with these materials.
- ✓ Inspect the operation of the awning and check the awning fabric. Clean the awning and let the fabric dry thoroughly before stowing the awning.

- ✓ Inspect the tires for signs of dry-rot and wear. Inflate all tires to the manufacturer recommended tire pressure based on the load.
- ✓ Lubricate all hinges and locks with a spray lubricant.
- ✓ Inspect and clean the RV's interior.
- ✓ Plug in any appliances that you unplugged for storage and replace any dry cell batteries you may have removed. This is a good time to put new batteries in items like smoke alarms.
- ✓ Test the operation of the carbon monoxide alarm, LP gas leak detector and smoke alarm.
- ✓ Check the fire extinguisher. Make sure it is fully charged and ready to use.
- ✓ Reset any breakers you turned off. If you removed any fuses for storage re-install them now.
- ✓ Clean or replace air conditioner filters if it wasn't done prior to storage and remove any covers that were put over air conditioners.
- ✓ Open vents and windows and air the unit out.
- ✓ If you removed the coach and chassis batteries for storage re-install them.
- ✓ Check the electrolyte levels in lead-acid batteries, clean the terminals and clamps and check the charge level in all batteries. Recharge batteries as required.
- ✓ Check the operation of the electric steps if applicable. Lubricate step mechanism.
- ✓ Test the operation of the hydraulic jacks if applicable. Check hydraulic fluid level.

- ✓ If your RV has a generator and you didn't change the oil and filters prior to storage this is a good time to do it.
- ✓ Inspect the generator exhaust system for damage prior to starting. Start and run the generator for two hours with at least a half-rated load on it. Consult the generator's owner manual for load ratings.
- ✓ Turn the generator off and plug the unit into shore power. Turn the refrigerator on in the electric mode. Allow sufficient time to cool and check for proper operation.
- ✓ Check all 12-volt interior lights and accessories.
- ✓ Test the monitor panel for proper operation.
- ✓ Check the operation of slide-outs if applicable.
- ✓ Check the remaining 120-volt appliances for proper operation.
- ✓ Test the Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) for proper operation.
- ✓ Turn the refrigerator off, leave the doors open and allow sufficient time for it to get to room temperature so it can be checked in the LP gas mode.
- ✓ Note: The LP gas system should have a leak test and gas operating pressure test performed by an authorized RV repair facility annually. Turn the LP gas valve on at the cylinders or tank and check the operation of all LP gas appliances. Make sure the water heater is full of water before testing the water heater. If a LP gas appliance is not operating properly have it inspected by a

RV repair facility.

✓ If it is a motorized RV and you didn't change the engine oil and filter prior to storage this would be a good time to do it.

✓ Check all fluid levels in transmission, power steering, engine coolant, engine oil, windshield washer and brakes. Consult vehicle owner's manual for proper levels and types of fluids.

✓ Start the engine and check for proper readings on all gauges.

✓ Lubricate the vehicle chassis if it wasn't done prior to storage.

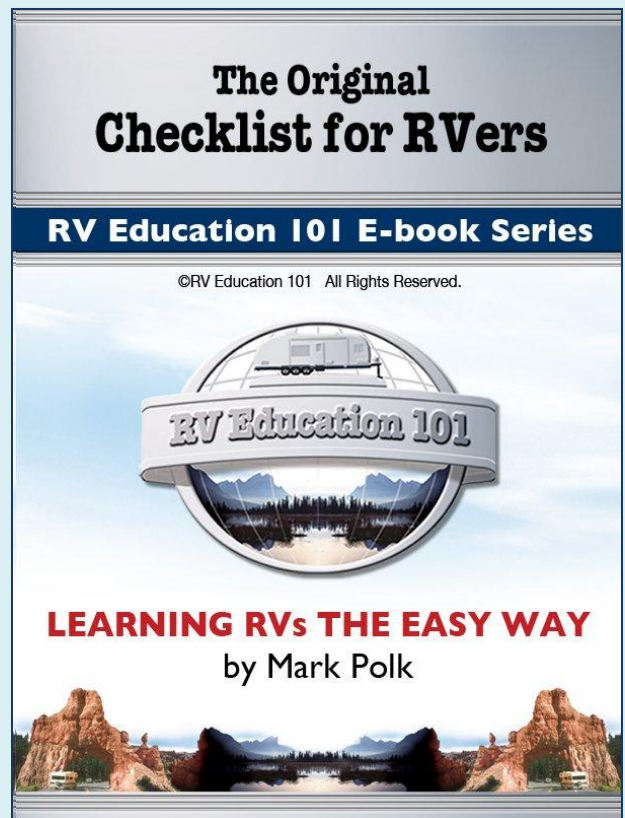
✓ Check the condition of the windshield wiper blades and replace if necessary.

✓ Check the operation of all chassis lights.

✓ In addition to these checks if you have a pop-up or travel trailer the wheel bearings and brakes (if equipped) should be inspected at least once annually. Inspect any canvas for dry rot and tears; inspect all hitch work and coupler for damage. Inspect the breakaway switch and pigtail for proper operation.

This checklist is not all-inclusive, but it works for me. You can add or delete from the checks and tailor it to your specific needs. Now for the fun part, load your clothes, food, and personal belongings, hit the road and have fun exploring this wonderful country we live in. ~ **RV 101**

[Watch Extend Engine Life Video on You Tube](#)



Get over [40 RV checklists like](#) this one to serve as reminders and help make all your RV trips stress-free and more enjoyable.

Q&A with Mark

Question:

I looked into the tow ratings for my truck and they are very confusing so any help you can offer on sorting through the confusion would be appreciated.

Answer:

There are lots of concerns and confusion when you try to determine how much your tow vehicle can safely tow. Of course the first step is to verify the published Maximum Loaded Trailer Weight Rating (MLTWR) or tow rating for your tow vehicle. When you verify this information it is important that you know the year, make, model, cab and bed design, engine size, and if it is 2WD or 4WD. Additionally and perhaps most importantly you need to know the rear axle ratio.

After you collect this information you can do a search on the Internet for towing guides designed to provide correct tow ratings, or at least what the vehicle manufacturer claims is correct information. Try to use a towing guide that is published by the vehicle manufacturer.

When you verify or locate the MLTWR for your tow vehicle there are two major concerns we have to safely match trailer weights with your published tow rating.

1) Try to find a trailer with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) that is equal too or less than the trucks MLTWR. The trailer's GVWR is the maximum weight the trailer can weigh when it is fully loaded for travel. If you keep the trailer's GVWR below the truck's MLTWR the truck is rated to tow it even at its maximum loaded capacity.

2) After you find a trailer that meets the criteria in #1 add the weight of the fully loaded truck and the fully loaded trailer together and make sure it is less than the truck's Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR). The GCWR is the maximum amount of weight the truck and trailer can weigh when combined. You can take the truck to a set of scales and have it weighed and you can look at the trailer's dry or unloaded weight and then add a safe amount to cover any cargo and personal belongings you plan to take in the truck and trailer.

There are other important concerns like proper hitch components, brakes, and trailer tongue weight or pin weight for a 5th wheel trailer, but if the truck and trailer pass these two requirements you are working towards a safe trailer towing combination.

Of course lighter is always better than going to the maximum on tow ratings.

For more great RV information between magazine issues check out [Mark's Blog](#)

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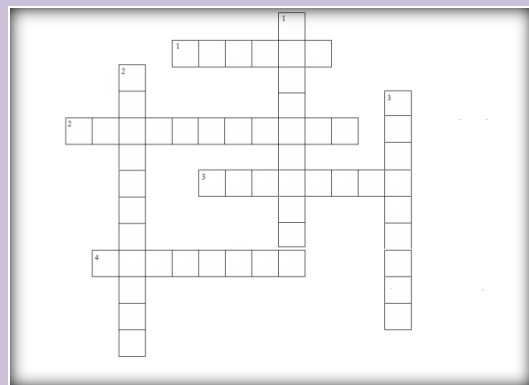
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Where will you go in your RV this year?



For those of you like us who have jobs and busy schedules now is a great time to sit down and do some RV trip planning for 2014. Take a look at your calendar for dates you want to go on vacation, holidays, long weekends, and other times you can escape and plan a short RV getaway or longer RV trip.

Planning these RV trips now offers many advantages. You can start to put some money aside for the trip, you can make campground reservations and lock in that prime spot, and you can secure the dates with your work schedule so there are no conflicts later. Plus, having these dates

and trips planned in advance gives you something to look forward to when the daily routine gets old or stressful.

Remember with an RV your choices for a destination are endless. Your RV is a cabin in the mountains, a cottage at the lake, a beach house along the coast and the opportunity to go where you want when you want.

So for all you hard working folks, and those lucky to be retired, plan now and enjoy your RV in 2014. **~RV 101**

How will you
Remember
your travels?



*The laptop we would've used to
keep in touch with the kids.*



*The guy from Ed's Towing.
Spent three hours with him.*



*Cook's Field, the week after we
missed the Bluegrass Festival.*

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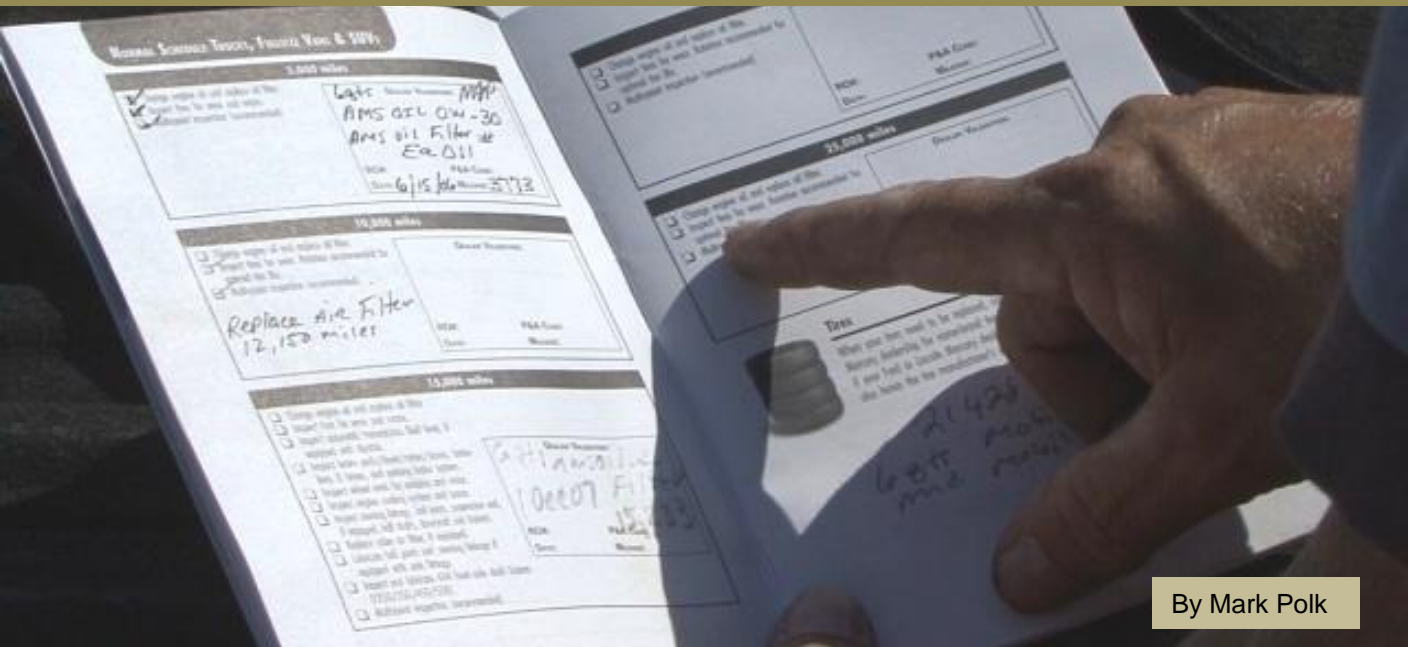
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Check it Out - Check it Off



By Mark Polk

In the military we used checklists to assist in performing routine and scheduled maintenance on our vehicles and equipment. This helped ensure that nothing was overlooked or forgotten. Here is a checklist to help make sure your RV is road-ready before heading out on your first RV camping trip of the season.

Check it Out, Check it Off

___ Check and adjust the air pressure in all tires. Always check the tires when they are cold, before traveling more than one mile.

___ Check the lug nuts on the wheels. Discoloration and stains around lug nuts can be an indication they are loose.

___ Make sure all items in the storage compartments are secure. Lock all exterior compartments.

___ Check the bike rack and bikes for secure mounting if applicable.

___ Make sure the power cord, water hose, and sewer hose are disconnected and properly stowed.

___ Make sure all slide-outs are in the travel position and any travel locks are securely in place.

___ Make sure the TV antenna is lowered and stowed in the proper position for traveling.

___ Check the awning. Make sure that it is securely stowed and all travel locks and knobs are secured and locked.

___ Raise all stabilizer jacks or hydraulic leveling jacks.

___ Look under the RV for any indications of leaks (motorized) or anything out of the ordinary. Have any leaks checked out and repaired before leaving on your trip.

___ Stow or retract the steps.

___ Fill the fresh water holding tank with enough potable water to get to your destination.

___ Check and secure the cap on the sewer drain outlet.

___ Turn all LP gas appliances off and turn the gas supply off at the tank or cylinders.

___ Double check all hitch work on towable RVs and on vehicles being towed behind motor homes.

___ Check all fluid levels for motorized RVs and tow vehicles.

___ Remove and store wheel chocks and any type of leveling blocks.

___ Check all running lights, turn signals, brake lights and headlights on the RV and tow vehicle.

___ Check for an up to date inspection or emission sticker and license plates.

___ Check the operation and condition of the windshield wipers. Replace wiper blades as required.

___ Check all fire extinguishers for a full charge and serviceable condition.

___ Check trailer brakes for proper operation.

___ Make one last walk around the outside of the RV and check for anything you may have overlooked.

Don't forget the inside of your RV:

___ Walk through the entire RV and secure all loose items that could move, fall or get damaged while traveling.

___ Turn off all appliances gas & electric.

___ Close all roof vents

___ Close all doors, drawers and cabinets.

___ Check for anything in the refrigerator that could spill. Lock the refrigerator and freezer doors.

___ Turn off the 12-volt water pump.

___ Close the range top cover.

___ Turn off all 12-volt lights and accessories that could drain the auxiliary battery. Don't forget the TV antenna booster.

___ Close the windows and secure blinds.

___ Secure any large items such as TVs that might move or fall while traveling.

___ All weight in the RV should be distributed evenly.

Adjust your mirrors and seat and hit the road. ~ **RV 101**

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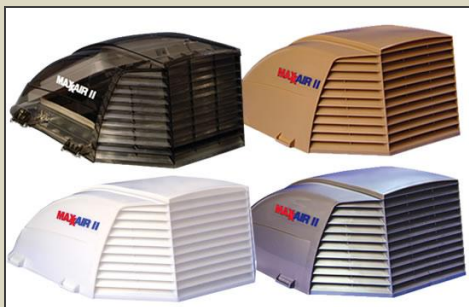
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It's a great place to learn more about your RV and keep up with what is new and exciting in the RV industry.



By Mark Polk

The Evolution of RV Slide-Outs

Every now and then there are inventions or advancements in technology that are so significant it changes or helps shape an entire industry. Crew cab trucks would be a good example. For years the only option was a standard cab. You could squeeze three people in it, but it left little room for other cargo and the person in the middle was not too comfortable. Next came the extended cab with jump seats in the back, and all kinds of storage space. Eventually you outgrow the extended cab truck and move up to the 4-door crew cab. I can tell you from personal experience that once you go to the 4-door model there is no turning back.

The same holds true for slide-outs in RVs. Once you own a RV with a slide-out, or multiple slide-outs, it's difficult to downsize to an RV with no slide-out.

When I first started selling RVs in the mid-90s slide-outs were cutting edge technology, and who knew at the time how big of an impact this technology would have on the industry as a whole.

But, as with most other new technology there were growing pains. RV manufacturers were experimenting with different methods to operate slide-outs, there were concerns about cutting that large of a hole in the side of an RV,

as well as the added weight and the potential for water leaks.



Imagine the first time an engineer said, hey let's cut a hole in the side of this RV and make a room that can slide in and out. He was probably standing in the unemployment line the following week.

In the early days there were lots of different names used for slide-outs, like tip-outs or pop-outs and there were lots of different operating systems like hydraulic, electric and rack and pinion models. I can remember manual slide-outs that you physically pulled out by hand and others that used hand cranks to put in and out. I also remember lots of folks having problems with water leaks around the edges of the slide-out because the rubber did not seal it or it was a poor design.

I have always been a firm believer that when something was first invented or was brand new technology give it a little time for the bugs to be worked out and then join the crowd. This held true with

slide-outs in RVs. Within a few years slide-outs had better operating systems, used lighter materials to build and had less problems with leaking and sealing.

But even with all the early growing pains and design challenges during those early years the added benefit of additional real estate inside the RV won over the RV buyer.

I can also remember walking in the first RV I ever saw with the slide-out extended. Just like pick-ups with crew cabs there was no going back for me.

But something else I was quick to notice as a salesperson was how other aspects of the RV could be affected when the slide-out was in the stowed or retracted position. I saw RVs that you couldn't get to the microwave, or the thermostat was inaccessible, or you could hardly get from the front of the RV to the rear of the RV. I always told my customers to look at the RV with all the slide-outs in the stowed position and make sure you can live with it that way.





Not long after the invention of the earliest RV slide-outs came more ideas on how to incorporate these slide-outs into modern day RVs. Possibly the most significant being the bedroom slide-out.

RV design has always faced limitations based on weight distribution and space. One area that suffers because of these constraints is the bedroom. You want the largest bed you can have, but that makes navigating around the bed challenging. Bedroom slide-outs were the solution to the problem. Well, maybe not when the slide-out is in, but when it was out, wow, you could actually move around the bed with ease and even have room to spare. As slide-outs continued to evolve it was more

and more common to see RVs with two slide-out rooms, one in the living area and one in the bedroom. I don't have



statistics to support it, but I think it is safe to say RV sales increased dramatically when the interior living spaced increased with slide-outs.



The next thing that caught my eye was that slide-outs on RVs were getting larger and some RV manufacturers were experimenting with three slide-outs on RV models. There were even full-wall slide-outs and RV interiors started to look more like an apartment or condominium. Soon four or more slide-outs were being used in designing RVs.

Kitchen slide-outs, living room slide-outs, dining room slide-outs, bedroom slide-outs, patio slide-outs and if I'm not mistaken I think I saw a toilet slide-out at the National RV Trade Show last year.



And slide-outs were not only used on motorhomes, travel trailers and 5th wheel trailers anymore. Now pop-ups and hybrid trailers were taking advantage of technology to increase the interior living space in the RV. There are

As with everything else there are pros and cons with advancements in technology, slide-outs in RVs included.

But, don't get me wrong, I am all for the additional interior and exterior living space slide-outs bring to our modern day RVs, but for right now I am content with the two slide-outs we have in our motorhome. ~ **RV 101**

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RV Exterior Cleaning Tips & Tricks



When you are traveling and camping in your RV the RV's exterior gets dirty quickly. The key to keeping your RV exterior looking new is to clean it often. If you allow bugs, dirt and black streaks to stay on the RV's exterior surface too long it can be hard to remove. I like to thoroughly clean our RV after returning from a trip.

Let's look at my top 5 RV exterior cleaning tips for a new looking RV:

- 1) Use a car wash soap that is compatible with the surface of the RV.
- 2) Use a long handled brush with soft bristles to reach the high spots and use a wash glove or mitt for the easy to reach areas.
- 3) When you use commercial cleaners, like black streak remover, always read the instructions for best cleaning results and to protect the RV's paint and graphics from possible damage.

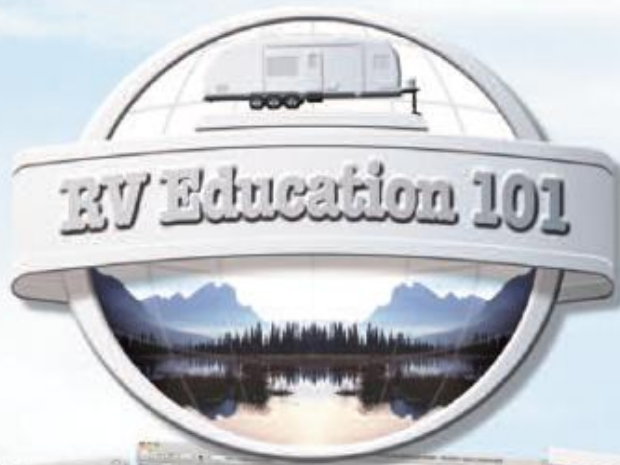
4) Rinse the area you plan to wash first. Always wash from the top down. When you are rinsing the soap from the surface avoid spraying water in any of the appliance vents.

5) You have probably heard lots of ideas for removing dead bugs from the front of your RV, but the best advice I can offer is clean it as soon as possible and use lots of water on the front of the RV to make the chore of removing bugs and road debris easier. I have had decent luck with bug and tar remover products too.

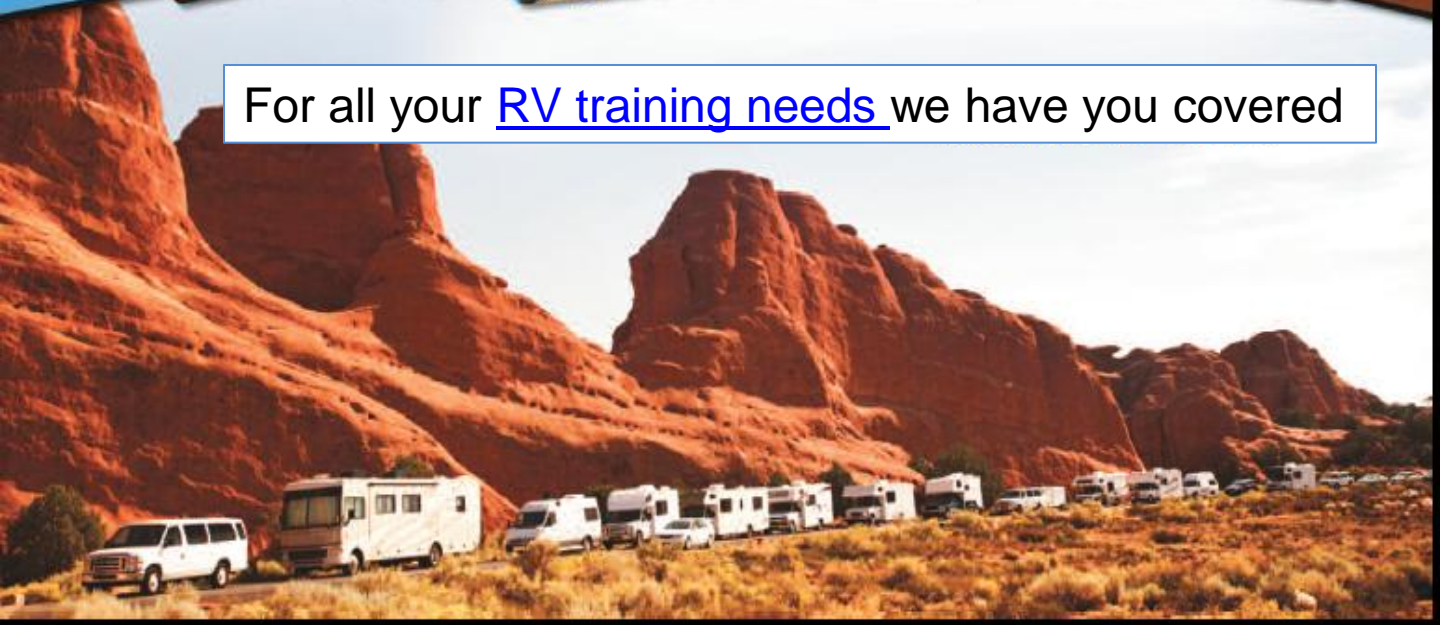
Well there you have it, a nice clean RV until you head out on your next RV trip. ~RV101

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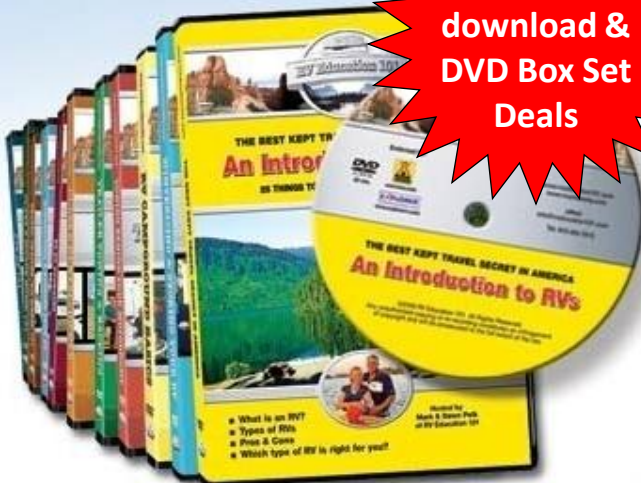


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Our goal with RV Consumer E-Magazine is to provide you with helpful information to make all of your RV experiences more enjoyable. I left my position as an RV Sales and F&I manager in 2000 to start RV Education 101.

We produce RV educational videos & DVDs and publish books and e-books on how to safely & properly use and maintain your RV. The reason I left my job was because of my concern about the lack of educational and safety awareness material available to the RV consumer, in other words you.

My wife Dawn left her position in RV sales to help start the company, and is our Sales and Marketing Director. We currently have a 35-foot Class A motor home. We have two boys, Tyler 17 and Josh 23, both avid RVers and two dogs, Roxie and Gracie.

If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit www.rveducation101.com

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RV Education 101
150 Bay Ridge Rd.
Harrells, NC 28444
910-484-7615

Contact:

Mark@rveducation101.com
Dawn@rveducation101.com

