Early Spring Maintenance
Inspecting your RV for Water Damage

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As prime camping season approaches it’s time to start thinking about getting the RV ready to go. It’s still too cold in some parts of the country to de-winterize the RV, but it’s never to early to start checking things out.

A good place to start is inspecting for water damage that might have occurred while the RV sat in winter storage. In this issue I am including a checklist you can follow to help inspect your RV for water damage.

We also started a brand new YouTube channel called RV 101®. This channel will only include quality videos on topics relevant to RV owners and enthusiasts. I encourage you to visit the site and click on the subscribe button so you are notified every time we release a new RV 101 video. For more RV tips, tricks and information like us on Facebook too. Happy Camping, Mark
Our digital RV Product Catalog puts all of our RV training products in one place, and we separate what products apply to what type of RV. For example if you own a travel trailer you can browse through the single DVD titles or go directly to the DVD value sets that apply specifically to travel trailers.

This helps accomplish two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV, and to make their entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. [Browse the product catalog now](#)
I always recommend inspecting your RV for water damage at least twice a year, and depending on where you store the RV possibly more often.

I would list water damage as the number one maintenance problem RV owner’s are confronted with. RVs flex when they travel down the road and sealants eventually dry out, crack and separate, especially when the RV is exposed to the elements.

Inspecting your RV for water damage can save you time, headaches and expensive repair bills if you locate and repair a leak before it gets bad.

This article is intended to give you a logical process to follow so you can properly inspect your RV for water damage.

The first thing you need to understand is that every seam on your RV, and anywhere the RV manufacturer cut a hole in your RV has the potential to let water in. It’s important you take your time and really inspect all of these seams and sealants on the RV.

I always say water damage on an RV is similar to progressive damage to a tire. The outside of the tire still looks fine, but the internal damage, over a period of time, causes the tire to fail without any warning.

The outside of your RV can look okay but the internal damage caused by water over a period of time can result in the entire roof, floor or wall rotting away without you knowing it.

Here is a basic checklist to follow during your inspections:

Caution: Always keep safety in mind when you are working on the roof of your RV. A slip or fall can cause serious injury or death.
To stop a water leak before it starts thoroughly inspect all RV roof and body seams. Consult manuals or your RV dealer for sealants compatible with different types of materials.

Tip: Go here for another article & videos on RV roof repair and sealants

Look for any discoloration and feel for any soft spots on the ceiling around roof vents, air conditioners, TV antennas, plumbing vents, and any other openings that were cut in the roof. Discoloration and soft spots indicate there is advanced water damage.

Look for any discoloration or wrinkles in the wallpaper, and feel for any soft spots on the walls around all windows, doors, vents, slide-outs, or other openings that were cut in the RV sidewalls.

Identify the location of items like the water heater, furnace, outside shower, potable water fill and city water inlet on the outside of the RV and then access those same areas from the inside of the RV. Look closely for any indications of water damage around these openings.

Open all overhead cabinets and look in the top corner where the wall meets the ceiling. Look for any discoloration and feel for any soft spots. This would indicate a leak at the seam where the sidewall and the roof attach.

Check in all outside storage compartments for any indications of water leaks or water damage.

Check for any soft spots on the roof itself, especially around the roof seams at the front and rear end caps of the RV.

Thoroughly inspect all sealants on the roof. Look closely for any cracked or separated sealants that would allow water to penetrate the surface.

Some Type B and Type C motor homes are notorious for leaks in the cab over bed area above the driver and passenger seats. Look for any signs of discoloration and feel for soft spots. The best way to do this is to remove the mattress and physically get up in the cab-over section to feel for moisture, water or soft spots.

Look and feel for delaminating on the outside of the RV. It is caused by water getting between the exterior fiberglass and the RV sidewall. Stand at the front or rear of the RV and look down the side for any noticeable ripples or what looks like a bubble in the fiberglass. You can also press on the sidewalls to feel for air pockets. If you feel the fiberglass move it is delaminating. It usually starts around an opening that was made in the sidewall. Repairs can be expensive. Inspecting these areas can identify and stop a problem before it gets too bad.

The key is to really inspect your RV for water damage. Take your time and look closely. If you identify a leak have it repaired immediately. Regular inspections can detect water damage before it does lots of damage and costs lots on money. ~ RV 101
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Don’t forget to check out Mark’s Blog, and our new RV101 YouTube Channel
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.

Not all insurance is equal. Just because you have your RV insured, doesn’t mean your whole RV experience is covered. Things like personal effects coverage, vacation liability, and towing expenses are frequently left out of other carriers’ policies. But at Explorer RV, we believe it’s more than just your RV we’re covering. It’s the travels, the good times, the memories. Visit us online to learn more or to get a quote.

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Awnings are a great feature to have on your RV. There are several different types of RV awnings and they serve different purposes. There are window and door awnings that provide shade and keep rain away from your RV windows or entry door. There are slide-out awnings that help protect the top of the slide-out from debris and water. And there are patio awnings that extend the living area of our outdoor world. The awnings on your RV will provide years of reliable trouble free operation, if you take time to do a little preventive maintenance and cleaning.

The first step to maintaining your RV awnings is to understand more about the different types of awning fabrics. Fabric used on RV awnings is one of two types, acrylic or vinyl. Acrylic fabric is a woven cloth that lets air circulate through the fabric. This air circulation allows the fabric to dry quickly when it gets wet. Acrylic fabrics are water repellant, but not waterproof. If you have experience tent camping you know that you shouldn’t touch the underside of the tent when it’s wet. Touching the wet fabric allows water to seep through the fabric. The same applies to an acrylic awning fabric. Vinyl awning fabrics are mildew resistant, but not necessarily mildew proof. Mildew can form on dirt and dust that collects on the vinyl fabric. It will be worse in high temperatures, humidity and if the fabric is stored when it is wet.

When you open the awnings for the first time each year, or after an awning has been stored for awhile, you need to inspect the awning fabric for any signs of mildew or stains. Remember vinyl awnings will mildew. To prevent dirt from imbedding into the woven fabric of an acrylic awning fabric you can simply hose the fabric off on a routine basis. Avoid scrubbing acrylic awning fabric. Scrubbing can remove the water retardant finish. For stubborn stains blot an approved awning cleaner on the acrylic fabric with a sponge or soft cloth. For more difficult stains or mildew on a vinyl awning fabric there are aftermarket commercial cleaners made just for awning fabrics. One method that works well is to spray the top and bottom of the awning fabric with the appropriate cleaner, roll it up and let it sit for several minutes. This helps distribute the cleaner over the entire surface of the awning fabric and allows...
While the awning is out, inspect the awning hardware. The bottom awning brackets support most of the load from the awning. Check the lag screws in the awning brackets for secure mounting. Inspect the arm pivot holes for any enlarged holes or broken rivets in the handles. Check for a warped roller tube. If the roller tube is warped it will be noticeable when you roll the awning out.

Inspect the awning fabric for any tears or excessive wear. Talk to your RV dealer about what materials to use to repair or patch the awning fabric.

Note: Never use oil based or abrasive cleaners on awning fabrics. Clean and thoroughly rinse both sides of the awning fabric. Carefully follow all awning and cleaner manufacturer directions.

Inspect the awning end caps for secure mounting and any broken or loose rivets. Caution: Never attempt to remove the awning end caps. Spring tension can result in serious injury. Have any damaged or broken parts repaired by a professional before using the awning.

Make sure the awning rail is securely mounted to the side of the RV.
In addition to cleaning and inspecting your awnings there are a few things to keep in mind when using the awnings, especially the patio awning. Always lower one end of the awning to allow for water runoff. The weight from water pooling on the awning fabric can cause extensive and costly damage.

Any wind gusts over 20 miles per hour can also cause extensive damage to the awning and to the RV. Never leave the awning out unattended. If everyone is leaving the campsite, store the awning in the travel position. When you go to bed, store the awning. Even when you are at the campsite you should use awning tie downs to prevent any sudden damage caused by high wind gusts or a sudden storm. You have the option to position the awning arms straight down and stake them to the ground, but you will get better support if they’re attached to the bottom awning brackets on the side of the RV. Remember, it is much easier to prevent damage to your awning than it is to repair it.

Never store the awning when the fabric is wet. Allow enough time for it to dry completely, on both sides, before storing the awning.

Check with your RV insurance provider to make sure your RV awning is covered in the event of any damage. Some insurance companies require separate coverage on the RV awnings.

Following these easy preventive maintenance checks can extend the life of your RV awnings. Happy Camping ~RV 101
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Announcing a New RV 101® YouTube Channel

We recently started a new YouTube channel called RV 101.

When we started our original RV Education 101 YouTube channel, many years ago, we did not organize everything exactly how we wanted. We will continue to add content to our existing channel, but with our new RV 101 channel we can include categories and playlists that we know is of interest to RV owners and enthusiasts.

As we build the new channel we will concentrate on producing short videos on topics RVers are interested in. The content will include RV how-to, RV DIY, RV tips & tricks, RV driving & towing skills, RV maintenance, RV safety and much more.

As always the video content displayed on our YouTube channel will be produced in-house by RV Education 101. It will be relevant, helpful video content that you can always depend on as accurate and the quality information.

Our goal is simple, we want to make all of your RV experiences safe, fun and stress-free through RV Education.

We encourage you to visit our new channel and subscribe so you will be notified every time a new RV video is released.
Watch Some Videos from our RV 101® YouTube Channel

RV Water Pump Care & Maintenance

How To Extend RV Engine Life
When you go camping in your RV there are items that are essential like a drinking water hose and RV sewer hoses, and there are nice to have items like a GPS designed for RVs and a portable BBQ grill. Today I want to talk about consumable items that you should always keep on-hand in your RV.

1) For starters you need holding tank treatments to treat the black water holding tank after you empty it. There are dry and liquid type holding tank treatments available. I suggest products that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly.

**Tip:** After you empty the gray water holding tank add some liquid dish soap down all the drains and run water long enough to get the soap past the P trap and to cover the bottom of the tank. The dish soap and water will help control odors and assist in cleaning the gray water holding tank.

2) While we are on the subject of holding tanks it’s a good idea to stock up on toilet paper designed for use in RVs. This is one consumable item you don’t want to leave home without.

**Tip:** To see if toilet paper is compatible with your RV waste-water system put one sheet of the toilet paper in a glass of water. If it starts to break-down and fall apart within a few seconds of being in the water it is suitable for use in RVs.

3) Laundry soap & dish soap are must have consumable items too. Clothes are going to get dirty and need to be washed, especially if your camping trip is more than a weekend excursion. You can purchase these items at the campground store, but it is less expensive to purchase them where you normally shop and just keep it in the RV.

4) Next on my list is a well stocked cabinet of first aid supplies and over the counter medications. You never know when an accident will happen, or when somebody will get sick. If you are dry-camping miles from the closest town or store you’ll be glad you have these consumable items along for the ride. If
you or someone else is on prescription medication make sure you have an ample supply for the duration of your trip, and don’t forget the sunscreen too. **Pet Tip:** Don’t forget pet medications and pet specific first aid kit if traveling with a pet.

5) Next on the list is hand sanitizer and 3% Hydrogen Peroxide solution in a spray bottle. I keep a bottle of hand sanitizer in the compartment where the sewer connection is made so it’s handy when I do my holding tank chores. I keep a spray bottle of Hydrogen Peroxide in the same compartment so I can disinfect the hose bib prior to connecting my RV drinking hose to the water connection at the campground. Inside the RV we keep hand sanitizer at each sink, and Hydrogen Peroxide for general cleaning and disinfecting in and around the RV.

6) Another consumable item I always have in the outside storage compartment is a supply of disposable gloves. They are inexpensive and can be used for all kinds of chores and routine maintenance on the RV.

7) In my tool storage compartment I keep a can of spray lubricant available. It should be a dry type lubricant, like graphite, that won’t attract dust, dirt and other debris. I personally use Boeshield T9 spray lubricant for everything on the RV. It cleans, lubricates and protects whatever you use it on.

**Camping Tip:** At least twice a year spray inside all of the lock mechanisms on the RV. This will keep the locks operating properly and help prevent them from freezing during the cold winter months.

8) Next on my list is disposable tableware. This includes paper plates, napkins, cutlery, cups and tablecloths. You can use regular tableware on most occasions, but sometimes it just easier to use disposable products.

9) I don’t know about you but I am a big fan of zip ties. I use zip ties for all kinds of things when we are on RV trips. They are inexpensive and after they have served their purpose you can discard them.

10) Last but certainly not least is good old duct tape. If zip ties don’t solve the problem duct tape usually will. I always keep a roll of duct tape in my tool storage compartment where it’s easy to locate when I need it.

Well there you have it, my top 10 list of consumable items to keep in the RV. There are many other consumable products that could or should be on this list, like doggy clean-up bags if you travel with pets. Responsible pet owners always clean up after their pets. Use this list as a starting point and add to it to devise your own special RV checklist of consumable items to keep in your RV. And remember when you dispose of consumable items recycle whenever possible. ~**RV101**
Getting to

Campground Tips
For Better Trips

If you know where you will be staying make campground reservations in advance. With a reservation there will always be a site waiting for you when you arrive.

Plan to stop traveling while there is still plenty of daylight to set-up and get settled in at the campground.

When you arrive at the campground, ask any questions you have about the site, like if it is a pull-thru site. If you are not proficient at backing this can help ease the stress of having to back your unit into the campsite.

Make sure the electrical source is compatible with your RV’s electrical system.

If it’s hot outside request a site that is in the shade, if possible. This will help the refrigerator and AC work more efficiently.

Check the site for any overhead obstacles that might interfere with setting the RV up, and when you position the unit on the site make sure there is enough clearance for slide-outs and the patio awning.

Test the polarity and voltage prior to plugging the RV into any electrical source. After you test the electrical source turn the breaker off, plug the RV in and turn the breaker back on.

Campground voltage can fluctuate depending on the demand. I recommend a quality surge protector to help protect your RV’s electrical equipment and appliances in the event AC voltage drops below 105-volts or goes above 130-volts.

Keep a variety of electrical adapters on hand in case you need them. You should also have an extension cord that is compatible with the electrical system on your RV. The gauges of wire used in standard household type extension cords are not suitable for RV hook ups.

Use a water pressure regulator at the campground to prevent damage to your plumbing system from high water pressure. Always connect the pressure regulator at the water source, and then connect the drinking hose to it.

Use a drinking safe hose to connect from the water source to the RV. It’s a good idea to have a 4-foot, 10-foot
and 25-foot hose on hand so you can always reach the campground water hook-up. Take a green or black garden hose for all other uses, like flushing out holding tanks or cleaning the RV.

It’s a good idea to have a 10-foot and 20-foot sewer hose available so you can always reach the campground sewer connection. Spend a little extra and get heavy-duty sewer hoses. Keep an assortment of sewer hose adapters and connectors on hand.

If you’re going to be leaving the campground for more than few minutes it’s a good idea to turn the water supply off until you return. Better safe than sorry.

Always stow the awning when you’re not going to be at the campsite, and leave it in the stowed position at night.

Lock your RV and secure valuables when you are not physically at the campsite.

Keep a spare set of keys for the RV and other vehicles.

Practice good campground etiquette and be sure to leave the campsite in the same condition you found it, or better.

If you travel with pets, respect other campers as it pertains to your pets. Always use a leash, control any barking and always clean up after your pets.

Happy Camping ~RV 101
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 devote my full attention to RV Education 101.

We produce RV educational videos 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 and travel with our 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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