



Airstream Tech Help Group

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This group, part of the WBCCI Technical Standing Committee, has been established to help the membership with any of their technical RV problems. Examples of questions that might be of interest to many members will be published in the *Blue Beret*. We will respond directly to you, in response to your email or letter describing a problem you are having. We hope you will find this new service of value in the care and feeding of your RV. You may contact us as follows: techhelp@wbcci.org or by mail: Howard Lefkowitz, 11508 Colt Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20902

SOME TRAILER ADVICE

QUESTION: I have a 1990 Excella (29-foot) with a few problems:

1. The fresh water tank drain-hole flange is broken, so it obviously leaks. Various repair people have tried a number of different patches, but a recent trip up the Alcan Highway has proven their efforts ineffective at best. Now it really leaks!

The time has come to replace the water tank. Is this a task a reasonably "handy" do-it-yourselfer can handle? How high off the ground do I have to have the trailer to get the tank out? Do you have any ideas where I can get a new (used) one? Will the water level sensor need to be replaced as well?

2. The bathroom (through the roof) exhaust fan plastic structure has failed and must be replaced. Recommendations?

3. The exterior aluminum protective coating appears to be peeling off, especially from the roof.

What can be done about that? Is this something I should be worried about?

Any advice, or further contacts, you can give me would be very much appreciated. Lyle

ANSWER:

1. All Rite Custom Manufacturing (<http://www.all-rite.com/>) can supply any custom size tank. This is the only source that I have seen used, but there must be others. The water level sensor can be mounted in a similar manner as the current tank, but discuss this with the Tank supplier. Airstream may be able to supply a replacement tank. I can't help with the replacement process. Jim

2. I have used Fantastic Fan's single speed exhaust unit on two of my friends' trailers. Much better operation and warrantied forever. Howard

3. This is a common problem with vintage trailers. I don't believe there is any way to stop it. We vintage folks ignore it until it becomes aesthetically bothersome, and then we chemically strip the entire clear coat off. The more ambitious of us will then polish the trailer. Without the clear coat the aluminum will oxidize and turn gray. This is not a problem, but it doesn't look new or polished. Jim

TONGUE JACK WILL NOT RETRACT

QUESTION: I can't get the electric tongue jack to retract, and I suspect that the limit switch may be stuck... but I'm stuck until I can figure out who the manufacturer is and possibly what a schematic looks like! Some wonderfully helpful person painted over all the data on the jack so I can't go there... can you folks help? Switch works fine to elevate the A frame, however, it refuses to retract, so my guess is either the limit switch or the toggle switch. Ralph.

ANSWER: Here is a link to the Barker Jacks which have some manuals which might be close, http://www.barkermfg.com/hi_power_jacks.html; check out the Super Power Jack Model 12250. Usually the jack is wired directly to the breakaway switch circuit which goes to the battery through a dc circuit breaker on your panel. I would check the toggle switch first since they usually tend to burn. Most of the units I have seen use 15 amp switches which are too small. This should be at least a 20 amp rated switch. If this is OK then it could be the limit switch or a broken wire. Howard

RESPONSE: BINGO!!! Looks like exactly what I need... now if I can just find the manual jack handle.... I'm going to holler at them and order the parts. No big rush, now that I know what I'm working with! Thanks a bunch Ralph.

continued

Airstream Tech Help Group continued

WINTERIZING FOR QUICK WINTER TRIPS

Question:

Hello tech group. I live in Florida and have never ventured out in the winter to places that are normally below freezing. I want to go to Tennessee for Christmas. I have a 1990 34 ft. Airstream and I do not want to damage it. I am most concerned about freezing when towing.

Answer:

Unless you want to run your heater while en-route and during the entire trip, you will have to winterize to be sure there is no damage. Enclosure (1) is the procedure Airstream uses which involves both of the normally acceptable approaches (anti-freeze and blowing air throughout the systems). This is an excellent procedure, which is quite thorough, and will insure that you will not damage anything during the trip.

A step by step pictorial of how to do the special RV anti-freeze approach is shown on Air Forums here:

(<http://www.airforums.com/forums/f458/getting-ready-for-the-freeze-winterize-7222.html>).

Just make sure you are thorough and get anti-freeze through every valve and in every trap including the shower drain. You will have to winterize again before you leave for home.

I have been winter camping for many years and usually did several small trips each year in cold weather (birding). In my Classic Motor Home I only used the drain and air-blow technique. I use 50 to 60 psi and did each water fixture (including spray heads) with a clip on air supply which gave me a continuous air flow. I could then easily move from fixture to fixture by opening a new outlet and then closing the one I had just blown out. With the constant air flow approach I could quickly winterize at any time without carrying four gallons of anti-freeze. You do need one gallon for the traps. This allowed me to be ready to camp at any time during the winter months. I carried a small battery air compressor with me so once the trip was over I could re-winterize before starting for home. If you are careful and thorough this approach can make winter camping relatively easy.

Last year one of my friends decided he really didn't need to winterize on a short trip home from the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The results were two broken water lines, a hole in one faucet and a blown water pump.

'Winterizing Your RV' by Schu's News is worth repeating.
Howard

Schu's News

by Dave Schumann

Winterizing Your RV

1. Drain and flush fresh water tank
2. Drain and flush gray water holding tank
3. Drain and flush black water holding tank
4. Drain and flush hot water tank
5. If you have low-point drain lines under your RV:
 - o Open the hot and cold faucets in your RV
 - o Uncap the low-point drain lines; let water drain completely
 - o Recap Drain Lines
 - o Close the hot and cold faucets
6. Blow out the water lines:
(Note: If you have low-point drain lines, this may not be necessary)
 - o Screw on compressed air adapter onto main fresh water inlet
 - o Apply compressed air, keeping pressure to less than 60 psi
 - o Open each faucet, one at a time, to force water out of lines
 - o Drain water filter canisters.
 - o Depending on your unit you may have a washing machine, icemaker or dishwasher; the lines to these would also have to be drained and blown out. (Consult owner's manual.)
 - o If you have a tank flush be sure to blow out also
 - o Make sure to open each faucet in the RV, including the shower and toilet
(Don't forget the hand sprayer)
 - o Open hot water drain plug and blow out the water in this tank
 - o Remove compressed air and compressed air adapter
 - o Replace drain plug in hot water heater and close all faucets
7. Put Antifreeze in the water lines:
(If you were confident you have successfully blown out all the water from your system, at this point you would add anti-freeze to all traps and the stool. One cupful in each is usually enough, winterizing would be complete at this point. If not proceed with following steps)

a. Use RV Non-Toxic Antifreeze ONLY

Winterizing Your RV continued

- b. Approximately 1-2 gallons should be plenty
- c. Make sure water pump is off and all faucets are closed
- d. Close the Water Bypass Valve to your hot water tank

NOTE: If you don't have a Water Bypass Valve for your hot water tank, seriously consider having one installed. Otherwise, in addition to the water lines you will end up filling the hot water tank with antifreeze. It's not harmful, but you'll use an additional six gallons of antifreeze.

- e. Disconnect the water line where it joins the fresh water tank
- or -

If your RV is so equipped, shut off the valve coming from the fresh water tank and open the valve for the winterizing inlet line.

f. Place the water inlet line (either from the main system or the winterizing line) into the jug or other source container with the RV antifreeze.

g. Switch on the water pump; it will start to suck up the antifreeze into the lines.

h. Open each valve of each faucet slowly, one at a time, until the red antifreeze starts coming out. Once flowing shut off the faucet valve.

Note: If for some reason you can't drain the water lines using the low-point drain lines and you can't blow out the lines with compressed air, you will have to wait until the antifreeze pushes out the fresh water in the lines before closing the valve. A rule of thumb; don't shut off the valve until the antifreeze starts coming out.

- i. Remember to also do this for the toilet and the shower.
- j. Be sure to drain water filter. Remove filter before adding anti-freeze and store in zip loc bag.

k. Shut off the water pump

l. Remove the inlet line from the antifreeze, then either:

Re-attach the water line to the fresh water tank

- or -

Close the winterizing inlet valve and reopen the fresh water valve, if your RV is so equipped.

m. Pour a small amount of antifreeze down each drain to ensure that the sink traps have antifreeze in them.

n. Pour a small amount of antifreeze in the toilet bowl also.

Note: Don't flush it into the holding tank.

8. You Are Done!