

The Most Important Item on Your RV? The Ladder!

Most of you are probably thinking WHAT!!

As a Certified NRVIA Inspector, I see a lot of issues on both new and used RV's. These issues run the gamut, from the most critical life-safety issues to minor things that can be easily fixed. By far, one of the saddest things I see is an RV roof that have not been properly maintained, and has caused expensive or irreversible damage. This is why I say the ladder is the most important thing on your RV.

Think about it...If you have to drag a ladder out from the garage [or the basement in your RV], how likely are you to inspect your roof. Actually, how many RV owners realize how important it is to do regular inspections of your roof. We don't pay much attention to the roof on our homes, since the roof on your sticks-n-bricks is good for many years. Your RV is a different story. So, you ask, how often should I inspect my roof? It's probably more often than you think! Here are the guidelines we use:

When Camping | Whenever you are camping in your RV, you want to check your roof before you bring the slides in. Debris can gather on the tops of your slides [or slide toppers] and cause damage when you bring them in. Harbor Freight has a small blower [about the size of an electric drill] that does a great job of blowing off your slides or toppers.

When Storing | Many folks store their RV's more than they use them. If this is you, make sure to put reminders on your calendar to check the roof. We recommend at least twice a year minimum, and more frequently if you're keeping an eye on something on the roof. Even if you store your RV in covered storage, you still want to regularly check your roof.

Sealants have a life span and will degrade regardless of how it's used or stored. A good reference is the manual that came with your RV. If you don't have the original manual, check the manufacturer's website for a downloadable version.

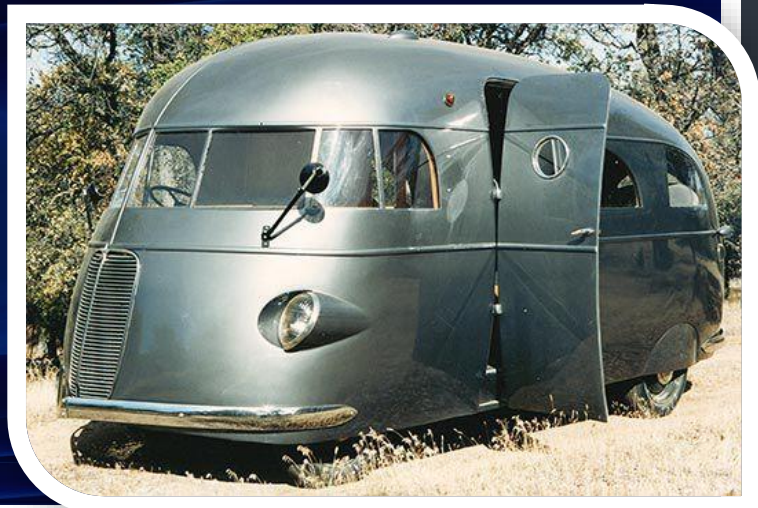
As you can see, whether your using you're RV, or storing it, inspecting the roof needs to be a regular event. I hope you can see why the ladder is the most import piece of equipment on your RV.

Okay, you're up on the roof, now what? When inspecting the roof, there are specific things you what to look for and most of them are related to the sealant used around AC's, vents, horns, lights, ladders, etc. [basically, anywhere there's a hole in your roof]. The sealants that are used on RV roofs have a specific lifespan, that lifespan can be affected by UV and movement.

Check any areas that have sealant around them. Look for cracks in the sealant, exposed fasteners, sealant that is lifting, has popped bubbles or is no longer adhering.

You also want to check the area where your front and rear cap attach to the roof, and along the sides where the roof attaches to the sides of the RV. If you notice any of these things, you want to either reseal these areas yourself or have a qualified RV technician do it for you. Water intrusion is a major enemy to any RV and can cause thousands of dollars in damage. If you decide to tackle resealing the roof yourself, be sure and use the proper sealants. These sealants can be found at RV supply stores and many RV dealers. [Please, DO NOT use caulking or sealants available at your local home improvement store, these are not typically made for RV's.]





The Value of RV Owners Groups on Facebook

Whether you like or dislike Facebook, there is one feature that any Rver can use: RV Owners Groups

One of the features of Facebook is groups. Anyone on Facebook can create a group and allow members to join the group. You typically have to request access to the group and sometimes answer a few questions, then wait to be approved. For this reason, we recommend joining helpful groups before you potentially need them.

The VALUE...

Almost every RV manufacturer is represented by a Facebook group [even some that don't exist anymore]. These groups are typically created and moderated by a fellow owner of a specific brand. [Ex. Tiffin, Grand Design, etc.]

Because these groups are filled with fellow owners, they're a great resource of information about the RV you already own, or are thinking of purchasing. You will find answers to all kinds of questions in these groups along with fun posts, technical stuff, hacks and travel info.

FINDING THESE GROUPS

- 1 **Login to Facebook** | If you don't have a Facebook account, consider getting one...it's free!
- 2 **Search for Groups** | I recommend using the manufacturer and brand for more specific groups [Ex. Tiffin Allegro Bus]. The year and model are not required.
- 3 **Join the Group** | Some groups are public and some are private. Private groups will have a "Join" button and sometimes a few questions to answer.



History of Recreational Vehicles

RVing has a long and varied history that is thought to have actually began with covered wagons crossing the plains in search of a better life.

Many people today have embraced RVing to see the sights of our beautiful nation, and as a way to connect with family. In fact, full-time rving has become a lifestyle for many. The first motor homes in North America were in Canada around 1910, but did not appear in the United States until the 1920s. The first RVs were trailers or towables used in conjunction with other vehicles. Many of the first RVs were hand built. Occassionally, they were attached to cars or trucks, while others were built as separate units to be attached by hitch to a tow vehicle. During the 1930s, RVs saw an increase in popularity and became available for commercial purchase. Motorhomes gained recognition in the 1950s and began to be mass produced in 1967. The first RVs did not have creature comforts such as bathrooms or black tanks; they were very basic. However, as they became more popular, they evolved to keep up

with what people wanted, providing similar comforts to those available in the home. Some of the early manufacturers to the RV industry are still around today. Among the original makers of recreational vehicle models were Ford, Winnebago, and Airstream. Airstream began to produce their trailers in the early 1930s. Airstream RVs earned a loyal following that continues to this day.



The original units cost between \$500 and \$1000 and came in a variety of different shapes and sizes.

RV's Through the Years...



Have fun, and enjoy the journey!