

Winterizing your RV

That all too familiar time of the year is here again. Leaves are falling from the trees, and the grass is dormant. The summer flowers are gone. The days are shorter and the nights are colder. Fall is upon us. Fall is my favorite time of the year. After a hot **Alabama** summer I look forward to this time of year. It has its good and bad points. It's good that I don't have to cut the grass for several months and football has begun. It's bad that I have to close our pool for several months. It's good that I don't have to run the air conditioning, but bad that we will soon have to turn the furnace on.

Fall is also the time of year you need to decide if your camping season is over. Parking your RV for the winter requires some preventive measures so it will be ready to use next spring. You'll also be glad you did it when you don't have costly repair bills due to the damaging results of winter. Now the question is how to prepare it for winter, and who will be doing it? If you're like me and you enjoy performing the routine maintenance on your RV, not to mention saving a few dollars, the "who" part is answered. As for the "how" part, this checklist is the easiest and most effective way to winterize your RV.

Before you get started there are a few items you will need to have. These items can be found in most RV parts stores:

- **Non-toxic RV antifreeze** (The amount depends on the layout and length of your plumbing lines. Two to three gallons will normally do).
- A water heater by-pass kit, if not already installed.
- A wand to clean out holding tanks.
- A water pump converter kit, or tubing to connect to the inlet side of the water pump.
- Basic hand tools to remove drain plugs.

Now we can winterize the RV water system to protect it from freezing. Be sure to read your owner's manuals for unit specific winterizing guidelines. Follow the steps below that apply to your RV.

- If you have any inline water filters remove and bypass before starting.
- Drain the fresh water holding tank.
- Drain and flush the gray and black holding tanks. If your RV doesn't have a built in tank flushing system clean the black tank out with a wand, or use a product like Flush King that allows you to clean both the black and gray tanks. Lubricate the termination valves with WD 40.
- Drain the water heater. Remove the drain plug and open the pressure relief valve. **CAUTION (never drain the water heater when it is hot or under pressure)**
- Open all hot and cold faucets; don't forget the toilet valve and outside shower.
- Locate and open the low point drain lines. There will be one for the hot and cold water lines. Using the water pump will help force water out, but turn it off as soon as the system is drained.
- Recap all drains and close all faucets.
- By-pass the water heater. If you do not have a by-pass kit installed the water heater will fill up with antifreeze before it goes through the water lines, wasting six gallons of antifreeze.
- Install a water pump converter kit, or disconnect the inlet side of the water pump (the line coming from the fresh water holding tank). Connect a piece of clear tubing to the inlet side of the pump and put the other end into a one gallon container of non-toxic RV antifreeze.
- Turn the water pump on and pressurize the system. Starting with the closest faucet, slowly open the hot and then cold valves until antifreeze appears. Replace the antifreeze container as required.
- Repeat this process on all faucets from the closest to the farthest away. Don't forget the outside shower, if equipped.
- Flush the toilet until antifreeze appears.
- Turn the water pump off and open a faucet to release the pressure. Go outside to the city water inlet. Remove the small screen over the inlet and push in on the valve with a small screwdriver until you see antifreeze. Replace the screen.
- Pour a cupful of antifreeze down each drain. Pour a couple of cups in the toilet and flush into the holding tank.
- If your water heater has an electric heating element make sure it is turned off. This will protect the element if the unit is plugged in while being stored.

- Make sure all the faucets are closed.
- Consult your owner manuals for winterizing icemakers and washing machines.
- The unit is winterized.

This checklist is a basic guide that was intended to assist you in winterizing your RV. As with many other checklists it would be impossible to cover every RV. It is extremely important that you read your owner's manuals for unit specific winterizing guidelines.

These helpful tips are happily provided by the storage experts at Greystone Self Storage! Give us a call at 205-991-5123 or stop by for a visit at 5345 Highway 280 E Birmingham, AL 35242.