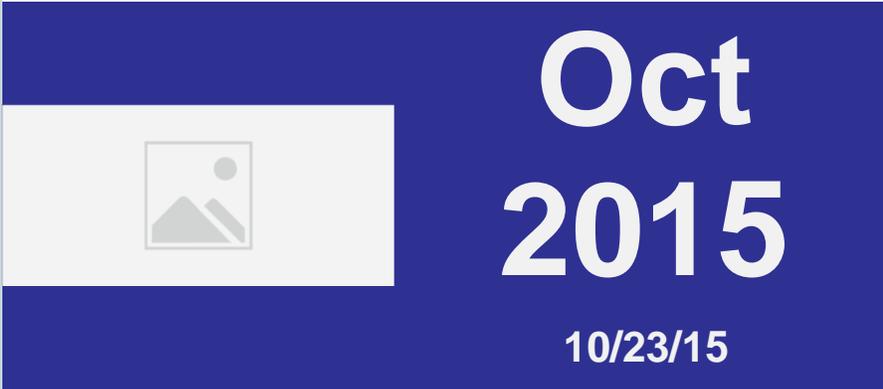


Subject: October 2015 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

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## **Dropping a RV Fifth Wheel... It almost happened to me! The practice, and some carelessness, almost did me in.**

It almost happened to me. I came that close to dropping our fifth wheel trailer on the truck bed rails. Maybe it has happened to you. No doubt you've heard of it happening to someone else. My Dad was a professional truck driver but it happened to him three times in two years. I think that's a record!

No, I didn't forget to lower the landing gear. Since my Dad's experiences, I have been especially careful to make sure the landing gear was down before I released the hitch.

So if the landing gear was down what happened? Like a lot of fifth wheelers I place blocks under my landing gear. This procedure reduces the length the landing gear has to be extended which seems to help stabilize the trailer. But the practice, and some carelessness, almost did me in.

The last time we parked I went into my unhitching routine. After getting the fifth wheel positioned, I placed the blocks and lowered the landing gear. Then I released the hitch, jumped in the truck and proceeded to drive the truck ahead. But I pulled the trailer too. I hadn't raised the trailer high enough and there was still too much weight on the hitch. That much weight caused enough friction the trailer might as well have been hitched.

The block under one leg slid along but the other leg was hanging in mid air

about eight inches off the ground! I was just lucky the trailer didn't slide off the hitch right then. Even now I cringe when I think of the damage which could have resulted.

I could argue that I had been somewhat distracted by our Daughter in Law's greeting when we arrived. We've all had the experience of stopping to talk with someone while in the process of hitching or unhitching and then forgot to do some part of the process. Have you noticed that the RVer with all the 'helpers' is the one who gets into trouble?

Because it's easy to get distracted during hitching and unhitching I wait to greet or say goodbye to a fellow RVer until after I know he's completed his chores.

However, more important than the distraction was that I had allowed myself to become complacent. Hitching and unhitching had become a routine. Now I believe in having a routine, a set procedure to follow each time, and I'm good about following it. But I allowed the routine to become a no brainer. And that's what really got me into trouble.

It's easy to become complacent when you are an 'old timer' at RVing. After you hitched and unhitched a few hundred times you get pretty good at it. Braking camp used to take an hour or more now I can do in fifteen minutes. Twenty tops. It's clear now that at least part of the extra time it used to take me allowed me to stop and think once in awhile.

Then there is the issue of the blocks. If the fifth wheel hadn't been perched on blocks the potential for damage would have been minimal. I went for years without using blocks for fear the trailer would somehow fall off them. I've seen some precarious setups that still make me wonder if the slightest movement would topple the blocks allowing the fifth wheel to fall a foot or more.

Because we use a king pin stabilizer jack and it is capable of holding up our fifth wheel by itself I decided the risk of the trailer falling off the blocks was minimal. The thing is I never considered the possibility of the trailer falling while I was unhitching... before the jack was in place.

What I should have done, and will do from now on, is set my wheel chocks before I unhitch. Yes, I do use them. But on a level site, which this was, I used them to stabilize the trailer rather than out of any concern for the trailer rolling down a slope. In this situation I don't set them until later. Now I know better.

So, I've learned a good lesson. I've changed my routine and I'm going to slow down a little and be a lot more careful. Thankfully the lesson didn't cost me more than a little embarrassment. Hopefully, you have learned a lesson too.

## Quick Tips for the Exterior Care of your Motorhome Fifth Wheel or Travel Trailer

- **Bugs and bird droppings on your paint,** grillwork and windshield? Saturate the area with spray cooking oil, let it sit for 10 minutes then wash the windshield as usual. To remove salt deposits from a painted metal RV exterior, wash with a solution of baking soda and warm water. For extra heavy stains, make a baking soda paste and rub on with a damp sponge. Rinse well. Wash your RV on a cloudy day or in the shade. Use warm but not hot water, as hot water can bleach paint.

- **Clean your RV from the top down** so that you're following the direction of gravity. If you can, clean the roof too so that dirt doesn't run down the sides during rain and heavy dew.
- **WD-40 serves as an alternative to commercial bug & tar remover** on the oily road buildup that accumulates on the lower panels of your RV. Wash the RV as usual after application.
- To make your tires look like new, scrub them clean with soap and water using a hard bristle brush, then apply self-polishing floor wax.
- **To clean tough spots on your windows**, wipe down with rubbing alcohol, allow to dry, then clean as usual.
- **Renew your windshield wiper blades** by cleaning with a low-abrasion scouring powder then wiping them with rubbing alcohol. Makes the wipers last longer and stops them from streaking.
- **A child's wax crayon**, close to the same color, makes an effective repair to tiny scratches on your paint. Rub the crayon over the scratch, then buff smooth with a clean cloth.

## Flipping Trailer Axles

Flipping RV travel trailer axles means mounting the axle or axles under the springs as opposed to over the springs. This raises the trailer about 7 inches.

It's often done for more ground clearance. But also, these days, pickup trucks are sometimes higher than they used to be years ago so flipping the axle is also done when someone with an older trailer gets a new truck. Thus allowing the trailer to tow level again.

The process basically involves unbolting one end of each spring, unbolting the axle and removing the axle from the springs. The springs are reinstalled.

Two new axle perches are welded to the top of the axle counter to the old perches. The axle is then bolted under the spring.

The above is done for each axle.

## RV Gray Water & Black Water Holding Tank Basics

by Steven L Fletcher

It used to be, back when campers camped in tents it was okay to dump gray water on the ground. When campers first moved to travel trailers it was still okay. Then campers wanted toilets in their RVs and holding tanks on travel trailers became necessary. For a while gray water could still be drained onto the ground an only black water had to be disposed of at a dump station.

Of course that's no longer the case, mostly anyway, but it helps to explain why the sanitation system on most motor homes, travel trailers and fifth wheels consists of the toilet which drains into the RV's black water tank and the bath tub/shower, wash basin and kitchen sinks which drain into a separate gray water tank. Each tank has it's own valve but they usually dump through the same sewer connection. There are exceptions to this... sometimes bath water will drain into the black water tank.

Nowadays it is generally not acceptable to dump gray water under any circumstances so a few RVs are being built with one combination gray/black tank. The advantage is mostly to the builder because there is less plumbing to do. But the combination tanks are necessarily larger and it is hard to find a place for them so most RVs still have two tanks.

### **RV Gray Water Tank**

Since only sink and bath water collects in the RV gray water tank it needs less attention than the RV black water tank.

Most people use so much water whenever the RV is hooked up for a few days, they find it convenient to leave the gray water tank valve open.

If you use the RV for more than a week with the gray water valve open then it's a good idea to close the valve, add holding tank chemical and allow the tank to fill. This helps flush out any buildup of stuff from the kitchen sink and keeps the tank fresh. It is quite possible for a gray water tank to get very stinky unless it's flushed periodically.

### **RV Black Water Tank**

The RV black water tank needs more attention primarily to control odor but also to keep solid waste and toilet paper from collecting and plugging the drain line and valve.

The black water drain valve should be left closed until the tank is 2/3rds or more full. This helps avoid the solids building up right under the toilet and assists flushing everything out. If the tank is not 2/3rds full when it is time to break camp, simply add water through toilet.

It's a good idea to close the gray water valve the night before breaking camp. Then when it's time to unhook, drain the black water tank first then the gray-water tank thus flushing the black-water completely through and 'rinsing' the sewer hose. The procedure works but I don't always remember to close the valve the night before.

I use a rinse wand which attaches to my utility hose and goes down through the toilet into the black water tank. It really works fast at flushing and rinsing the tank. With all the freshwater going into the tank eventually the sewer hose is flushed clean also.

I don't rinse the black water tank every time I dump but an occasional rinse does help control odor especially during the hot summer months.

Please don't take the time to flush your holding tanks when there are people behind you waiting for their turn at the dump station. Flush your tank when you are at a campsite with hookups or if you're sure no one will be needing the dump station.

After the black water tank is drained and flushed close the valve and add enough water to cover the bottom of the tank and then add the tank chemical.

It's my opinion that RV holding tanks are just that, holding tanks. They are not mini septic systems. I can't imagine any serious bacterial or enzyme action happening in the two to four days that most RVers 'hold' their black waste. If that were the case we wouldn't need 3" sewer hoses or macerator pumps.

Again, it's just my opinion, but the only reason for using chemicals in the black tank is for odor control. If you're using chemicals for any other reason you're just kidding yourself. I know it is a controversial stand but someone had to say the emperor has no cloths.

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## How US Highways are Numbered

U.S. Highways have been around since the 1920's and the Interstates since 1956. The Interstate system comes from President Dwight Eisenhower. United States highways and interstates are numbered within a nationwide grid.

These highways are sometimes referred to as federal highways but they have always been maintained by state or local governments since their initial designation in 1926. However much of the funding does come from the federal government.

In 1956, uniform construction standards were adopted, governing such things as access, speeds, number of lanes, width of lanes and width of shoulders.

Standards were also established for numbering the routes:

- \* Routes with odd numbers run north-south.
- \* Routes with even numbers run east-west.
- \* For north-south routes, the lowest numbers are in the west.
- \* For east-west routes, the lowest numbers are in the south.

So, I-5 runs north-south along the west coast, while I-10 runs east-west in the south.

When an interstate hits a major urban area, beltways around the city carry a three-digit number. These routes are designated with the number of the

main route and an even-numbered prefix. To prevent duplication within a state, prefixes go up. For example, if I-80 runs through three cities in a state, routes around those cities would be I-280, I-480 and I-680. This system is not carried across state lines, so several cities in different states can have a beltway called I-280.

When I-95 hits metropolitan Washington, D.C., coming from the south, it becomes the famous Beltway that circles the city, signed I-495. North of the metro area, when the two circumferential highways rejoin, it becomes I-95 again.

Divided routes have been around since 1926, and designate roughly-equivalent splits of routes. For instance, U.S. Route 11 splits into U.S. Route 11E (east) and U.S. Route 11W (west) in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the routes rejoin in Bristol, Virginia. Occasionally only one of the two routes is suffixed; U.S. Route 6N in Pennsylvania does not rejoin U.S. Route 6 at its west end. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has been trying to eliminate these since 1934; its current policy is to deny approval of new ones and to eliminate existing ones.

## Camping Bloopers - Annoying RV Driving

1. **Merging** – Drivers that go slowly down the on-ramp blocking traffic and heading into traffic that is going really fast, that's just not a good idea.

2. **Stopping to stare at a car crash**– Blocking traffic that is starting to pile up behind your RV for miles and miles, just so that you can see all of the details of a fender bender as you pass by – not the best manners.

3. **Using high beams improperly** – The offenders in this case can be city or rural drivers. City motorhome drivers who never get to use their high beams, so thus forget that they have them and never use them, causing them to creep along at slow night speeds because they cannot see. This high beam user can also be a rural RV driver that doesn't meet another car or motorhome very often, so thus, they forget that they have their high beams on and constantly blind people.

4. **Avoiding jackrabbit starts** – Most new and [used RV's](#) are not fuel-efficient RVs, so many RV owners try to avoid fast starts thinking that it will save gas. So, these are the travel trailer drivers that creep away from the stop sign, holding up traffic behind them as they "snail" away. It is actually more efficient to power up to speed relatively quickly, then back off the throttle and cruise at a steady speed.

5. **Braking for no reason** – We really couldn't find a more comical way to say this than how this article put it, so we are just going to quote the article here: "Just asking, but what's up with these inexplicable brake applications in the middle of straightaways? Did you just remember the cat is still in the dryer? See your high school flame pass in the opposite direction? Wake up and realize you were driving? The mystery is baffling. All I know is that it seems people aren't paying attention and then get startled back into focus, so they apply the brakes. Focus on driving when you're behind the wheel, not the other things that are happening in your life. You might live longer and worry less."

## RV Storage Businesses On the Rise

As RV ownership and manufacturing demand reaches higher and higher levels, the need for RV storage becomes an increasingly promising business opportunity, according to a report from [insideselfstorage.com](http://insideselfstorage.com)

One key difference between the development of boat/RV storage and traditional self-storage is the parcel size required, according to the report. While an average self-storage project needs three to five acres, a boat/RV-storage site needs seven to 10.

“Part of why this type of storage is so land-intensive is the drive-aisle space needed to achieve the best and easiest access to the units. RVs and boats can be difficult to maneuver. The more space you can give tenants, the better their experience will be, and the less likely your buildings will be damaged,” the report said.

There are facilities that do succeed on much smaller parcels. Location and market demand are key drivers. The key is to do a comprehensive analysis of building costs vs. return-on-cash and make sure investors have a clear understanding of your market and the propensity to rent.

According to a March 2015 business-trend report from the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), RV ownership has reached record levels, and demand for manufacturing is at its highest in almost a decade. Similarly, RV storage has been in high demand, and for good reason: Many of the major metro markets are grossly underserved.

If you're in one of those markets that has an appetite for vehicle-storage services, there are several things you should know. If you're thinking about building a new boat/RV-storage facility or adding this type of storage to an existing storage site, here are some things to consider.

#### **Site Selection**

One key difference between the development of boat/RV storage and traditional self-storage is the parcel size required. While an average self-storage project needs three to five acres, a boat/RV-storage site needs seven to 10. Part of why this type of storage is so land-intensive is the drive-aisle space needed to achieve the best and easiest access to the units. RVs and boats can be difficult to maneuver. The more space you can give tenants, the better their experience will be, and the less likely your buildings will be damaged.

It's important to note, however, that there are facilities that do succeed on much smaller parcels. Location and market demand are key drivers. The key is to do a comprehensive analysis of building costs vs. return-on-cash and make sure you have a clear understanding of your market and the propensity to rent. Proper due diligence will help you assess how much you can afford to pay for a piece of dirt based on the amount of rent per square foot and anticipated construction costs.

As with any real estate investment, it's best to find a visible and convenient location. That said, boat/RV-storage customers are willing to go a greater distance to store than traditional self-storage tenants, who travel a typical three to five miles; so an infill site in an established neighborhood, while probably an excellent location, isn't essential. Finding a site at the right price in an underserved market and close to major thoroughfares with convenient access may make up for some lack of visibility.

#### **Site Design**

Site design is one of the more critical phases of boat/RV-storage development. Make sure there's ease of access—to units, around your property, and in and out of the facility. Entrances and approaches should be long enough to accommodate “stacking” (a few vehicles waiting to enter), and drive aisles should be as wide as you can make them.

I recommend a 50-foot drive aisle for fully enclosed units and a 45-foot aisle for canopies constructed at an angle. Some operators have built even

larger aisles, and customer feedback has shown that aisle width is a huge decision-making factor for prospective tenants.

The type of boat/RV storage you plan to build will also affect the design process. There are several ways to offer this type of storage, and each comes with its own rent structures and construction costs. The right mix for your site should be based on the demands of your specific market and determined during the feasibility and site-planning phase.

### **Open Storage**

Less than a decade ago, most boat/RV-storage sites were situated on “barely developed” land, with property owners using vehicle parking as a mere placeholder while waiting for something bigger and better to come along. While this is still a productive way to launch a vehicle-storage enterprise, many customers today are taking strides to safeguard their boat/RV investments and appealing to storage operators to provide security.

Open parking is still the cheapest way to offer boat/RV storage, but it doesn’t appeal to the discriminating tenant. It’s readily available in many markets and provides the lowest cash-on-cash return. It can be a great option if there’s a need in your market and you have bare land that can be easily paved. It’s a low-maintenance way to get into the business.

### **Canopy/Roof-Only Structures**

Canopies continue to be one of the most sought-after products in the boat/RV-storage industry. The roof-only structure deters most corrosive aspects of weather and provides some long-term protection from the elements. While not innately secure, this type of storage can be constructed economically in most areas using a light-gauge welded “cee” design.

When designing canopy storage, one of the most important considerations is in the roof. Because this product is open by nature, I suggest using a “thru-fastened” roof so breaches can be easily identified and repaired.

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