

Subject:

September Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches



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Newsletter

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Maintaining RV Batteries for Travel in Cooler Weather

With Labor Day just past, and most kids back in school, summer is winding down for many of us. While the warm weather isn't gone yet, the cooler weather isn't too far away. This makes maintaining your RV batteries especially important, particularly if you still plan to travel during the fall & winter months. Trying to jump your RV battery in a remote area during a non-traditional camping season is not the ideal kind of adventure.

RV batteries should not get below a 50% charge in order to maximize their performance and lifespan. Periodically checking the voltage using a voltmeter around once a month can help determine the amount of charge the battery has. Also, be aware of how much power you are using. Keep in mind that even when they are powered down, small appliances can still draw from your battery power when plugged in. Whatever type of charger is used, it needs to be at a higher voltage than your battery to do its job. When properly taken care of, a battery can last at least 5 years. If a battery's lifespan is shortened, it can be due to a number of causes such as over or under-charging, sulfation, or dis-charging too low.

RV battery chargers typically operate in 3 stages. The first stage does most of the charging, getting the battery to 80-90%. The second stage takes the battery to close to 100%, and the third stage uses a small amount of power to keep it maintained at 100%, without risking overcharging. Some types may have a fourth stage for flooded batteries, which takes the batteries to a higher voltage temporarily to get rid of sulfation.

Besides 3 stage chargers, other devices can be used to charge a battery, such as converter & inverter chargers, single stage chargers, solar panel systems, generators, and trickle chargers. When using solar panel systems, make note of the wattage. Depending on the wattage it can either be just enough to keep a battery maintained at full charge, or it may be able to power the RV all day. Trickle chargers, just like the name describes, uses a small amount of power to keep a battery up at 100%. Battery maintainers can be left connected to the battery without overcharging them. Converters & inverters have a consistent power source, while solar panel systems, using the sun, will have a variable power source. Single stage chargers keep the batteries at a set voltage, however they are less ideal than multi-stage chargers. Depending on the type, they can take longer to charge and do not bring the batteries to a higher voltage, which helps their performance.

BatteryMINDer has a number of products available for keeping your batteries maintained and charged. For example, the BatteryMINDer 2012-AGM is a charger/maintainer/desulfator for AGM sealed batteries. It will not over charge the battery and can maintain up to six 12V batteries at the same time. It also uses high frequency pulses to dissolve sulfation.

BatteryMINDer SCC005 is a 12V solar controller with 5W panel that can work with all types of

12V batteries. It's able to maintain up to 2 batteries at once using solar power. For a 2 bank charging station, there's a product available from Battery Tender. It has two encased battery chargers that can charge and maintain AGM, sealed, and flooded batteries. The 2 charging stations operate independently of each other.

Electrical Hazards and Your RV

Severe weather is common in many areas at this time of year. However, lightning isn't the only potential problem when it comes to electrical hazards and your RV. They can come from unpredictable conditions at the campground as well. You may not have control over the external electrical hazards that can be found at a campground, but there are ways to prevent major problems.

Something that you can control is how much you have running at once. Running too many appliances, especially in hot weather, can lead to electrical issues if your system can't handle it. The RV's 12V battery controls systems like the water heater, furnace, fridge, and lights. The 120V hookup controls electrical devices like the TV and small kitchen appliances. Be aware of what is running on what system. Campground electrical pedestals are exposed to the elements and not always closed correctly. Other problems such as open ground, open neutral, or reverse polarity can also occur. The whole RV park can also pull on the same electrical grid. That can make the voltage available to your RV potentially unpredictable, and of course, nearby lightning strikes can also affect the local electrical grid in the campground.

One electrical problem for RVs is something called 'hot-skin' condition. This occurs when there is electrical current moving through the chassis. The chassis is therefore at a different voltage than the ground, making it dangerous to come in contact with it. This can be caused by unsafe connections at the campground. If you are outside and the ground or your hand is wet, this can be especially dangerous. Hot-skin isn't something you can see, but you don't want to risk electrical shock simply by touching your RV. Luckily, there are ways to prevent that from happening.

Power surges can damage anything you have plugged into your motorhome and it can fry the wiring of the RV itself, which becomes a very expensive repair job. An RV surge protector between the campground pedestal and your motorhome provides protection from this problem. Portable surge protectors can be used when you need them but are susceptible to theft. Surge protectors that are hardwired are protected from the outside but are a permanent installation. Be aware of whether your RV would need a 30 or 50-amp unit. Depending on the types of protective features your surge protector has, it can stop power from coming to your RV until the problem is fixed. The Surge Guard 34850 is an example of a 50-amp portable unit that provides protection from overheating, open ground, open neutral, or low/high voltage problems.

Surge protectors aren't the only devices available for RV electrical safety. Using a voltmeter, for instance, can test your RV for potential hot-skin conditions. Other types can test the interior outlets of your RV to make sure the voltage is within a safe range. The Hughes Autoformer Digital AC Voltmeter plugs into your RV outlets and gives a digital readout of the current voltage. It can read between 90 and 132 volts, so you'll know if the outlet has over or under voltage problems. A polarity tester can help you verify that your outlets are wired correctly with proper polarity and grounding. The Prime Products Polarity Tester displays the outlet's voltage so you can make sure it's within a safe range and uses LEDs to show you polarity errors such as reverse polarity, open neutral, or open ground. It plugs into any 3-prong wall socket.

Full-Time RVing Can Be a Full-Time Job

Source: sent anonymously

Gone are the days of traveling without making campsite reservations well in advance I quit my job to become a full-time RVer. I thought I'd retired but have since realized I've merely changed careers. I like to think of it as "vagabondage." I now spend more of my time making reservations and less time doing what I thought full-time RVers did: goin' where the weather suits our clothes.

For the past 13 years, I have worked under the close supervision of my wife and navigator, Holly, who has tolerated, indeed embraced, my penchant for a peripatetic life. “So,” she enthused, “what do you think about spending February in Florida?”

Employing one of my few faculties that has improved with age, what I heard her say was: “I want to spend February in Florida. Make it happen.” That created for me a problem of biblical proportions: I could find no room at the inn, or, in this instance, the campgrounds.

It’s Getting Crowded Out Here

We began RVing 23 years ago in a small fifth-wheel. We ambled with ease to RV parks and public campgrounds with little regard to whether there was room for us. We rarely made reservations. This is no longer true.

Fueled by the annual migration of snowbirds and the buying power of young families, RV manufacturers have had one banner year after another, which means more RVers competing for a limited number of sites at resorts and campgrounds across the continent.

When snow flies in the Rust Belt, snowbirds flock to the Sunbelt, which means campgrounds along the southern tier of the United States are frequently booked a year or more in advance. Securing a campsite at a state park in Florida, for instance, means making a reservation — and paying in full — up to 11 months ahead. In Georgia, it’s 13 months.

Similarly, when students are paroled each summer, young families eager to get the most out of their new RVs will seek places to spend vacations. RV parks in the Rust Belt then fairly bulge with happy campers. If you failed to anticipate that and did not make reservations early, you may find it impossible to stay at a campground of your choice.

Online, On Time

To secure sites at preferred public campgrounds, I am now among the RVers who lurk online on the date and hour that reservations open. If the lurker is not ready to click on “Book This Site” at just the right instant, someone else gets the spot. My failure rate has become an item of entertainment for my navigator.

I am told that some lurkers stoop so low as to book sites earlier than necessary, later paying a fee to shorten that reservation to the dates they actually want. And some campers use the names of different family members to make back-to-back reservations, which allows them to secure a site for more nights than policy allows.

Gaming the System

To make matters worse, organized scalpers, armed with sophisticated computer programs, have found ways to circumvent reservation rules. These “robo-reservation” methods are capable of securing campsites at prime locations; reservations are then resold through online auction sites to campers willing to pay what scalpers call a finder’s fee.

National and state park officials have long been aware of such practices and have altered reservation policies accordingly. Notably, National Park Service policies were changed in 2011 when officials became aware that many campsites at Yosemite National Park, for instance, were being resold through “clubs” and online auction sites that charged a premium of as much as 600 percent.

The inspector general for Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection issued a report in 2014 detailing how campers and scalpers had learned to circumvent reservation policies. The report was in response to complaints from citizens who had found it difficult or impossible to make peak-season reservations at state park campgrounds. While policy changes have limited the success of scalpers, reserving a campsite at a state park in the Florida Keys in winter remains nigh unto impossible.

The growing demand for campsite reservations is great for campground owners and managers, but not so good for folks who have no idea where they will be that many months away. That glorious sense of freedom one may get from RVing fades when your RV is parked in your own driveway because you failed to plan. Oh, wait! I’m a full-time RVer; I have no driveway.

Six Tips for Booking Campsites

1. Plan Ahead My navigator and I have learned to discuss our desires and make a commitment to be where she wants to be at least a year in advance. Once she determines

location and a range of dates, I get busy online or on the phone contacting campgrounds.

2. Be Flexible Managers of most campgrounds and RV parks will work very hard to help you find a suitable site. You, after all, represent income. But if sites are full when you want to be there, be prepared to alter your schedule. I'm more flexible than Gumby.

3. Avoid Weekends This is especially true of holiday weekends. We have found sites by checking in on a Sunday, after most weekenders head home. We'll check out on a Friday, when the next wave of weekenders is to arrive. If we want to stay at a particular campground over a holiday weekend, we arrange to arrive by the middle of the prior week and check out the middle of the following week. Hitting the road a day or two after everybody else had to go back to work means we avoid long lines at dump stations and heavy traffic on highways.

4. Be Persistent Life happens, and plans change. Keep checking online reservation systems or call campground offices to determine whether a site may have become available due to cancellations. Many states and municipalities withhold a few campsites from reservation systems. Perfect timing on your part could yield a place to park for short periods. In Florida state parks, for instance, non-reservable sites may be occupied up to two weeks.

5. Choose Less Popular Locations This need not mean lowering your standards. We have been pleasantly surprised by staying at campgrounds that didn't seem as appealing as the nearby RV resorts that could not accommodate us. We are more interested in people than we are in amenities and have always found someone who, or something that, contributed to our enlightenment or entertainment.

6. Consider Shoulder Seasons November through March is peak season for snowbirds. But April, May, September and October offer suitable weather conditions across the Sunbelt. Campgrounds, attractions and restaurants are also less crowded.

Horse Trailer Myth – Asking The Experts Gooseneck Vs. Tag-Along Interview

USR: Tom and his wife, Neva Scheve, have been advocating horse trailer safety since 1984. Both have written numerous articles for Dressage Today, Horse Illustrated, Equus, Horse and Rider, Trail Blazer, Southeast Horse Journal, and have been safety clinics around the country. Neva has written three books on horse trailers including "The Complete Guide to Buying, Maintaining, and Servicing a Horse Trailers."

We asked Tom some questions about the differences and advantages of different styles of trailers.

USR: Is a gooseneck horse trailer safer than a bumper pull trailer?

Tom: We prefer to call them "tag-along" trailers rather than "bumper pulls". It's just semantics, but the idea is that you should never hook a horse trailer to the actual bumper of a tow vehicle. So, the term "bumper pull" makes people believe it's OK to use a ball installed on the bumper, but it's important to always use a frame mounted hitch, usually with a weight distribution system. That being said, we use the term "bumper pull" on our website since it is the "common term."

USR: Good point. So, is a gooseneck safer than a tag-along trailer?

Tom: Great Question. It's a common misconception that gooseneck trailers are always safer, and that myth needs to be dispelled. But it gets tricky.

USR: How so?

Tom: Well, first of all, I always recommend a gooseneck trailer for 3 or more horses, whether it's a slant or a straight load. But for a two-horse trailer, a tag-along (bumper pull) can be just as safe, and tow just as well if hitched up with the right equipment. The tricky part is the word "safer." There are so many variables with towing that just calling the trailer itself "safer" doesn't take in all the other parts, such as using the proper tow vehicle with the proper hitch. And, of course, the operator's driving expertise is also a factor.

USR: Okay. I get it. So why would one choose a tag-along trailer over a gooseneck?

Tom: The benefits of a tag-along, or bumper pull, over a gooseneck is that it's cheaper,

shorter, tracks closer to the path of the tow vehicle when turning, can be pulled with a properly rated SUV or a truck, and it's lighter so you don't need such a big tow vehicle. If you don't have a lot of storage space for the trailer, it doesn't take up as much room in the yard. Unless the gooseneck area is needed for sleeping or storage, it doesn't make sense to spend the extra money, unless one just prefers to have a gooseneck because they like it better.

USR: And the gooseneck?

Tom: Well, if you want a place to sleep or extra room for tack, the gooseneck area gives you plenty of extra room. If you want living quarters a gooseneck is usually mandatory. Also, it's easier to pick the right tow vehicle and hitch because it's obvious a full-sized truck is needed and the hitch only installs in the bed.

One of the reasons people believe a tag-along (bumper pull) trailer is not as stable is because it's so easy to make a mistake when putting the tow vehicle/hitch combination together. And we often see people tow with some scary combinations. For instance, as I mentioned earlier, by towing directly on the bumper, the trailer would be susceptible to sway and other problems. There are also so many tow vehicles to choose from, it's easy to choose a less capable tow vehicle.

USR: Which is easier to hook up?

Tom: Now remember, we're talking about a two-horse gooseneck vs. a two-horse tag-along. The tag-along tongue weight is lighter maybe by 1,000 lbs. or more, so if the jack is in good working order it can be easier to jack up and down. And you don't have to crawl up into the truck bed as you do for a gooseneck to fasten the safety chains, or in some cases, secure the coupler onto the ball.

USR: How about backing up to line up the coupler and ball?

Tom: Both are tricky but can be mastered with practice. If you don't have a built-in tool chest in your truck you can see the ball from the cab when lining up. Because you can't see the coupler or ball on a tag-along, you might need someone to guide you or do a "hit and miss." With experience, it's possible to hitch a tag-along alone with no problems. There are, however some innovative devices on the market that can help, and some tricks I've learned that can help with either style trailer that don't cost anything.

USR: I'm sure our readers would like to know the tricks. Are they secret?

Tom: Not at all. With a gooseneck, the trick is to put your tailgate down, of course, and then place a small stone or piece of tape at the tip of the rear of the tailgate where you can see it from the driver's seat. This stone or tape should be placed directly in line with the ball in the truck. Then, you back straight under the trailer, making sure that the coupler goes right over the stone. If you are driving in a straight line, the coupler should then end up right over the ball.

USR: And for the tag-along?

Tom: With the trailer hitched up to the vehicle, take a piece of visible tape and put it up high on the nose of the trailer directly up from the coupler so you can see it from the driver's seat. If you have a truck or tail gate on your SUV, put another piece on the end of the tailgate to line up with the tape of the trailer. When you next hitch up, just align the two pieces of tape again.

USR: What about length? Do some like to pull the tag-along because it's not as long or big?

Tom: Actually, a two-horse tag-along with a dressing room is an average of 17 ½ feet including the tongue. So, you are pulling 17 ½ feet behind your truck. An average length for a gooseneck with dressing room is 21 ½ feet, but the gooseneck area, which is usually around 7 ½ feet, is over the truck. So, you really only have about 14 feet, give or take, that you're pulling behind your truck. So, the gooseneck can be a bit shorter. Of course, a tag-along without a dressing room is really the shortest option.

USR: Which do you think would fare best in an accident?

Tom: There are a lot of opinions on this, but I'd say it would depend on the type of accident.

USR: How so?

Tom: If it's a major accident, let's say a head on collision, there's a chance the gooseneck could pop off the ball, and if the safety chains break, the trailer is heading straight for the cab where you are sitting. By the way, this is why you always want to use safety chains.

In a minor accident, where you might have to do a severe swerve to avoid hitting something, the heavier gooseneck would be a bit more stable than being hitched behind the vehicle like a bumper pull. That's why it's important to have the proper hitch. A weight distribution system on a bumper pull adds quite a bit to the safety factor.

So, a lot of it depends on the circumstances and the quality of the trailer. I think either type of trailer should be strong enough to hold up as well as possible in an accident. There are no requirements for trailer strength, and no crash testing is done, so we only have to go on the information we get from examining accidents after they happen to see which type of construction holds up better. In my many years of experience, steel and steel framed trailers hold up much better in accidents.

USR: Any other insight you might want to add about gooseneck vs. tag-along?

Tom: The best choice is a trailer that makes one feel comfortable. Over the years, many of my customers like to see the horses in the trailer while they are traveling. So, a tag-along with big windows gives them that ability which results in a feeling of comfort. Others just like the feeling of a gooseneck because they feel safer or more secure. In that case, a gooseneck is the best choice. The point I've tried to make today is that, for a two-horse trailer, one doesn't need to buy a gooseneck trailer "just because."

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How is this IMPACTING your Horse?

Animals riding in trailers has always been a dangerous situation. The horse must stand spread almost spread eagle in the trailer when in motion to keep from falling. The bounce and jerk of the trailer also places undue stress on the horse's leg muscles and joints, making the horse stressed out, tired, and jumpy by the time the trailer stops... especially on long rides. The drive always seems to take a little longer, too, because the driver has to stop and let the horses rest every four to six hours.

[Air Safe Hitches](#) has helped prevent this problem by introducing the first improvement in towing technology in over 50 years. The Air Ride Trailer Hitch integrates Air Ride Technology into the hitching process allowing both the tow-vehicle and the trailer to act as separate entities, thereby reducing tire bounce, vibration and sway when towing.

Every horse owner knows this problem exists. Our hitch reduces the tire bounce of the trailer so drastically, that the trailer and its contents are under less stress, thereby eliminating damage to the trailer, the tow vehicle and most especially the horses.

The Air Safe Trailer Hitch is constructed with jig-welded steel, and Heavy-Duty Airbags and Space Age Composites for a smooth safe ride.

These Air Safe Trailer hitches separate the trailer and tow-vehicle making them ride as independent vehicles. This in turn gives the trailer the ability to move on its natural axis, making it safer to pull. This technology has been proven to put less stress on the trailer, which reduces the amount of wear and tear on the trailer, the tow-vehicle and the horses.

"This is the best product to come on the market in years! The benefits to horses and other livestock are too numerous to name. I highly recommend this product for all my patients to reduce the stress of traveling on joints and bones.

Feeling a little insecure? Beef up your RV security

By Russ and Tiña De Maris

It looks like among some RVers, there's a bit of insecurity. In a recent poll we asked, "Do you lock your door when you take a walk around the campground?" Way more than half of respondents said they always or most often did so – some 70 percent of you. OK, maybe it's not insecurity – it's perhaps just common sense.

Would you like to do more to enhance your RV's security? Here are a few suggestions that might help.

Cheap and simple: Folks who visit trailhead parking lots are constantly reminded – don't leave expensive stuff in your cars. Well, as RVers, it's kind of difficult not to leave some costly equipment in our rigs – there's no place else to put it. But we can dial back the risk factor by not advertising. If you leave your rig, either pull the blinds, or put your precious goodies out of sight of the windows. If a passing bad guy doesn't see anything to steal, he may well go looking for "greener pastures."

The same is true outside of the rig. Leaving a generator loose in the campground is an open invitation for a vanishing act. Chaining them up works to a degree, but bolt cutters can quickly erase that hold-down. Yes, we've heard that angle grinders can cut through security cable, but it's a lot noisier to fire up a generator to run an angle grinder than to snip through a chain. Best yet, if you can, mount your generator under cover – we keep ours secured in the pickup bed, underneath a lockable truck canopy.

Beef up the basement storage: Unless you've done some changes on your own, we probably have the key to your basement storage compartment. Yep, that little CH751 key is by far the most common key among RVers. Changing out the lock isn't a difficult task. You can change to a tubular key, or if you lose things like keys, you can change out to a combination lock with ease.

Set a light night watchman: Motion sensor lights aren't just for use at home. You can mount a solar-powered motion light or two on your rig easily. Put it up high and it will illuminate a large area around your RV when it senses movement from bad guys, or just Rocky and Bullwinkle.

Go to a keyless entry door lockset: You can keep a secure deadbolt on your door to discourage break-ins but have the modern advantage of keyless entry. Either hit a button on your key fob or push a few buttons to use a combination entry. Or you can do the old-fashioned thing and use a real key – it's your choice with this replacement lockset. RVLock V4 is a bit on the spendy side – figure \$240 for your travel trailer or fifth wheel – but it does everything but sing and dance. Motorhomers, we can't find a remote fob style, but a combination or key entry lock we have. A little less money than the towable one we mentioned, too.

One-Liners

- Middle age is when you are warned to slow down by a doctor instead of a policeman.
- A clean desk is a sign of a cluttered desk drawer.
- Anything worth taking seriously is worth making fun of.
- Better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot.
- To sit alone with my conscience will be judgment enough for me.
- An escalator never breaks... it only becomes stairs.
- When you get older, lack of pep is often mistaken for patience.
- The secret of success is to know something nobody else knows.
- What will today's younger generation tell their children they had to do "without"?
- If you're doing the speed limit, you're in the way.
- 18 out of 10 schizophrenics agree.
- It's not an optical illusion. It just looks like one.
- Bumper Sticker: Excuse me for driving so closely in front of you.
- Today is the last day of your life, so far.
- No man really becomes a fool until he stops asking questions.
- People never grow up; they just learn how to act in public.
- One half of the world will never understand the other half and it doesn't matter which half you're in.
- I've discovered the whole problem with the National Debt. Most of us work 5 days a week and the government spends 7.
- You'll notice that a turtle only makes progress when it sticks out its neck.
- No matter how bad it gets, I'm rich at the dollar store.
- The tongue must be heavy indeed, because so few people can't hold it.
- The minute a man is convinced that he is interesting, he isn't.
- If you want to know more about paranoids, follow them around.
- Anything not nailed down is a cat toy.
- The reason Las Vegas is so crowded is that no one has the plane fare to leave.

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