

Subject:

November 2020 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

# November 2020

Newsletter

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## Should I Grease My Trailer Hitch Ball or Not?

October 16, 2020 March 9, 2020 by Mike Scarpignato

One question many people have regarding the maintenance of the trailer hitch ball is – **Should I grease my trailer hitch ball or not? The short answer is that you should if you want to maintain it properly. Grease is one of the most effective tools for preventing rust, corrosion and heat build-up on a trailer hitch ball.**

The trailer hitch ball is an interesting aspect of every trailer. It can be incredibly useful, but many people don't use it properly and don't know how to maintain it. Most people will let it get rusty and never use it as a result. However, if you take the time to maintain it, it can be a very useful part of your RV.

That being said, there's a lot to learn about why you need to grease your trailer hitch ball and how to do it. As a result, you'll want to keep reading so that you can learn as much information as possible.

### Should I Grease My Trailer Hitch Ball?

If you want to ensure that your trailer hitch ball is properly maintained, then you should definitely consider using trailer hitch grease. If you don't use grease or a grease alternative it will only be a matter of time until your trailer ball hitch gets rusty.

It's recommended that you use a dry graphite lubricant like CRC Dry Graphite Lube so that you can prevent dirt from sticking to the hitch. One of the biggest concerns opponents of trailer hitch grease have is that it can attract dirt. However, if you use a dry graphite lubricant it will keep dirt away while still maintaining your trailer hitch ball.

Additionally, when you apply grease you should make sure to wipe off any old grease that was there before. Having old grease build up can cause damage to the hitch, as well.

An alternative to using grease is to place a cover over your trailer hitch ball when it isn't in use. However, this has limited effectiveness since there will be a lot of time where your hitch ball will be exposed to the elements when it's in use.

As a result, it's better to try to maintain the trailer hitch ball by greasing it rather than just using a cover. You can still use a cover if you grease it, so you don't need to grease it as often. However, it shouldn't be your only preventative action.

### Do I Have to Grease My Trailer Hitch Ball?

You do not need to grease your trailer hitch ball. That is entirely up to you. However, greasing it is recommended. Greasing will help ensure that the trailer hitch ball keeps its structural integrity, and it will help prevent it from squeaking. When the hitch gets rusty you will hear a lot

of loud squeaks while hauling your trailer which can be incredibly annoying.

However, the decision to use grease is entirely up to you. Your RV or trailer won't break down because you don't grease the hitch ball, but it is a great tool to help with maintenance.

### **Can I Grease a Rusty Trailer Hitch Ball?**

If you own an RV and you've never greased your trailer hitch ball before, there's a good chance it developed some rust over time. If there is only a little bit of rust on the ball you can still grease it and increase the lifespan of the hitch ball.

However, if you're trying to fix a ball that is completely covered in rust, it's too late. At this point, it might even be unsafe to use the trailer hitch ball. If you find yourself in this situation, you shouldn't try to grease the ball. Instead, you should try to find a new one and replace your old, rusted, trailer hitch ball.

### **If I Need a New Hitch Ball, Which is the Best Trailer Hitch Ball?**

If you've determined that your trailer hitch ball is too rusty to fix, you'll need to get a new one. Unfortunately, picking a new hitch ball isn't as easy as picking the one that looks best at the store. There's a lot you need to consider.

The first thing you need to do is take a look at your ball mount and get the information you have on it. Ball mounts vary in terms of size, type, weight capacity, price, features, and vehicle compatibility. As a result, you will need to find a trailer hitch ball that is compatible with your ball mount. If you pick one at random you will likely find that it won't even fit on your mount.

As a result, we can't give a list of the best trailer hitch balls for you. You will need to assess which ones are compatible with your mount. However, this shouldn't be too difficult. You should be able to find this information easily online.

### **How Often Should I Grease My Trailer Hitch Ball?**

At a minimum, you should grease your hitch ball every spring and fall. However, when you do decide to reapply grease you should wipe it clean before applying a new layer of grease.

It's also a good idea to grease it before you leave on a trip. Your trailer hitch ball is most likely to be exposed to conditions that could test the grease when you're away from home. As a result, applying a new coat of grease before you leave is a good idea.

### **What Is White Grease Hitch Ball Lube?**

White Grease Hitch Ball Lube is a heavy-duty lubricant that is used for metal to metal applications. Lithium acts as a thickener that provides structure to hold the oil in place, and it also acts as a sponge by releasing small amounts of oil during use.

This will help extend the lifespan of your hitch ball, which will make it easier to connect and disconnect the hitch ball. The lube is non-toxic, and it's designed so that it won't break down. Furthermore, the lubricant is water resistant, so you don't need to worry about it washing away in rain. It's a great option for someone looking for a hitch ball lubricant to prevent their hitch ball from getting rusty.

### **Are There Better Alternatives to Trailer Hitch Grease?**

If you don't want to grease your trailer ball hitch, you can explore other options. There are a few that you have to choose from. Firstly, you can use a solid candle to coat the hitch ball. This method will create a lot of mess, but it's easier to manage than grease. You can also use motor oil to get the job done. Both alternatives will get the job done to varying degrees. However, there's a reason that most people use grease, and that's because it's the most durable and the most effective.

### **How to Grease a Trailer Hitch Ball**

The first thing you'll want to do is wipe down your hitch ball to ensure that there isn't any leftover grease. You then should check for any signs of rust. If it is covered in rust, then you should replace it. However, if there is only a little bit, you can try to remove it with sandpaper if it isn't chrome. Once this is done you can get started applying the grease.

When you're applying grease, you'll want to make sure that you get it on the entire surface of the hitch ball. Otherwise, the portions of the ball that aren't covered could be at risk of getting rusty. As a result, you should apply the grease liberally. You can apply it directly with your fingers because grease isn't toxic.

After you apply the grease it's still a good idea to keep the trailer hitch ball covered whenever possible. The grease will do a good job of protecting it from the elements, but there's no reason not to take every action possible to extend the lifespan of your hitch ball. Having it covered will extend its lifespan and reduce the frequency that you need to apply grease.

#### **Is Grease a Necessity for RV Owners?**

After reading our article, we hope you have all the information you need on applying grease to trailer hitch balls. We know there's a lot of information to absorb, but we wanted you to be as informed as possible.

Remember that you should always wipe your hitch ball clean before reapplying grease. You should apply grease liberally, and frequently. It's better to apply grease more often than you need rather than to apply it too infrequently. As long as you keep an eye on your trailer hitch ball, you shouldn't have in issue keeping it from rusting.

## **Boondocking Dispersed Camping Resources**

Boondocking is camping without any hookups to power or water as you would normally find in an RV park. Sometimes called dispersed or dry camping, boondocking is essentially free camping. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is an agency within the United States Department of the Interior that administers more than 247.3 million acres of public lands in the United States. All BLM, National Forest and National Grasslands are open to dispersed camping, unless otherwise marked. Every so often you might see signs that say "No Camping" or "Camp Only In Designated Campsites", but usually only near cities or National Park boundaries with a potential for overuse.

On most National Forest lands, you can stay at the same site for a maximum of 14 days. The BLM usually imposes a 21-day limit and Arizona and California have Long Term Visitor Areas where you can park a tent, car, van or RV for months at a time. Most BLM public lands are located in these 12 western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Camping on BLM land is free except for a few areas where a small fee may be required. Boondocking on BLM land means that you have a vast area all to yourself. No cramped RV lots, no noise and best of all, it's free. It also means that you have no electricity, no water and no sewer as you would have in an RV park.

The options for boondocking for long periods of time are:

A generator to provide your rig with electric in the evening or to power the A/C. Solar panels installed on your RV so that you can charge a bank of batteries. Fill-up and use your potable water tank on your RV for water while boondocking Use your RV gray and black tanks sparingly for toilet and washing use.

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[Click to check out the benefits of an air hitch vs a rigid hitch.](#)

## What's Making That Beeping Noise in My RV?

**RVs** are loaded with all kinds of equipment and items that need attention. Have you recently been annoyed by an ongoing ear-piercing beep in your RV? You have determined it's not the cell phone, it's not the smoke detector and it's not your kid's video game. What could it be? Very possibly it's the built-in CO (carbon monoxide) detector. Carbon monoxide is developed when you use LP to create heat in the furnace or cook with gas on the cooktop. It's also deadly to humans and that's why the detector is built-in. Some manufacturers also use a combination CO and LP detector so the device can detect an LP leak and not just carbon monoxide build-up.

Now the incessant beep has been chirping for days yet no one has been in the RV or there has been no reason for it to be beeping. It's very possible that the chassis battery charge is running down. Quite often the beeping can be shut off by simply starting the engine and bringing the battery level back up.

But your RV doesn't have an engine and yet you hear the same beep! That's true, even in trailers and 5<sup>th</sup> wheels, the CO detector is wired in to pull power from the house battery. That battery may need to be recharged or possibly replaced.

Or you find that all the batteries are fully charged yet the CO detector still goes off. In some rare cases, especially in high heat situations, outgassing of various components used in cabinetry, carpet, and other adhesives to build the RV could be causing the CO detector to beep. Open windows and exhaust out the interior and often this will get the detector to go back to sleep.

Warning systems are for the health and safety of you, your friends, and your family. Don't try to take a short cut and disconnect them. They very well could prevent a tragedy if properly maintained and understood.

## What You Need to Know to Take a Winter RV Camping Trip

By Jeff Adams

The temperatures are low and the days are short but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy RV camping in the wintertime. Campgrounds that are open are generally empty, the crisp air is quiet and the landscape is peaceful. Still, the best part: no bugs.

Have a safe and relaxing winter trip with these tips to help you prepare your RV and enjoy an offseason adventure.

### Prep Your RV for Winter

Before heading out, the most important thing to do is make sure your rig will be up to the rigors of winter camping. Most current RVs are designed, built and insulated to take cold weather in stride. Even if you don't have the latest in RV technology you can still make your trailer or motorhome cozy.

#### Exterior

Check window seals and re-caulk where needed. Examine the weather stripping on all exterior doors—especially the entry—basement areas and access panels and replace if necessary to keep cold drafts out.

You can also cut insulating foam boards, available at home improvement centers, to fit snugly between the RV frame and the ground all the way around the base of your rig. This barrier will help insulate tanks, water lines and the floor by blocking out cold air. RV skirts can help, though they don't provide as much insulation.

#### Holding Tanks

Empty your black and gray water tanks before your trip. Add about a quart of special pink RV antifreeze (not the green kind used in cars) to each. This will protect the dump valves from freezing. Insulate the pipes draining into the tanks with foam pipe insulation, and consider adding electric pipe heaters if you'll be camping in below freezing temperatures for an extended time. Note: you'll need an electric hook-up or generator for this.

You can also add holding tank heaters, which are available in 12V DC and 120V AC models.

Special tip: Wrap your sewer hose in insulation or heat tape. This will help prevent ice dams from forming inside. Some veteran snow campers use their sewer hose only to dump their tanks; then they clean the hose and store it in a heated compartment immediately. A frozen hose is likely to split when you disconnect it.

Don't empty your tanks until you're ready to leave. This will help prevent ice from forming.

#### Fresh Water Hose

If you have a fresh water hook-up, consider buying a heated water hose to prevent freeze-ups or bursting. These are controlled with a thermostat and AC power is required to operate. Keep all hoses and cables off the ground or out of the snow.

Better still: fill your fresh water tank, and then disconnect your hose from the campground faucet and let the water drain out.

#### Water Pump

If your water pump is located in an insulated exterior storage area, a small space heater can help keep it from freezing.

#### Windows

If you don't have dual pane windows, you may be able to retrofit with insulated RV windows. Or, you can add insulated curtains. Keep them closed at night to trap in warm air. For a Class A or Class C motorhome, an insulated curtain made to separate the cockpit from the living

area will reduce the amount of cabin space you need to heat, saving propane or electricity.

A low-cost solution is to cover your windows on the inside with foil-backed foam insulation, available at most home improvement stores. Lightweight and easy to cut, you can attach hook-and-loop fasteners to the window frame and the insulation to hold them in place. Also available is a window insulating film that reportedly reduces condensation and stops heat loss.

### Ceiling Vents

Most RVs have roof vents or skylights, ideal places for heat to leak out. Seal off these spots by installing RV vent cushions, which fit securely into most standard-size vents simply by pushing them up into position. If you're handy, you can also make custom-size vent cushions out of thick foam padding, available at home improvement or fabric stores.

### Stabilizing Jacks

Stabilizing jacks can freeze to paved or concrete pads, so place blocks of wood beneath them. This way, you can raise the jacks, drive forward, and then free the blocks with ice melt, a hammer and a chisel. Or, just leave the blocks and get replacements later.

### Refrigerator

The refrigerant in a propane or electric refrigerator is a solution of hydrogen gas, ammonia, distilled water and sodium carbonate, all under 200 PSI pressure. When outside temperatures drop below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, this liquid may turn to a gel that can plug the refrigeration system's coils permanently.

To help avoid this, remove the outside refrigerator access cover and apply duct tape over the top two out of three vent slots. Do this on the inside of the cover to prevent leaving adhesive on the outside when removing the tape. An easier alternative is to insert round half-inch pipe insulation in the top two slots from the outside.

In extremely cold weather, it may be necessary to place a small space heater in the compartment, set on low. Make sure that the heater is not near any flammable surfaces.

### Ice Maker

Many RV builders do not insulate or heat the ice maker water line. If this is your situation either drain the water line, insulate it, or wrap it with heater tape.

### Furnace

Test the furnace before you hit the road. Clean the furnace area using compressed air or a soft brush to remove all dust, debris and insects. If your RV has only a heat pump or heat fins, consider an additional heat source as these systems don't work well when the outside temperature drops below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you don't want to run the furnace, portable electric space heaters can make a real difference in staying warm, as can a catalytic heater—just be sure that a window or vent is open a crack for ventilation.

And be aware that interior heat and moisture from your breath and a catalytic heater can create condensation in your RV. An electric dehumidifier, if you're plugged in, or a container of moisture absorbent will remove dampness from the air and help prevent corrosion, mold and mildew.

### Propane

If you use propane to heat your rig, it's likely to last only a few days in really cold weather. Make sure that a propane refill station is nearby and open, or bring a couple of extra tanks with you, safely secured for travel.

Some campgrounds offer propane bottles for rent. Call ahead to find out.

### Engine Block Heater

If you camp in extremely cold regions, it's best to have an engine block heater installed. Turn on the block heater at least three hours before you start your engine.

### Other Considerations

#### Slide Outs

Ice and snow can accumulate on slide out awnings, preventing the awnings from rolling up properly when it's time to go. Clean the snow, ice and frost off the awning.

In addition, ice and snow can accumulate on slide gaskets and prevent the slide from retracting. Spraying RV antifreeze on the gaskets may help. And retracting the slide the night before you leave can save a lot of grief on a cold winter morning.

### Emergency Items

When winter RV camping, the best planning includes preparing for the worst. Always have the following with you:

- Tire chains
- Weather band radio
- Extra blankets
- Extra warm clothing
- Sleeping bags rated for zero degree temperatures
- 5 gallons of drinking water in heated storage space
- A "white gas" camping stove (does not require propane)
- Gasoline-powered generator
- Extra propane tanks
- Blow dryer to defrost pipes and tanks
- Emergency GPS system
- Extra food
- Solar charging panels are good for re-charging house batteries
- Cash for unexpected fees or emergencies

### Check the Weather Before You Go

In some parts of the country, winter storms can appear suddenly and are unforgiving. Be safe by checking with the National Weather Service to see what the forecast is for the areas you'll be in.

### Make Sure Campgrounds Are Open

Due to their elevation, some campgrounds close as early as mid-September to early October; so double check to see if your favorite spot is open. You don't want to be disappointed by a "Closed" sign.

### Finally

At first glance, winter RV camping can seem like a huge amount of work. But the good news is that many of the add-ons only need to be installed once. After that, they can be left in place.

# Planning an RV trip? Here's what you need to know before you go.

By Danielle Braff

June 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. EDT

RVs look like the perfect vehicle for the pandemic — you can go on vacation and still socially distance. Which may explain why RV dealers across the country are seeing a significant increase in sales, some as much as 170 percent from a similar period last year, according to the RV Industry Association, based in Reston, Va.

Rentals are even hotter: RVshare, a peer-to-peer rental website, reports a 1,600 percent surge in rentals since April, the height of the pandemic — and it has already tripled bookings from the entire year of 2019.

Because social distancing “will likely be around in some form for the foreseeable future,” said Monika Geraci, senior manager with the association, it’s comforting that recreational vehicles “allow the freedom to go where you want, when you want — but also the ability to control your environment and how you interact with other people.”

But if you buy one, be warned: You can’t just hop inside and enjoy the ride.

“RVing is a whole new experience,” said Megan Buemi, RVshare spokeswoman.

#### Equipment

The first step is stocking up on essentials, said Kelly Beasley, co-founder of Camp Addict, an RV education website.

Surprisingly, Beasley said, new and used RVs don’t come equipped with many necessary tools (rentals should supply everything, but check before you drive off the grounds).

*What’s it like to go on vacation during a pandemic? I went to a newly reopened resort to find out.*

Nearly 90 percent of last year’s RV sales were towable, rather than motorized. Beasley suggested that all new RV owners purchase a sewer hose, chocks (chocking involves securing the wheels when you’re at your destination so the rig doesn’t roll or move unexpectedly); a water hose (to connect your RV to a water supply at the campsite); a power cord (to connect your RV to a power supply at the campsite); refrigerator bars (to keep the contents of your fridge from spilling out); and more (she has a full list at [campaddict.com/must-have-rv-accessories](http://campaddict.com/must-have-rv-accessories)). While motor homes have a parking brake, trailers don’t — and Beasley recommends putting chocks on a motor home anyway in case the parking brake fails. If you plan on connecting a trailer to your vehicle, you’ll need a hitch, though you won’t need one on a motor home unless you’re going to tow a vehicle behind it.

Backup cameras will also be helpful if it’s not a new vehicle, said Beasley, suggesting the Rear View Safety Wireless Backup Camera System, which typically cost between \$200 and \$600.

#### Maintenance

Maintaining your RV may feel like a second job at first, but it should become less daunting once you figure out what you’re doing.

“Maintenance on your RV is much like the maintenance on your personal vehicle, only supersized,” said Cindy Baker, a travel adviser with InteleTravel, part of Ensemble Travel Group, a consortium of more than 700 independent travel advisers.

Before you venture out on any long trip, you’ll need to inspect your tires to make sure they have the correct amount of air to carry the weight of your load, Baker said.

It’s easier than it sounds, since you can purchase a tire pressure monitoring system. Place the sensors on your tires to monitor their pressure and temperature as you drive. They warn you of changes that can lead to a dangerous blowout, said Julie Chickery, a Virginia-based RV enthusiast with a blog called Chickery’s Travels.

She suggested joining an auto roadside service, as many offer plans that cover your RV and your car simultaneously.

#### Driving

Once you’ve got everything you need, you may think you’re all set — but you need to practice driving first, especially going backward.

There’s a learning curve when backing up a trailer, Beasley said. Because trailers have a hitch connection point, the back of the trailer will go in the opposite direction of the back of the

vehicle when you back up.

Nearly every campsite will require you to back in, so before you get on the road, find an empty parking lot to practice.

“Also, if you have a lot of RV behind your rear wheels, you have to watch out for tail swing,” Beasley said, when your back end swings out when you turn.

“Plenty of newbies have damaged property and their own RV because they didn’t understand the mechanics of how their back end juts out when they make a turn,” she said.

Before you head onto the road, you need to memorize the height and weight of your RV, which is essential knowledge for going under bridges. Some roads are completely inaccessible for RVs, so it helps to use a GPS navigator specifically for RVs. You can configure it for the length, height and weight of your vehicle, said Jer Goss, Atlanta-based chief executive of Goss RV, a luxury motor coach rental company.

#### Parking

When you’re ready to venture out, you’ll need to determine where you’ll park your RV.

Many RV adventurers choose to join membership-based clubs to save money on campground nightly fees as well as other camping services, Baker said.

For example, Escapees RV Club offers between a 15 and 50 percent discount at more than 800 commercial parks throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada for \$39.95 annually. Membership also includes seven of the club’s own parks throughout the United States, where RVers can stay for the short term or even on deeded lots.

Alternatively, for \$44 annually, Passport America offers discounts that are about 50 percent off, and they have more than 1,800 participating campgrounds within their network.

There are also memberships that offer free boondocking (off-grid, sans utilities) to their members at locations across the United States.

When you’re researching campgrounds and memberships, be aware of the various options, Chickery said. There are very simple campgrounds that will provide a safe place to park for the night — and there are destination RV resorts with activities and swimming pools.

Once you’ve defined your needs, you can search for the best fit at your desired location by using apps such as AllStays and RV Life. Chickery likes them because they provide user reviews of the campgrounds.

Keep in mind, however, that a discount on camping sites is only as valuable as how often you will be using that discount (the more you use it, the more you save).

#### Speed

When you hit the road, you’ll need to slow down. An RV is a large, heavy piece of machinery that can be dangerous if driven too quickly, Chickery said.

Towable tires aren’t made to go faster than 65 miles per hour, she said. However, even with a motor home, you could make a case for driving more slowly for safety purposes.

“The faster you go, the longer the distance it takes to stop,” she said. “When you add the weight of these motor homes and large towables to the equation, driving at slower speeds and allowing additional distances between vehicles will improve safety.”

Plus, because RVs weigh between five and seven tons, driving is going to feel different from driving a 3,000-pound car. You’ll accelerate slowly and break even more slowly, said Diane Vukovic, owner of the blog Mom Goes Camping.

“You have to plan turns well in advance: It takes a while to come to a full stop in an RV, so you’ll need to leave lots of room to brake,” she said.

Wind can also make driving an RV tough, so if it’s windy, you should go more slowly.

A common mistake for rookie RV owners is the “drive-off disaster,” said Paul Johnson of Minnesota-based North Outdoors, a website detailing outdoor activities.

This occurs when you drive away from the site without fully unhooking everything. The utilities need to be fully unhooked, and anything that could come loose while driving — such as the sewer hose — needs to be securely stowed. The windows and hatches should be shut.

“The worst part about a drive-off disaster is that you often don’t know you did it until you make your first stop, several hundred miles down the road,” Johnson said.

But at least it’ll make for some interesting Instagram pics.

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