

RV Fresh Water System

Fresh water is one of those things that many people take for granted. If you are an RV owner, be sure to keep your fresh water system properly maintained and in good working order. Don't let a faulty fresh water system spoil your hard-earned vacation.

Caring for an RV fresh water system doesn't need to be an intimidating process. In fact, it's easier than most people think. There are no guarantees that any water system delivers completely safe or pure water, but taking certain precautions can keep your RV water safer and easier to use. Thanks to Mark Polk for his contributions.

Begin with a white, non-toxic drinking hose. Hoses not labeled "safe for drinking" can allow lead and other dangerous chemicals to get into the water. Use the white non-toxic hose solely for hooking up to your water source. Take along a green or black garden hose for all other flushing and filling tasks, like cleaning out holding tanks or washing the RV. While the white drinking hose is not in use, roll it up and connect the two ends together. This will keep dirt, contamination and other debris from getting in the hose. When you are ready to use it again, run some clean water through the hose as an added precaution before hooking it up to the RV.

The next step is to filter the incoming water with a high quality filtration system. Water filters cannot purify the water completely, but they can help to control and remove bacteria, lead and other dangerous contaminants found in drinking water. Hydrolife filters feature a filter media called KDF that uses electrochemical oxidation-reduction to neutralize harmful chemicals and bacteria. The hydrolife filter also uses carbon to reduce pesticides, fungicides and other organic contaminants.

There are two basic options for filtering your RV water system. An inline filter installs directly to the water line that you drink from. The other, more preferable option is to filter all of the water going into the RV. By doing so, you are protecting the entire water system, filtering the shower water to help prevent any skin irritation.

Possibly the most important step is to keep your fresh water system sanitized. At an absolute minimum, the system should be sanitized every spring when you take the RV out of storage. Additionally, be sure to sanitize the fresh water system any time you notice an odor.

To sanitize the fresh water system, begin by draining the water heater. Find the water heater in the outside compartment of your RV. The drain plug, or petcock, is located in the bottom left hand corner. Remove the plug and open the pressure relief valve on top of the water heater. CAUTION: NEVER drain the water heater when the water is hot or the tank is under pressure.

Locate the lowest point where the water lines drain. Look carefully, as they can be difficult to find. There will be one for the hot and another for the cold water lines. This is the lowest point in the water system. Open these and let the water drain out. Next, find the drain for the fresh water holding tank and release all of the water from it. At this point, turn the water pump on for a moment to force any remaining water out. Be sure to shut off the pump as soon as the water stops draining. Close all of the drains. The majority of the water has now been drained from the system.

The next step in sanitizing your water system is to take a quarter cup of household bleach for every fifteen gallons of water that your fresh water tank holds. Mix the bleach with water in a one-gallon container and pour it into the fresh water holding tank. Next, fill the fresh water tank almost completely full of water. Turn the water pump on, open all hot and cold faucets in your RV and run the water until you smell the bleach at each faucet. Close the faucets. If it's possible, pull the trailer or drive the RV to move the water around and assist in cleaning the entire tank.

Once the tank has been filled with the bleach-water combination, let it sit for at least 12 hours. Drain the entire system again, and then re-fill the fresh water tank with potable water. Open all of the faucets and run the water until you no longer smell any bleach. It may be necessary to repeat this process to eliminate all signs of bleach from the water system. When the smell of bleach is gone, it will be safe to use your water system.

Modern RVs are equipped with automatic pressure demand pumps, polyethylene fresh water storage tanks and polybutylene water lines. These systems were designed to operate at a certain maximum water pressure level, about 35 to 45 pounds per square inch. The on-board pump has a built-in pressure switch that shuts off power to the pump when the pressure has been reached. Most homes and RV parks have a city water connection to supply water. Often, the pressure at these facilities exceeds 80 pounds per square inch, and sometimes much more.

Take care, as this high-pressure can and will cause leaks to develop.

For your peace of mind, invest in a simple water pressure regulator to use whenever you're using an outside water supply source. This device controls the incoming water pressure to supply a continuous and regulated 45 PSI maximum. The regulator is connected at the supply end of the hose to protect the hose and the RV at the same time. You can purchase a water pressure regulator at your local RV supply store.

People enjoy the RV lifestyle because it offers freedom to travel with all the comforts of home. Make sure that your comfort includes a supply of clean drinking water wherever your travels might take you.