

**SPECIAL SECTION!** 2024's Newest Parts & Accessories

# RV ENTHUSIAST

NORTH AMERICA'S PREMIER HOW-TO RV RESOURCE

April 2024

## RV OEMs Debut New Entry-Level Towables



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# RV ENTHUSIAST

NORTH AMERICA'S PREMIER HOW-TO RV RESOURCE

April 2024

Volume 4, Number 2

## INSIDE



**Tanks a Lot** - Like a lot of appliances and components in an RV, water heaters are usually taken for granted — you just expect them to work. Unfortunately, they can fail to fire at the most inopportune of times, and it's hard to imagine life on the road without hot water. By performing basic maintenance before and after each travel season, you can ensure that it will work when you need it.



**Get Rid of That Sagging Rear End** - Hitching up big fifth wheels with plenty of pin weight can make it difficult to keep the towing truck on a level plane without assistance from overload or air springs. RoadActive's clever-but-simple suspension add-on — the big takeaway is its easy adjustability — has a profound effect on handling while towing, without the need for additional leaf-spring support.



**2024's RV OEM's 'Rediscover' Entry-Level Towables** - If you've gone shopping during the past few years for anything from a car to a bag of groceries, you know that your money doesn't buy what it used to. That goes for RVs, as well; towables have jumped by 25% to 40% or more just since 2022. Now, manufacturers — including some that have never ventured into the space before — are fighting back with a new wave of "entry-level" travel trailers and even fifth wheels.

## DEPARTMENTS



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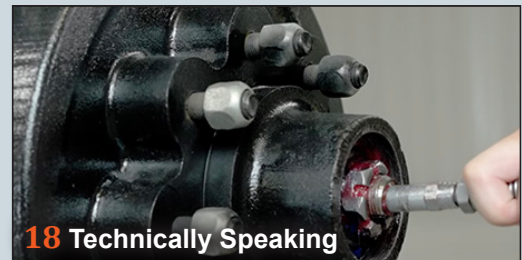
It's hard to believe that Class B motorhomes — the medium of the "van life" movement — were originally a trend fueled by surfers and hippies. Today, "living small" helps a new generation of RVers live large.

### 10 News & Notes



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In the first of a series of articles, Campers Inn COO Ben Hirsch offers insights on how to gauge a dealership's ability — and desire — to provide service and after-sale support to its customers.



### 18 Technically Speaking

One reader's Fleetwood motorhome goes "clickety-clack," while another questions a recall on certain axle Zerk fittings. A third complaint centers upon an errant awning during extension. We can help.



### On The Cover

David, Rose and Gabriel Blea enjoy an outing in an Ember RV E-Series 25RUD. Photo by Bruce Hampson

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**Squatters Not Welcome -**  
Tow vehicle suspensions take a real beating — and, in many cases, just don't have the strength to carry the load of a hitched trailer. One of the easiest solutions is SumoSprings — easily installed supports that, due to their progressive design have a soft initial engagement (meaning support ramps up when loaded). Plus, they require zero maintenance after installation.



**Slideout Floor Replacement -**  
Few RV problems cause owners more distress than wood rot. That's especially true when you discover soft spots in your RV's floor. Slideout rooms are especially susceptible to this malady, so when Carrier RV Services let us know they were replacing a slideout floor, we tagged along. It may not be something you want to tackle in your driveway, but it's nice to know what it takes to get the job done.



**Hottest New Parts & Accessories -**  
When it comes to new product debuts in the RV industry, there are no better venues than distributor shows — and there is no bigger distributor in the industry than NTP-STAG. Our partner, *RVBusiness* magazine, attended this year's EXPO 2024 and reported back in-depth about the latest parts and accessories that attracted attention — and that you'll be seeing this summer.

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By Bob Livingston

# "Living Small" Helps a New Generation of RVers to Live Large

It's funny how trends are recycled. Back in the 1970s, van conversions were popular, a movement driven by the surfing craze and "hippies" who lived life on the fringe. Undoubtedly, the Dodge Tradesman van was the most popular foundation for those RV companies that transformed a common work vehicle into a mobile bedroom for spirited individuals who wanted to spread their wings and explore beyond the routines of daily life. As a young person emerging from the late 1960s, when it could be argued that the anti-establishment movement helped shape the future of America through its "peace and love" mantra, I, too, became infatuated with "van life," which has evolved into a hot ticket for the RV industry.

I built my first RV by converting a used Dodge van into a traveling motel, but I moved in a different direction from that of the surfer crowd (although living near the beach in Southern California was certainly the impetus for my surfboarding adventures). This van, of course, was rather crude by today's standards, but it had everything my wife, Lynne, and I needed to hang with the RV crowd.

Building a van conversion from scratch propelled my love affair with RVs, and it was "loaded" with amenities like a dinette that converted into a bed, running water, icebox, convection LP-gas heating and a powerful stereo system. I'll never forget the seemingly endless days of cutting holes for windows, paneling the walls and adding a paisley-print fabric ceiling. A family friend in the canvas business kindly built a room that could be attached to the side of the van, which accommodated a sizeable crowd not afraid to snuggle up on a tarp-covered ground. While we did pass around jugs of cheap Tyrolia wine among friends, our RV interests were more traditional, and we enjoyed hanging out with a much older and wiser crowd.

Today, we're that much older crowd — and the latest generation of younger RV enthusiasts is no longer an anomaly.

While I'm not surprised that my early encounters with the RV lifestyle and career as an RV journalist propelled the decision to live full-time in a fifth wheel more than eight years ago, I still get a kick out of watching videos depicting van life — and the nomadic lifestyle — on YouTube.

When the auto makers shuttered the manufacture of standard-size vans and introduced more svelte replacements, many of us were sure that "real vans" were headed for extinction. Fortunately, nothing can be further from reality; vans are better than ever, albeit more expensive. Kudos to the automotive industry for building more efficient vans that led to the resurgence of a lifestyle segment powered by energetic and enthusiastic individuals looking to escape the doldrums of daily life.

Surprisingly, many of the "nomads" of today are venturing out later in life — and have embraced the lifestyle with a passion. I still fantasize about getting back into a van to relive my RVing roots, and a relatively new activity — "stealth camping" — has really piqued my attention. Self-containment efficiency has spearheaded the practicality of living in close quarters without giving up amenities. I can't believe how many owners I see while traveling or watching YouTube who park anywhere, even on city streets. These free spirits are enjoying travel adventures only made possible by robust, compact energy and comfort systems, while operating on a budget that seems impossible these days. I won't debate the legality of overnighting anywhere with impunity, but you have to give these people credit for creativity. In many cases, it's hard to decipher a work van, like those used for delivering packages, from a recreational van doubling as a daily driver. The whole concept is fascinating — and, of course, traditional boondocking is more than just a passing fad.

Living large is not fashionable for those who embrace a minimalist lifestyle. The idea of living in a "tiny home" is intriguing; fortunately, the industry has responded generously by offering products for those who want to keep life simple. Heck, I've seen videos and camped near people living full-time in a tear-drop trailer, so having a comfortable bed, a well-equipped galley and a bathroom makes a Class B motorhome seem like a palace by comparison. But the happiness factor seems parallel.

At one time, many of the technological advancements that embellish RV livability trickled down from the more expensive Class A motorhome segment. Today, it could also be argued that systems packed into vans and

small camping trailers are driving innovation throughout the RV industry. Case in point: efficient solar and energy systems that are capable of running the gamut of appliances and accessories without hookup support. Watching a 40-inch TV while inside a smaller trailer — not to mention preparing food in a microwave or on an induction cooktop while enjoying air-conditioned comfort — would be unfathomable not that many years ago. Now, that's what I call "roughing it without restraint" — something only made possible by the RV industry's accurate read of contemporary trends.

The aftermarket is also loaded with items readily available to talented do-it-yourselfers building custom interiors in vans and tiny trailers. Many of those conversions — and the clever use of space — are breathtaking. I can't imagine that executives in the industry aren't today considering many of the ideas populating social media.

One thing for sure, as history will attest, even tiny RVs will keep enthusiasts engaged — and the lifestyle buzz alive.



*Once a movement driven by the surfing craze and "hippies" who lived life on the fringe, van conversions — Class B's — are fueling a renaissance in experiential outdoor lifestyles.*



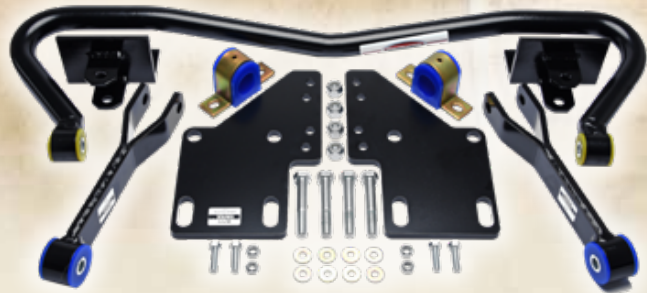
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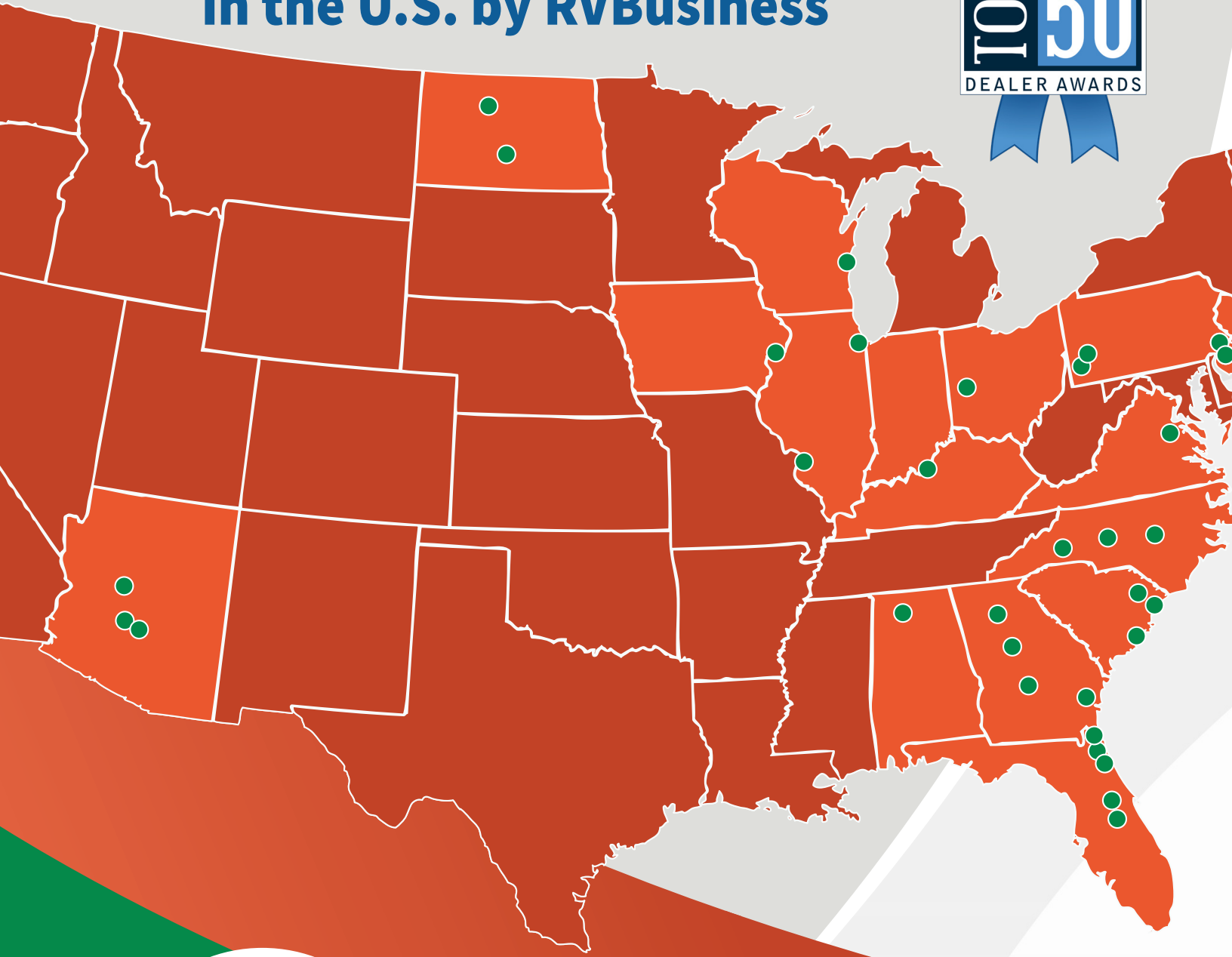
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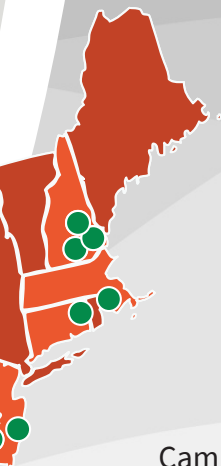
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# THE CAMPERS INN RV *Story*

Campers Inn RV began in 1966 after founders Art and Fran Hirsch had a poor experience at an RV dealership. After years of camping in a tent, the Hirsch's saved up some money and decided to find something more comfortable. They gathered their three kids and headed to a local dealership. But when they arrived, the salespeople were more interested in playing cards than helping them find an RV.

Art was furious. He was wearing clothes from his job as a mold maker, and he felt the salespeople judged him by his appearance. They left angry and empty-handed. On the way home, they decided they could do a better job themselves.

They pooled together the family's savings and began selling RVs out of their front yard in Acton, Massachusetts.

Campers Inn RV continued to grow over the next five decades, and we are now one of the largest RV dealership groups in the United States. We are still operated by the Hirsch family, and we remain dedicated to connecting families of all backgrounds with the RV lifestyle and helping them find their "away."



[Campersinn.com](http://Campersinn.com)

# Taxa Outdoors Debuts 'Dark Sky Mantis'



The recent total solar eclipse was more than just another celestial event — and Taxa Outdoors has decided to capitalize on it with a special limited edition of its most popular overland vehicle, the Mantis.

The company's Mantis is designed for off-road adventures with axle-less suspension, rugged all-terrain tires and articulating Lock 'N' Roll hitch. Its newest version, the Dark Sky, includes a custom matte wrap, limited edition graphics and matching dark wheels.

The Mantis MSRP starts at \$45,750 and, at just 19 feet long, can be stored in a standard garage. Other features

of the 3,115-pound (dry) unit includes a secure pop-up roof for optimized ventilation for the comfort of the unit allowing sleeping for four adults and a well-equipped kitchen with durable baltic birchwood cabinetry and high-pressure laminate countertop, plus a slew of appliances that facilitate cooking for the whole family, ranging from a sink to a two burner stove and cooler. For increased comfort and convenience, the Mantis comes standard with an 8,000-Btu air conditioner, furnace, and hot water system.

For more information, visit [taxaoutdoors.com/dark-sky-mantis-launch](https://taxaoutdoors.com/dark-sky-mantis-launch).

with more than 48 hours notice and 32.2% pulled the plug with less than 48 hours notice. (Some canceled multiple reservations in different timeframes.)

While some campers are courteous enough to cancel reservations they don't plan to use, others simply no-showed on campsites they reserved. According to The Dyr's report, 14.9% of campers no-showed at least once in 2023.

## Go RVing

### Go RVing Announces 2024 'Experiential' Events

Got a friend interested in the RV lifestyle — but doesn't want to deal with high-pressure salesmen when they check out the latest models? Do you have an older RV and are considering stepping up to more conveniences? Experiential events are a core part of Go RVing's strategy to expose diverse audiences to RVing and an active outdoor lifestyle in an unexpected setting. They provide consumers with real-world opportunities to directly engage with RVs.

This year, Go RVing will be participating in 12 events, ranging from festivals to state fairs and more. As of press time, these were the remaining programs on the schedule:

- Fiesta Hermosa – SS (Los Angeles, CA): May 25-27, 2024
- Carolina Country (Myrtle Beach, SC): June 6-9, 2024
- National Cherry Festival (Traverse City, MI): June 29-July 2, 2024
- American Century Championship (Lake Tahoe, NV): July 11-14, 2024
- Yarmouth Clam Festival (Yarmouth, ME): July 19-21, 2024
- Minnesota State Fair (1st weekend) (Saint Paul, MN): August 22-25, 2024
- Santa Cali-Gon Days (Independence, MO): August 30-September 2, 2024
- Salmon Days (Issaquah, WA): October 5-6, 2024
- Go Outside Festival (Roanoke, VA): October 18-20, 2024

## 'No Show' Campers a Rising Problem



Have you been noticing a rising proliferation of empty — but reserved — campsites during your travels? You're not imagining it. [The Dyr](#), a leading app for camping availability,

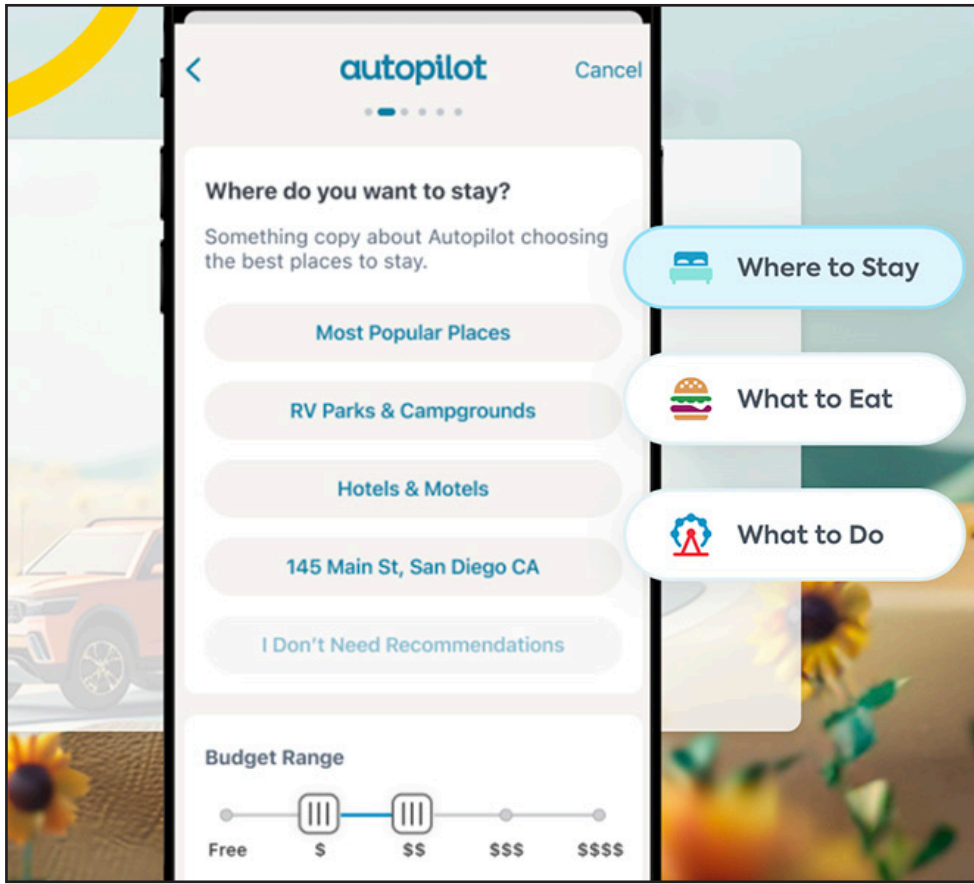
photos and reviews, has found that less than half of campers (42.7%) used all the reservations they made in 2023.

This eye-opening statistic is part of [The Dyr's 2024 Camping Report presented by The All-New Toyota Tacoma](#).

And yes, it's getting worse. The report also found that it was    to book a campsite in 2023 as compared to 2019. Amid the overall increase in the number of Americans who camp and scarcity of campsites, over-reserving campsites has become a strategic exercise to make sure you have a spot.

Of the campers who canceled a reservation in 2023, 87.3% canceled

# Roadtrippers Offers AI-powered Planner



AI-powered road trip planner designed for both cars and RVs, with personalized interactive trip recommendations based on their interests, preferences and vehicle type.

Roadtrippers offers vital road trip planning and navigation tools with a treasure trove of destinations, experiences, services and accommodations, simplifying long-term plans and spur-of-the-moment getaways for users. Recently, the tool seamlessly weaved together top features from beloved camping apps like Campendium, Togo RV and Overnight RV Parking into the Roadtrippers powerhouse resource.

The software features Roadtrippers Autopilot, a cutting-edge and patent-pending road travel recommendation tool, fueled by exclusive human insights from more than 38 million planned trips spanning more than 42 billion miles. It allows users to seamlessly craft personalized and one-of-a-kind trips tailored to their vehicle and preferences for accommodations, dining and activities while also factoring in budget levels and interests to shape potential stops.

For more information, visit [Roadtrippers](https://www.roadtrippers.com).

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) continues to make inroads into our daily lives. Now, Roadtrippers, a leading road trip planning app, has launched the only

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-SCOTT SHAFER



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## Conversion Kit Eliminates Blackwater



Poll any group of RV owners, and chances are high that dealing with blackwater problems — from odors to messy hoses to plugged tanks — ranks as their No. 1 most-hated exercise. If it really, really bothers you, consider the new blackwater conversion kit from Dry-Flush, which eliminates blackwater by eliminating the traditional RV toilet. Instead, users retrofit their RVs with the company's Laveo Dry Flush portable unit.

Installing the Laveo with the new conversion kit is a simple four-step process: plug the waste flange, place the bracket in the appropriate position, fasten the bracket to the floor with double tape, screws or glue, and slide on the toilet. A brief installation video is on the company's website.

The odorless, chemical-free, rechargeable Laveo portable toilet measures 16 inches W by 20 inches D by 18 inches H and weighs just 29 pounds. For comfort, the seat and height are standard toilet sizes. When done, users simply push the flush button as they would with a traditional toilet. However, instead of requiring water, chemicals and plumbing, the double-layered barrier bag automatically encloses the toilet's contents in a spill-resistant, odorless way. The dispenser automatically brings in new, clean barrier bag material for the next flush.

For more information, visit Waterless Toilets at [here](http://www.dryflush.com).

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# RVOvernights.com Launches App for Campers



Travel company [RV Overnights](http://RVOvernights.com) has announced the release of its proprietary app for both iOS and Android. The app is free to download and the company is currently offering an introductory price allowing new members to enjoy a dis-

count while they explore RV Overnights' services.

RVOvernight is an emerging platform in the recreational vehicle (RV) travel sector. The launch of the app is a notable step forward in connecting RV enthusiasts with unique and memorable camping experiences. The app, which went live in February, is designed to revolutionize the way RVers discover and book overnight stays across the United States.

The RVOvernights app introduces an array of innovative features which are geared toward simplifying the travel planning process for RVers. Central to the app's functionality is its comprehensive database of nationwide host locations. This

provides users with a diverse range of boondocking options, from farms and wineries to breweries, distilleries, and attractions, such as drive-in movie theaters. There's even an option for roadside barbecue restaurants. Notably, the app also offers Google Street View on every host profile, letting users see things like driveway access before making a stay request, and incorporates maps of more than 2,300 dump stations and 1,900 propane fill locations.

For more information, visit [RV Overnights](http://RVOvernights.com).

## Blue Compass, Love's Travel Stops Partner on Discount Program

Traveling — even in an RV — isn't always easy...and it's always expensive. Fortunately, the Blue Compass RV dealer group has announced a partnership with Love's Travel Stops to provide customers discounts on gas, auto-diesel and propane through the Blue Compass RV's RV Complete app and Love's Connect app.

Using the RV Complete app, RV enthusiasts will have access to exclusive discounts at all participating Love's nationwide. The partnership with Blue Compass RV marks the largest dis-

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count offered from Love's for any RV dealership group, the company said.

Love's provides RV-friendly amenities at more than 640 locations in 42 states. In addition to access to RV parking, fuel and convenience items like fresh food and drinks at all Love's locations, RVers also have access to Love's network of RV hookups for overnight stays at more than 50 locations across the country. Users can utilize a scannable barcode on the Love's Connect app to access the discounts. Current, exclusive discounts for RV Complete users at Love's include \$0.13 off each gallon of gasoline, \$0.20 off each gallon of auto-diesel, \$0.50 off each gallon of propane and 50% off at dump stations.

More information can be found at [bluecompassrv.com](http://bluecompassrv.com).

## RV Rental Firm Offers 2024 Price Index

Interested in the RV lifestyle but haven't yet taken the plunge? Renting a unit is by far the best way to decide — but rental costs can be all over the map. Now, Go RV Rentals has pub-

lished its 2024 RV Rental Price Index, which records how much it costs to rent an RV in the U.S. (\$183/day USD) and Canada (\$192/day CAD).

Twenty-four metro locations were sampled: 20 in the U.S. and 4 in Canada. Six popular RV types were included for each location. Keep in mind, though, that the reported costs exclude miscellaneous charges such as insurance,

service charges, optional equipment, and sales tax — all of which may add 50% or more to a bottom-line trip cost. Daily RV rental prices range from \$89 USD / \$92 CAD for a pop-up camper to \$306 USD / \$308 CAD for a Class A motorhome. The mid-priced travel trailer and Class C motorhome costs averaged \$115 USD / \$134 CAD and \$212 USD / \$241 CAD, respectively.

## 63rd Annual 'Escapade Rally Set for Wyoming



Got an open date on your calendar in mid-June and a hankering to spend it with hundreds of like-minded travelers?

Consider heading to Rock Springs, Wyoming, where the Sweetwater Events Complex will play host to the 63rd Escapade, June 16-21. Escapade is the largest and most extensive gathering of the Escapees community and is an immersive way to learn about the RV lifestyle. Nearly 1,000 RVs and more than RV enthusiasts are expected to descend on the Sweetwater Events Complex where they can learn from professionals and other campers.

During this event, RVers will gain new tips and tricks on camping and traveling through seminars, social gatherings, nightly entertainment and more. Many attendees will also participate in the Flaming Gorge Bus Tour, an excursion that includes breakfast, lunch and interpretive narration as it travels along southwest Wyoming's landscapes, including rock formations, deep canyons and the Flaming Gorge Scenic Byway, the nation's newest All-American Road. Register for the rally at <https://escapade.escapees.com/>.



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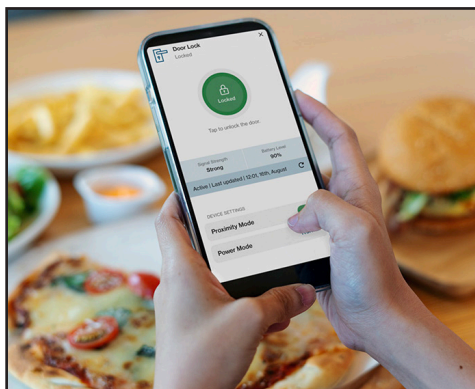
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## Winegard, Bauer Partner on RV Security



Considering the size of the investment, most RVers are concerned about the security of their unit both on the road and when tucked away between trips. Fortunately, companies are answering the call. Winegard recently announced a partnership with Bauer that brings enhanced security and convenience to RV owners: the company's RV Halo app now works with the Bauer NE Bluetooth keyless entry door latch,

*continued on page 51*

By Ben Hirsch



**N**avigating the landscape of RV dealerships can often feel like traversing uncharted territory. With myriad options and varying levels of service, the choice of dealership significantly shapes the RV ownership journey. This column kicks off a multi-part series designed to demystify RV dealerships — offering consumers a roadmap to identify the hallmarks of exceptional service and support.

At Campers Inn, we know that there is a large segment of our customer base that feel that dealers are more similar than different, and that after-sales service isn't important to most dealers. However, we'll explore and explain the nuances that set dealers apart — from sales and finance to after-sales service to engaging with the community — ensuring you're equipped to make informed decisions.

The profitability of service departments within RV dealerships presents a unique industry landscape distinct from the automotive sector, where service often drives profits. In contrast, RV dealerships frequently view their service departments as “necessary” for customer satisfaction rather than profit centers, with service being a cost center for the average dealership. This economic reality underscores the importance of local patronage — choosing to buy and service your RV locally supports the dealership's ability to provide quality after-sales support. It also is the reason that many dealerships choose to only service what they sell. While not the policy of the Campers Inn RV family of dealerships, it is a real challenge faced by our industry. Understanding this backdrop is crucial for consumers, as it affects the quality of service and the overall RV ownership experience.

### Investing in Service Certifications

A dealership's commitment to certifying its personnel is a clear indicator

of its dedication to customer satisfaction. It's crucial to assess how a dealership invests in its team's expertise, particularly in certifications from the RV Technical Institute (RVTI) and the RV Dealers Association Mike Molino Learning Center (RVDA). RVTI is the gold standard of technician training and oversees Levels I-IV technical certifications across the industry. If a dealership has a lot of certified technicians, you can assume it is investing in training. In addition, the Mike Molino Learning center is the gold standard for service and parts staff, such as service advisors, parts associates, warranty writers and other dealership personnel.

### Customer Satisfaction as a Priority

Another key differentiator is a dealership's focus on customer satisfaction. The best dealerships have initiatives such as customer surveys for all customers, including those that come in for service after the sale. The best dealers will even compensate their management team and tie incentives directly to customer satisfaction. While most dealerships will ask for feedback on the sales process, many don't desire the feedback to the service process. However, dealerships that seek this information recognize it as invaluable feedback, helping to refine service practices. If your local dealer isn't interested in this feedback, it is a warning flag.

### Resources and Accountability in Fixed Operations

The allocation of resources to service and parts departments is a testament to a dealership's commitment to excellence. Resources can be in the form of buildings, mobile service vehicles, and personnel. Probably the most important, however, is investing in a depth of talent in service personnel. While buildings and fixed infrastructure are nice, RVs are fixed by people — preferably, knowledgeable ones. Having trainers on staff, directors ensuring processes are completed and key support staff to enforce standards all increase the customer experience. Effective resource management, standardized training and accountability measures are key factors distinguishing the best dealerships.

This is a harder measure to determine, but is something to ask about when shopping a dealer — the ones that put resources into their service and parts departments will be proud to brag about those investments.

### Online Reputation

Evaluating a dealership's online reputation — particularly through unbiased platforms like Google reviews — offers insight into its reliability and customer service quality. While dealerships, like all businesses, ebb and flow with personnel and turnover, looking at how it is trending through reviews is a good way to identify the quality of a dealership's service over time. However, it's important to note that online reviews can be manipulated both positively and negatively, and as such should not be the only source of information when deciding where to service your RV. That said, this is a good indicator for potential buyers to understand a dealership's service standards.

The decision to where to purchase and then service your RV is exceptionally important. Local service is often more than a convenience — it's a crucial support for quality after-sales care. At Campers Inn RV, we practice what we preach in all of the above aspects. Service is a part of who we are and why our company was started by my grandparents. As we continue this series, we'll delve deeper into what makes a dealership stand out in sales, community involvement and overall customer experience. Understanding these aspects will empower you to make informed decisions — ensuring a fulfilling RV ownership journey.

*Ben Hirsch is the COO of Campers Inn RV, the nation's largest family owned-and-operated RV dealer group with more than 35 stores across the country. Ben joined the family business in 2013 and helped the company acquire or develop 30+ locations in eight years. He previously served in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of Captain, and was a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot. Ben is a graduate of West Point and holds an MBA from the Wharton Business School.*



A Jayco Pinnacle fifth wheel with Overlander EXT solar package.

## Making the Most of RV Solar Power

To say that boondocking — camping off-grid — is popular today would be an understatement, and for increasing numbers of RV enthusiasts looking for experiences well away from traditional campgrounds, there's no better way to maintain essential RV power while away from hookups than with a good self-contained power system. That said, the freedom made possible by solar power is only as good as your panel(s) and battery bank, and at Jayco we now offer every new model with solar as either standard or optional equipment.

With four packages to choose from, we've created systems to meet the power requirement levels of virtually all RVers looking for their boondocking escape. Carrying our recognizable Overlander monicker, our packages stand against competitors with safety features like DC-to-DC power chargers, solar controllers and much more. These are standards that you won't find anywhere else — and in addition to our

safety feature, you can pair your setup with a generator.

Campers can now add one of our Overlander Packages to almost any of Jayco's towable products — from luxury fifth wheels to single-axle travel trailers, there is now a solar package option for your Jayco trailer. It's time for you to take charge of your next adventure.

Here's a quick look at each package. For more information visit [jayco.com/solar/](https://www.jayco.com/solar/).

### Overlander EXT

Gear up for the ultimate off-the-grid RV setup with our Overlander EXT package. Order your luxury fifth wheel fully loaded with six 200-watt solar panels paired with six self-heated 100AH lithium batteries. With

the added features of soft start power saver A/C in the living room and 12-volt 13,500-Btu bedroom A/C, you will be sure to enjoy hours of energy without the worries of running out of power. Other system components include a 100-amp MPPT solar controller, 3,000-watt split-phase inverter charger, DC-to-DC power charger, battery monitor and energy management system (EMS).

Available on: 2024 North Point, Pinnacle & Seismic Luxury Series

### Overlander 4

With features like the DC-to-DC power charger, the Overlander 4 Solar Package allows you to have a charge once you arrive at your destination without worrying about your batteries overheating. With our solar package features, you can now charge while hooked up, manage and regulate energy going into your batteries with the added benefit of being able to add a generator to your self-sustaining setup. The package includes four 200-watt solar panels, two 100AH lithium self-heated batteries, 60-amp MPPT solar controller, 3,000-watt split-phase inverter charger, DC-to-DC power converter, soft start power saver bedroom and living room 15,000-Btu A/C with heat pump (one system on Eagle products), battery monitor and EMS.



2024 Jayco Eagle FW

continued on page 51

## Solar Tax Credit

Did you know that the U.S. Government has extended the Residential Renewable Energy Tax Credit to the end of 2034? If you own an RV you could qualify for the credit, giving you back up to 30% of the cost of a complete solar package or most additions to your current system that have been made in the past five

years. A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of income tax you would otherwise owe. There are no income limits on the solar tax credit, so all individual taxpayers are eligible to claim the credit on qualifying solar energy equipment investments within the United States.

To learn more visit: [energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-federal-tax-credit-solar-photovoltaics](https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-federal-tax-credit-solar-photovoltaics).

*Note: This is for informational purposes only and should not be relied on as a source for tax, legal or accounting advice. The IRS has additional resources to help determine eligibility. Always consult your tax or legal professional and refer to your RV's owner's manual and warranty for further information.*

# SHINE BRIGHTER

*Experience more with Jayco RV*



## #1 Selling Travel Trailer for 15 Years

The Jay Flight is the perfect family camper and one of the most popular offerings in our lineup. Part of its appeal is its consistent performance and solid construction. Jay Flight uses plywood construction for the floor, roof, bed and bunk bases, an integrated A-frame, dark-tinted windows for privacy and UV protection, Goodyear® tires and linoleum throughout – including slide room floors.

### FEATURES

- Goodyear® tires
- Plywood construction: Floor, Roof, Bed and Bunk Base
- Integrated A-frame on all models
- Dark tinted windows for privacy UV protection
- Linoleum throughout - including slide floors



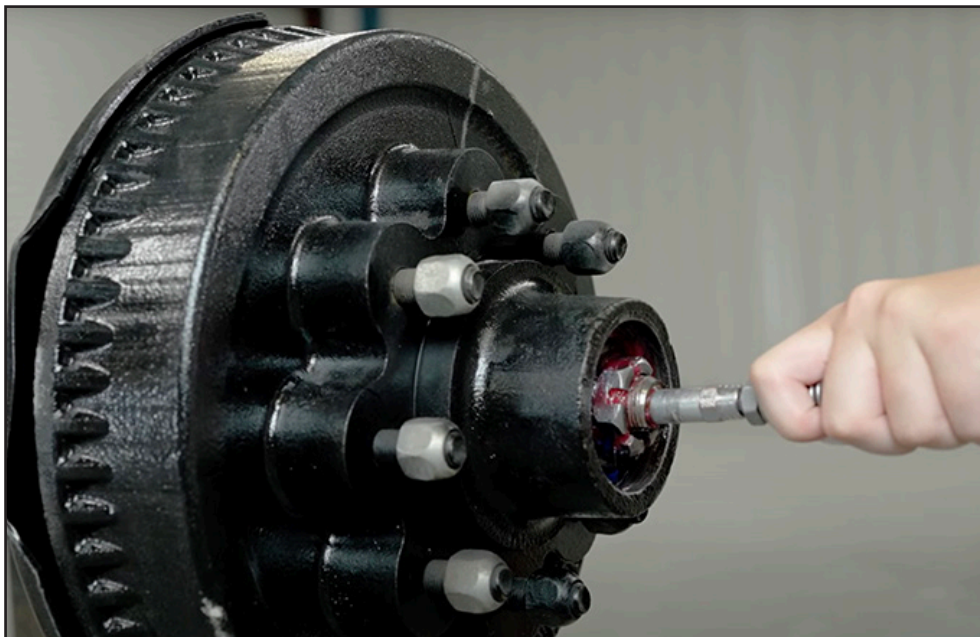
THE JAYCO  
DIFFERENCE

**Pre-Delivery  
Inspection**



At Jayco we pride ourselves in having a robust and thorough PDI process. Every unit that comes off of the manufacturing lines is sent to our PDI facility for a detailed inspection. A team of selected professionals inspects over 100 points of the interior and exterior and all functions including lights, TV, radio, slides and awnings. We don't stop there. At the last point of inspection, all tanks are filled to ensure they function properly. Pre-delivery inspections are just another Jayco Difference that helps give our consumers peace of mind while on the road and at camp.

## Zerk Lube Fitting Recall



Hey Bill, I noticed that my 2022 Grand Design fifth wheel had a recall on the axles. I wasn't sure what they were talking about and how critical it is to have it done, because it's not easy for me to get my trailer to a Grand Design dealer. We live in our fifth wheel full time and, of course, they want us to leave it, which creates a problem finding a place to live. We're not sure what to do. What do you suggest?

—John Wilson

John, you're in luck. I have a 2023 Grand Design fifth wheel under the same recall (NHTSA 23V-455) and it involves a problem with the Curt axle Zerk fittings. Apparently, these grease fittings were installed at the end of the axle spindles and one or more of them came loose and migrated into the bearings, which created an imminent failure. The dealer will remove the wheels/tires

and the dust cover to the spindle nut and check if the grease fittings are in place. If they loosened, the mechanic will replace it/them or simply tighten any fitting if it's still intact, which is what I did. All four on my spindles were fairly snug, but I did give them another turn or two just to make absolutely certain that they were tight. While a Grand Design dealer is perfectly willing to check the fittings and make the repairs as required, you can do the same thing yourself or pay someone to inspect and fix the fittings where you live or are storing the fifth wheel. This will eliminate travel and wait time, and likely be less expensive than travel and housing costs. You can also remove the Zerk fittings and screw in plugs with an 1/8-inch pipe thread.

If you search the Internet for Grand Design recalls, you'll find any that are out there and be able to stay on top of any issues and the necessary fixes.

## Clickety Clack

I have a 2006 Fleetwood motorhome and when hooked up to electric at the pedestal, there was a clacking noise that continued for a long time. It would finally stop but soon started up again; the intervals between clacking sessions became more frequent. I started looking around and I found a box where the 50-amp power cord runs through the side of the box — and on the lid it read "transfer switch." There are other electrical wires coming out of the side of the

box as well. I can see that the lid comes off the box, but I was afraid to remove it and start messing around with that electricity. Have you run across this before any suggestions?

—Robert Huntington

Robert, I am very familiar with the transfer switch. It's best to leave any inspections and testing to the pros, since you shouldn't mess with electricity unless you're experienced. High amperage can run through the relays inside of

the transfer switch, which is designed to automatically transfer 120-volt AC power from shore power to the generator without having to manually plug the power cord into a junction box that's usually mounted near the generator.

Over time, high amperage flow can start to deteriorate the contact points or, if the wires didn't get securely tightened and installed properly, they can literally burn the set screw and block. If this happens the connection is bad and the transfer switch will operate erratically. At this point, it's time to replace the transfer switch. Hopefully, you can find an exact replacement, but nevertheless, an RV mechanic should be able to make the swap easily and you'll be back in business.

## Refrigerator Swap



My four-door Norcold refrigerator in my 2010 fifth wheel burned out and I am contemplating whether I should put in a 120-volt DC refrigerator or install the newer model Norcold LP-gas/electric refrigerator. I live in the RV full time so, of course, the refrigerator never shuts off, and it would be ideal if I could put in a bigger refrigerator for more food storage. What's your take on my situation?

—Susan Richardson

Susan, most people will agree that there's never too much space in a refrigerator, especially in the freezer compartment. The problem that you're going to run into is the size of the

refrigerator opening where your original unit is mounted. When trying to change from one type or model refrigerator to another you'll have to spend some time measuring the available space, making plans for modifications, if necessary, and finding a plan for securing the refrigerator for travel.

A residential style refrigerator, in many cases, will give you more storage capacity and seems to be popular among full timers. It's important that the model you choose can take the bouncing and bumps on the road, and finding a way to mount it can be challenging. Also, you'll need an inverter to run it while traveling and when camping without hookups. Plan on installing good batteries and back it up with a solar system, if you spend time boondocking, which also applies to operating a 12-volt DC refrigerator without hookups.

Probably the most versatile refrigerator is one that runs on 12-volt DC power, which is convenient while on the road. They have a compressor and a frost-free freezer just like a residential model and are easier on the power bills versus operating an LP-gas/electric RV refrigerator when electric is metered or while running on LP-gas.

Another option is to replace the cooling unit in your existing Norcold refrigerator with one that operates on 12-volt DC power. This may not be cost-effective, considering the age of your existing refrigerator and if you spend most of your time in RV parks with hookups.

## Breathe Easy



A typical 300-watt pure sine wave inverter.

I rely on a CPAP machine to sleep at night and until now we have not been off the grid without hookups. We plan on camping on the beach with friends and will not have hookups. We do not have a generator in our fifth wheel trailer, nor do we have an inverter and a solar panel to recharge the batteries, largely because up until now we didn't have to deal with this. Perhaps you could give us a little advice for keeping the machine going.

—Paul Johnson

It just so happens that my girlfriend uses a CPAP machine, so I am familiar with the process. You didn't mention the CPAP model, but I assume it has a dehumidifier and heated hose, which seems to be the best way to go for most patients. My first suggestion is to get a hose that is not heated and turn off the dehumidifier function since they use quite a bit more power.

You will need either a battery (or pack) that can be recharged with a solar panel or generator and consider — since you don't boondock often — using a portable inverter that can be plugged into a nearby 12-volt DC outlet. You should be fine with a pure-sine-wave, 300-watt inverter. If you don't have a nearby 12-volt DC outlet, one can usually be installed. Of course, you can run directly off a generator, but who wants to listen to it all night—and burn gasoline or propane.

You can get by with one Group 31 AGM battery, like the one offered by Odyssey for a few days, but you'll need a method for recharging. That's where solar shines. Another option is to use a self-contained power station to run the CPAP machine, and also consider carrying a small generator for backup just in case you find yourself with a flat battery.

## Awning Help

I have a 2018 motorhome with the Carefree Travel'R awning. When I extend the awning, it only goes out a little way and then shuts off. When I let off on the switch for a few seconds and then push it again, the awning goes out a little farther but it keeps stopping. It does retract most of the time, but it stops sometimes while retracting. Everything seems to be in good shape, and I don't understand what's making it stop every 8 to 10 inches. I would prefer not to replace the whole awning at this point since it's expensive. Any idea what's causing the problem?

—Jason Padilla

Jason, this is a typical problem with an older awning that uses gas struts to help extend and retract the awning. I'm assuming that you've checked to make sure there's at least 11 volts DC without a load at the switch; low voltage can create the stopping problem. If the voltage is too low, it can be repaired by replacing the wire that might not be heavy enough, but it can be tricky to route new wire to the motor. Also, use your multimeter to check for bad con-

nections.

If you confirmed the voltage, look carefully at the hardware and make sure it's not bent. Check the articulating hardware and the upright columns; if it doesn't close all the way, a component may be bent or out of alignment. The individual hardware pieces for some older awnings may not be available. If that's the case, you would have to purchase an entire hardware kit, if you determine that one of the components is bent. You might be able to find just one side of the hardware online from an Ebay or other seller, but don't count on it.

If the awning jumps a little bit as it goes out, the gas struts may be sticking or defective. The gas struts may also be weak; replacements should be available, but they are extremely difficult to change and very dangerous if you don't know what you're doing. That's because they are filled with high-pressure nitrogen and can still be under load. If not done correctly, they can cause serious injury. Always replace both at the same time.

### Bill Gehr



Bill started his 50-year career in the RV industry when he went to work for an Airstream dealership. After the gas shortages in the 1970s, Bill decided to start his own business and opened up Bill's RV Service in Ventura, California. After several years in business, he met Bob Livingston, and together they worked on hundreds of technical editorial projects at his shop while becoming great friends. Bill eventually joined Bob on the TV show "RVtoday," filming a number of hands-on projects. After retiring, Bill headed out full-time in his fifth wheel and toured 39 states while writing technical articles for *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome* magazines. He now is Technical Director for *RV Enthusiast*. RVE

Are you stymied by a technical problem with your RV? Write to RV Enthusiast Technical Director Bill Gehr at [bgehr@rvemediagroup.com](mailto:bgehr@rvemediagroup.com). Bill will answer inquiries as space permits. RVE

# Tanks a Lot



*The RV water heater is something we sometimes take for granted. By performing basic maintenance before and after each travel season, you can ensure that it will work when you need it.*

By Chris Hemer / Photos by Chris Hemer

It's hard to imagine life on the road without a water heater. From washing hands to bathing and doing dishes, it is one of the key appliances that makes life in an RV comfortable.

Until it doesn't work.

RV tank-type storage hot water systems are not complicated devices, and in fact are much like the units found in most residences, albeit smaller.

The fact that they have not changed

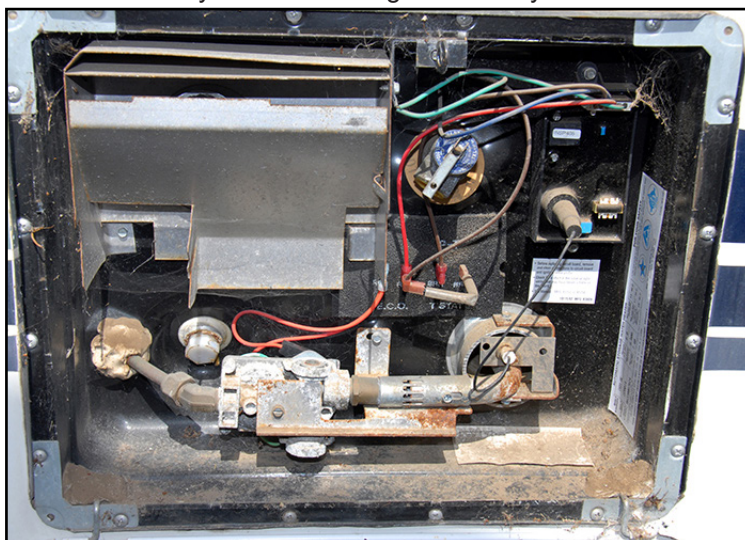
much through the years is testament to their reliability; the bulk of RVs on the market today still use six or 10-gallon units manufactured by either Atwood or Suburban, and they can last for years if they're properly maintained. However, if they're stored for months outside without being maintained or were not properly drained before the end of the season, you could be repaid this spring by a water heater that won't fire — or produces water that smells like rotten eggs.

The good news is, these problems are easy to repair yourself, even if you're new to RVing.

The main difference between Atwood and Suburban water heaters has to do with the tank design: Atwood uses an aluminum-clad tank that does not require an anode rod, while

Suburban models are porcelain-lined steel and *do* use an anode rod. Atwood claims that the aluminum tank lining acts as the anode and the metals in the water serve as the cathode, so an anode rod isn't required. Suburban uses an anode rod to draw the harmful electrolytic process away from the water heater tank lining, focusing corrosion on the anode rod and sparing the tank walls. Both systems work — it's just a difference of engineering philosophies.

Both types should be drained and flushed at the end of every season. If you live in an area where winter temperatures drop below freezing, a full water heater tank can rupture — and we don't need to tell you that will require a trip to the RV repair shop and a fistful of hundred-dollar bills. But even if you live in a warmer climate and put your rig away at the end of the travel season, you should still drain the tank; otherwise, the stagnant water can lead to unpleasant odor. Typical city water contains naturally occurring sulfate, which in small amounts poses no risk to human health. However, certain bacteria feed off the sulfates in water, reducing them to hydrogen sulfide — and that's where you get that rotten



*If your RV has been in storage for a season or more, this is likely what you'll find when you remove the cover — dirt, dust and spider webs.*

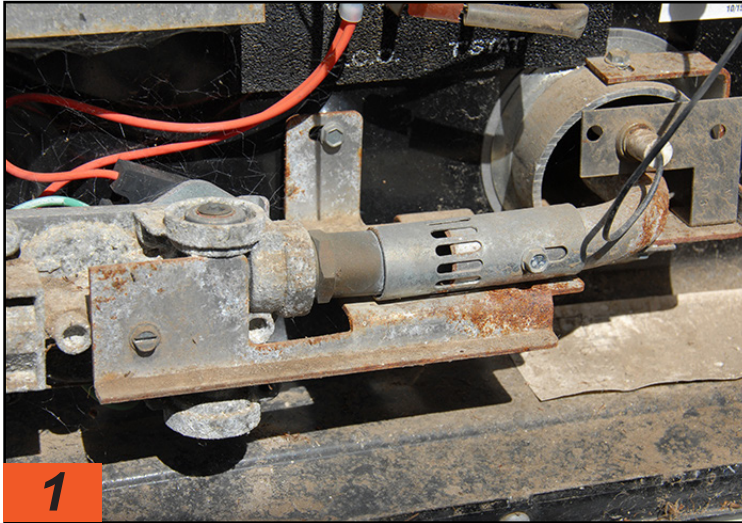
egg smell. Another possible cause is a corroded anode rod, mentioned earlier. That's why it's so important to completely drain and flush the water heater tank at the beginning and end of each travel season.

Regardless of brand or how the RV is stored, another common problem is a water heater that just won't fire; you turn it on and hear that familiar, "tick, tick, tick" but nothing happens. This

could be because the burner tube is blocked by debris (like a bug's home), the igniter electrode is oxidized and no longer makes good contact with the ground, or there is insufficient power and/or gas to the appliance. It's pretty simple stuff — it takes both fuel and spark to make a fire.

Fortunately, solving these common problems is easy in most instances. To see how it's done, we visited C&S RV

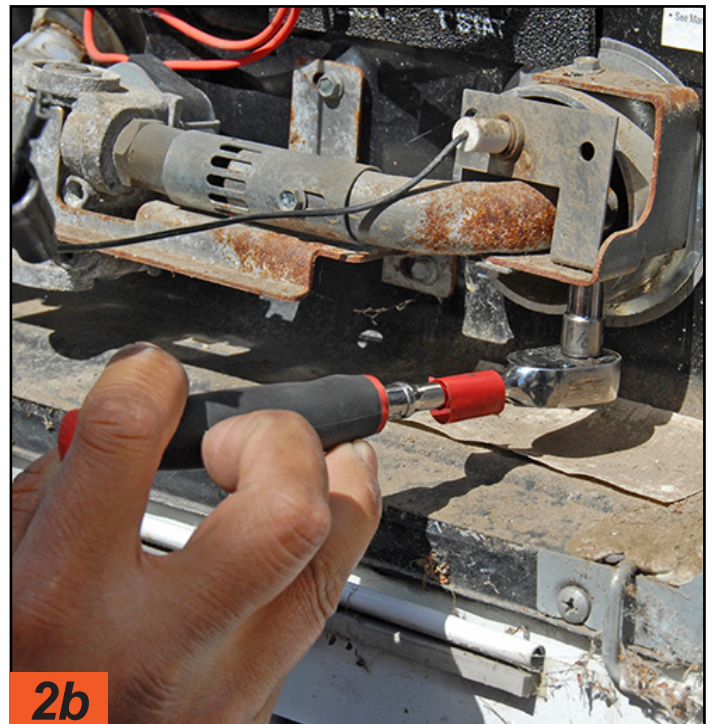
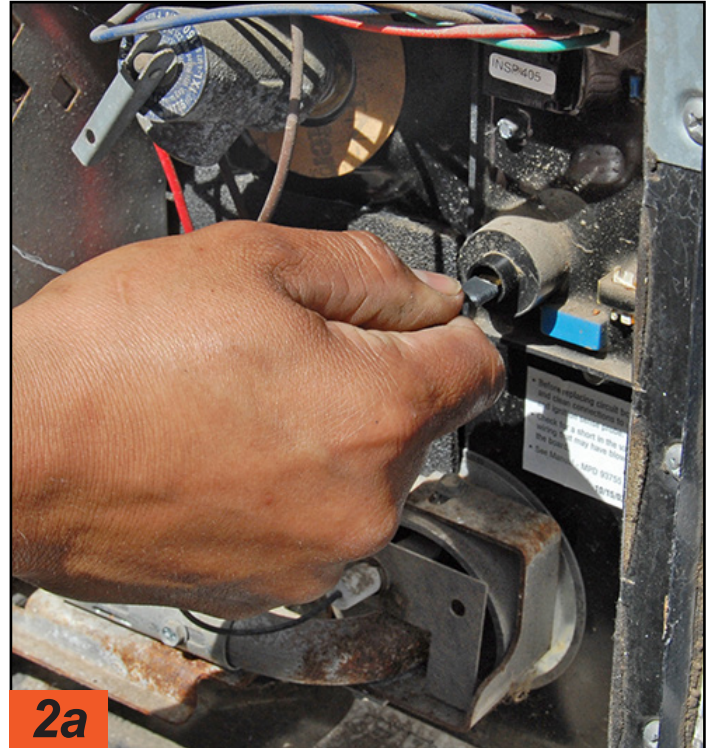
Service Center in Oxnard, California (805-982-9900) and watched as its technicians performed routine pre-season maintenance on a 6-gallon Atwood and a 10-gallon Suburban. With proper maintenance and basic knowledge of RV water heater function, you can ensure your water heater will work properly when you need it.



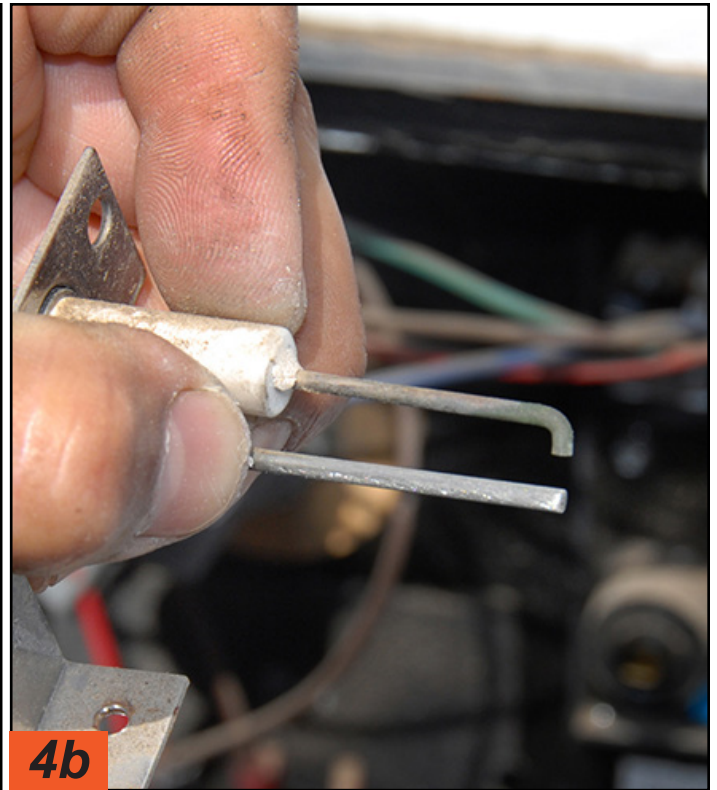
While dirt and other debris in the water heater enclosure aren't attractive, they don't necessarily do any harm. However, spiders and other critters love to build their homes in the burner tube (they are attracted to the smell of propane for some reason), and that can reduce or obstruct the flow of LP-gas to the burner. If you have access to compressed air, blow out the burner tube to clear any spider webs or other debris (after removing the ignitor assembly, as seen in the following photos). If compressed air isn't available, you can go with canned compressed air (used for cleaning electronics like computer keyboards) or remove the slotted burner tube cover (held in place with one screw) and carefully run a flexible brush through the burner tube. Once finished, re-install the ignitor assembly and plug it back in.



With the screw removed, the ignitor bracket assembly can be lifted out of the way.



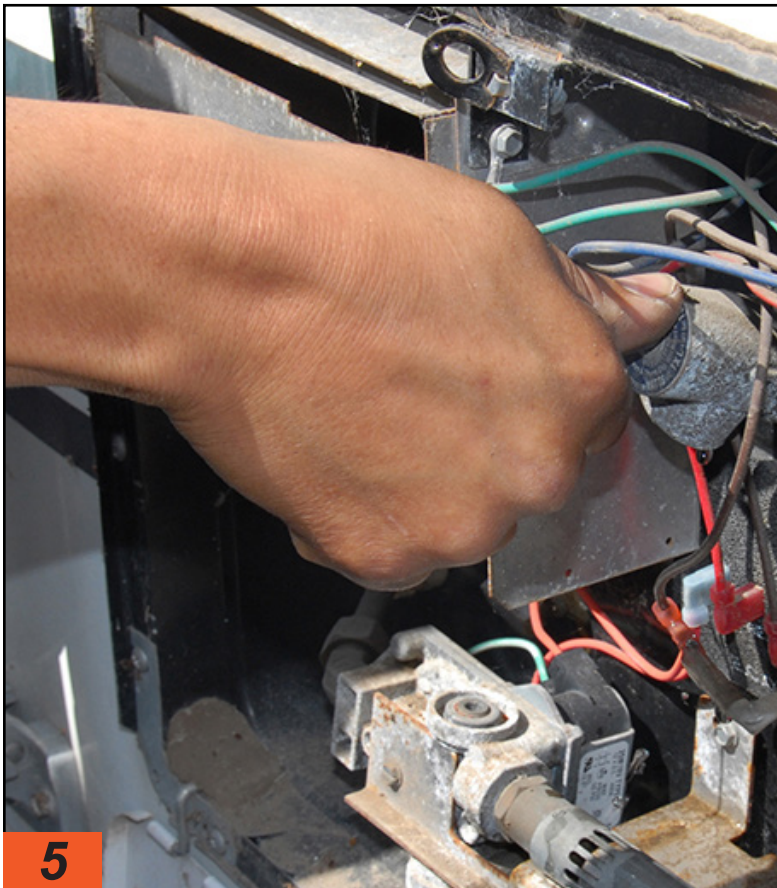
Another reason a water heater may not fire can be traced to an oxidized igniter/ground. On this Atwood water heater, the unit igniter is unplugged, then the single screw that holds the bracket in place is removed.



**4a**

**4b**

Use a piece of sandpaper (120 grit will do) or emery cloth to clean the igniter electrode and ground wires. Make sure to hold the igniter assembly by the two wires as shown, not by the white porcelain, as this can crack if you're not careful. For the purpose of comparison, we cleaned just the bottom ground wire; compare it to the electrode, which has a greenish brown appearance. It's still in good shape, but further oxidation could cause future problems.



**5**

**6**

After blowing out the burner tube, check the emergency relief valve by pulling up on the handle. Water from the tank should start to trickle out of the valve if it is working properly. If the valve is sticky or won't move, it must be removed with a pipe wrench and replaced.

Here is a good example of a frozen emergency relief valve. Note the calcium deposits and rust that eventually prevented the valve from functioning.



**7a** The water heater should be drained at the end of every season. Atwood water heaters use a plastic plug that is easily accessed using a ratchet, extension and appropriate socket. This plastic drain plug from an Atwood unit is several years old — note the silt residue caused by water tank corrosion and infrequent maintenance.



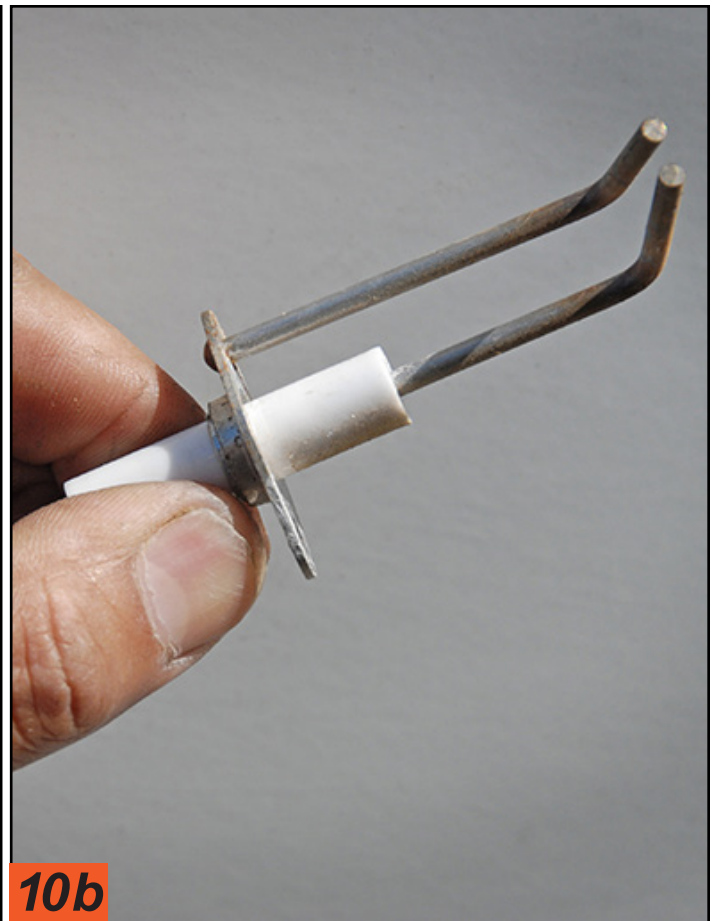
**8** All of the magnesium on this anode rod from a Suburban tank has been eaten away by corrosion, leaving only the metal core. Obviously, you shouldn't wait this long to replace the anode rod; it should be checked twice a season for signs of corrosion and replaced when it has lost 50-75% of its material. Be sure to apply anti-seize or Teflon tape when replacing the anode in the water heater.



**9** Although it looks different, servicing a Suburban water heater is a similar process. First, unplug the electrode wire, as shown.



10a



10b

The electrode assembly is secured with one screw. The Suburban electrode assembly is cleaned in the same manner as the Atwood. A few passes with a piece of sandpaper and it will be good as new.



11

Checking the pressure/temperature relief valve involves operating the valve lever and allowing water to flush the valve. A leaky valve may need replacement. Be sure to get an exact replacement. The biggest difference between the Atwood and the Suburban is that the Suburban comes with an anode rod drain plug from the factory. [The plastic plug that Atwood uses](#) is intentional as a safety and anti-corrosion concern; do not replace with a metal plug.



12

The Camco Water Heater Tank Rinsers (about \$14 on Amazon) is an inexpensive and easy way to mitigate a build-up of harmful sediments that can accumulate below the drain plug line. After opening the pressure relief valve on the water heater, remove the drain plug and attach the tank rinsers to a garden hose. The tank-rinsers wand is then directed into the tank to remove any deposits, which are flushed around the wand. **RVE**

# ***Get Rid of That Sagging Rear End***



*Hitching up a big fifth wheel with plenty of pin weight can make it difficult to keep the truck on a level plane without overload or air springs. RoadActive's clever-but-simple suspension add-on has a profound effect on handling while towing — without the need for additional leaf-spring support.*

By Bill Gehr / Photos by author

**T**ow vehicle suspensions play a vital role in ride quality, safety and the ability to handle hitch and overall weight imposed by a trailer or fifth wheel. Owners who tow with a pickup truck must pay attention to axle ratings, gross vehicle and combination weight ratings and towing capacity. Typically, trucks have enough payload to handle most trailers on the market,

but in many cases, the springs don't have enough "backbone" to keep the truck on a level stance under heavy — or maximum — loading, like towing a big fifth wheel.

That can be dangerous. Too much rear-end sag can impact front-axle loading, headlight aiming and handling — to the point where safety can be compromised. Unfortunately, too many

owners end up with a truck that doesn't meet expectations when it comes to towing. A case in point: a new RV owner who purchased this 2022 F-350 long-bed truck to tow a 38-foot fifth wheel. The rather large fifth wheel had 3,800 pounds of pin weight and the rear axle payload was rated at 5,600 pounds. Although Ford claimed the truck could handle the 5,600 pounds, the rear end



The RoadActive Suspension kit comes pre-assembled for a simple installation. Included are the two spring assemblies, bolts, spacers and gap discs. Kits are available for trucks without overload leaf springs.

still sagged when the fifth wheel was hitched — which in turn forced a nose down attitude for the trailer.

There are quite a few options to help a sagging suspension on the market, and I would venture to say that I have tested all of them, except the RoadActive Suspension (RAS) that was installed for this project. The RAS ([active-suspension.com](http://active-suspension.com)) has a unique design in which its simplicity underscores the effectiveness of the system. The big takeaway is its adjustability in providing very little to maximum support — plus, it is incredibly easy to install on most model pickup trucks without overload springs. If your truck has overloads (on this project truck it was an option and not ordered) the extra springs can be removed and a spacer installed to make the RAS work.

According to the manufacturer, the RAS reduces bounce and wheel hop when towing or hauling, and rear-end bounce was unmistakable on the project truck. The RAS is also designed to prevent body roll from side to side and improve axle wrap when heavy loads are placed on the truck. Also, there was no need to deal with air springs, which don't prevent side-to-side sway. The RAS suspension provides a variable-rate tension coil that applies proportionate force as the weight is applied. This unique design, when ad-

justed properly, does not affect the ride of the truck while it's empty. If weight changes, the capacity can be adjusted with common wrenches. No drilling or welding is required as the kit comes fully assembled — and the company provides a 30-day money-back guarantee.

### The Installation

Figure on spending a couple hours, at most, to install the parts. The process starts by setting chocks on both front tires, then the rear end is jacked up to remove the wheels — always use jack stands. The RAS kit comes fully assembled right out of the box, so it's just a matter of placing the parts on the existing springs and bolting them down. You'll first place the RAS eye-bracket hook over the leaf spring rear wrap eye and proceed with

an adjustment of the gold threaded rod inside the tension spring. The gold threaded rod is set at approximately 5 to 6 inches for shipping purposes and will need to be lengthened to accommodate positioning of the round spacer that will be placed in front of the spring-pack U-bolts to hold the RAS extension brackets in place.

The adjustments are made by turning the coil spring with one hand while holding the threaded rod with the other. This action will screw the threaded rod out of the spring by a few inches, making the overall unit longer. Next, the extension brackets have five holes on each side, which can accommodate the 12mm bolt, spacer and lock nut at different positions depending on how it lays on the springs. At this point, the lock nut is only hand tightened to establish the permanent mounting position.

Make sure that the bolt and the spacer are located directly under the leaf spring pack, which is very important. The instructions do not provide a torque value for the bolt and spacer, but we



Before installing the hardware, measurements were taken at the rear wheel wells to establish heights from the ground before and after hitching up the fifth wheel — note the painter's tape and marking for repeatability and accuracy. After the installation, the rear end gained  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height with the fifth wheel hitched to the truck.



**2**

*The rear axle must be raised off the ground, supported by jack stands and the wheels removed. This provides clear access to the rear springs for installation of the RAS components.*



**3**

*While there are few parts to this system, it's best to spread them out in front of each rear wheel for installation. The owner of this 2022 Ford F-250 ordered the truck without factory overload springs, making it suitable for the RAS modification.*

tightened the bolt to 75 ft.-lb.

The next step was to adjust the coil spring to the correct tension. Before doing this, we made sure that the eye bracket was in the center of the rear leaf-spring hanger. Two nuts that are on the threaded rod were adjusted using a 14mm ratcheting wrench and a standard 24mm wrench. These two nuts were snugged together when the kit was assembled from the factory and were adjusted by holding the threaded rod stationary and turning the coil spring until the gap between the coils started to open.

The kit comes with a white and a black disc that can be placed between the coils to change loading. Setting the gap with the white disc (1mm thick) will add 25% more suspension strength to the coils; for 40% more strength, you'll need to use the black disc (2mm thick). If these discs are lost, you can do the same thing with a dime or a nickel to set the gap. Once the gap is set, the lock nut is tightened against the coil spring and the second nut is tightened against the first one to ensure it won't back out when on the road.

That's it; job completed, and the rear wheels can be put back on and the lug nuts tightened to factory specification.

Since this was the first RAS we installed, it took about two hours to get it right, but the install is straightforward. The kits run between \$539 and \$589 and are backed by a 5-year warranty.

### Does It Work?

A resounding "Yes!". Overall, the truck handles much better — and after the RAS components were installed, the suspension bounce and annoying porpoising were virtually eliminated. And there was a noticeable, 3 3/4-inch improvement in rear-end sag when the fifth wheel was hitched. Nothing changed when the truck was running solo because the RAS gear remains idle until loaded.

You will likely want to "fine tune" the spring tension after a few miles of towing, which only takes a few minutes. For this project, the RAS system has worked flawlessly during more than 20,000 miles of fifth-wheel towing. The owner of the truck was happy with his decision to pass on the overload springs, which were more than compensated for with the installation of the RAS hardware.



4

The first step was to place the RAS eye-bracket hook over the leaf spring rear wrap eye. Installation of the RAS on the Ford was simple, but some trucks might require disassembly of the spring pack.



5

Once the hook was positioned over the spring wrap eye, the extension arms were pre-installed for proper fit. A bolt and spacer hold the arms in place under the leaf springs; there are five holes in each arm for different bolt/spacer placement.



6

Tightening the coil spring is accomplished with the use of ratcheting wrench on the end with the threaded bolt and standard wrench on the end of the coil.



7a

7b

Setting the coil spring tension was done by adjusting the gap using the white disc (1mm thick) that added 25% more suspension strength to the coils. If you set the tension using the black disc (2mm) you'll up the spring tension by 40%. If you happen to lose these discs, a dime or nickel can substitute for setting the gap.



8

The simplicity of the install and the net results were impressive. Plan on making fine adjustments after towing a few times; this can be done without removing the rear wheels. In the end, the truck exhibited much better handling — and the rear-end sag while towing was virtually eliminated. The system remains at idle when the rear axle is not loaded, so there is no degradation of the solo ride. **RVE**

# RV Manufacturers 'Rediscover' Entry-Level Towables



David, Rose and Gabriel Blea enjoy an outing in Ember RV's new E-Series 25RUD travel trailer.

*OEMs respond to a tough economic environment with a host of new travel trailers and even fifth wheels to appeal to new RV enthusiasts.*

By Bruce Hampson

Anyone who has gone shopping for a car, bought groceries or eaten at a restaurant in the past few years has come to grips with a runup in costs not seen stateside in 40 years.

That holds true for RVs, as well.

Building units to meet specific price points is a juggling act for RV manufacturers in the best of times — and no one would characterize the past few seasons in quite those terms. Granted, the pandemic-fueled resurgence in the RV lifestyle pushed shipments and registrations to record highs, but even then, shortages of parts and appliances created by closed manufacturing facilities overseas — coupled with huge jumps in shipping charges — began to impact RV prices.

And then, of course, record consumer-price inflation reared its ugly head,

followed by a near tripling of interest rates as the federal government worked to corral these rising costs. None of

these factors could be controlled by the RV industry, but their after-effects are on display on dealer lots. Depending



Ember RV's patent-pending Embertrack "do it yourself" repositionable bunk/storage system allows an owner to reconfigure the area to suit different lifestyle requirements.



*Comfortable interior of Ember RV's E-Series 26ETS, a 31-foot, 7-inch rear bunk/forward bedroom suite model featuring Embertrack.*

upon who you talk to, the total cost to consumers of towable RVs, for example, have increased in price anywhere from 25% to 40% or more just since 2020, forcing manufacturers to re-evaluate what they offered — or didn't offer — especially in the price sensitive entry-level arena.

"We're all dealing with the same economic factors" which have impacted prices, said Ashley Bontrager, CEO of Bristol, Ind.-based Ember RV. And, while the travel trailer manufacturer has weathered economic headwinds before — founded in August 2021 at the tail end of the pandemic, Ember RV has never really enjoyed a time when producing and selling its lines of travel trailers hasn't been impacted at least in part by factors beyond its control — the builder is, like a growing number of towable manufacturers, confronting today's tough environment head-on.

"We faced a few less challenges when we started because of how we were sourcing and what we were sourcing," said Bontrager. "A lot of the components we used to design our first Overland series RVs weren't broadly used. The independent suspension we co-designed with CURT was brand new to the market, we imported windows from Europe which weren't widely used stateside, we went to more of a composite build because there was such a struggle getting luan to the states. We got really creative."

That said, the company has had to

deal with rising costs associated with producing its Overland Series and Touring Edition travel trailers. Like certain other towable manufacturers *RV Enthusiast* contacted, Ember's response to higher tariffs was the establishment of an entirely new line designed to appeal to more price-conscious buyers. Introduced in February, its new E-Series — the "E" stands for having the "essentials" needed for comfortable camping — is Ember RV's first foray into a lower-priced line.

"We've always had a lot of interest in the Ember brand, but one of the things

we've heard from consumers was 'we love your product, but for us it's going to be a 'someday' RV" due to our price points," said Bontrager. "So, last year I challenged our team to come out with a product that doesn't skip on the important things Ember has become known for, but delivering it at a lower price point."

Currently available in five single-slideout floorplans, the E Series baselines beginning at \$41,781 — more than \$14,000 less than the company's lowest-priced Overland unit.

"We did have to make some concessions during design," Bontrager pointed out. "For example, our E-Series doesn't feature our caravan-style windows due to their higher cost and has more wood and less composite materials in its structure. We also went with a leaf-spring suspension with 15-inch Goodyear tires versus the CURT IS suspension and 16-inch Goodyears — but generally speaking, when someone looks inside an E-Series, when they touch it, they don't notice some of these things because we delivered on the same level of fit and finish that our products have become known for."

Neither are we talking about shrinking the unit's footprint to reduce its cost. The E-Series is available in five single-slideout, tandem-axle floorplans from 27 feet, 1 inch to 31 feet, 7 inches and dry weight of 5,155 to 6,120 pounds. All feature 82-inch ceiling heights and Ember RV's "Smart RV" system to control the slideout room,



*Ember RV's new E-series is available in five floorplans, from 27 feet, 1 inch to 31 feet, 7 inches and dry weights of 5,155 to 6,120 pounds.*

awning and lighting. Among them:

•22ETS: A 27-foot, 1-inch family travel trailer (5,395 pounds dry) with a forward queen-size bed and rear bunk system offering multiple single/double bunk configurations as well as a rear bike/kayak door and Ember RV's new Embertrack, a repositionable bunk/storage system.

•22MLQ: A 27-foot, 1-inch "couples coach" with front sleeping and mid-unit living quarters, this 5,155-pound (dry) trailer shares the streetside slideout with theater seating and galley appliances; the curbside dinette looks out over the campsite.

•24RLD: Built around a rear living area floorplan, this 28-foot, 7-inch, 5,580-pound (dry) trailer separates the main quarters from the front sleeping quarters with a full-width bath and is one of two E-Series units offering door access to either end of the unit.

•25RUD: The second dual-door-ac-

cess trailer, this 30-foot, 1-inch, 5,635-pound (dry) trailer is similar to the 24RLD, but features a U-shaped dinette along the rear wall; the streetside slideout is home to theater seating, a 12-volt refrigerator and pantry.

•26ETS: Another rear bunk/forward bedroom suite model featuring Embertrack, the 6,120-pound (dry), 31-foot-7-inch 26ETS is built to sleep 5-8 persons; the mid-living area coach offers both the dinette and theater seating in the streetside slideout opposite the galley.

And, while the E-Series embraces the essentials needed for camping, Bontrager noted that the new line also features "a few extras" to make them stand out, including accessories like an air fryer as well as an 18,000-Btu rooftop "Whisper Quiet" A/C unit. An optional solar package (with two 200-watt rooftop solar panels, 2,000-watt pure sine wave inverter and MPPT control-

ler) also is available, as is a wireless side/rear camera observation system.

"That particular air-conditioner is new to the market, and we love the fact that it is 18,000-Btu versus 15,000," Bontrager said. "And, since we're building "relatively" smaller units, they aren't ducted on our E-Series except for one duct in a key location like a bathroom or bedroom. The 18,000-Btu unit provides amazing air-conditioning capability — and it's extremely quiet. So it has a lot of benefits for the customer, which we really like."

Offering an air fryer is likewise new to the market.

"It's actually a convection microwave with air fryer capability, so you get all three possibilities in one appliance, which is fantastic — not only for usability, but saving space," Bontrager said.

## Lance Squire



equipped at a trim level "that is more approachable from a price standpoint."

The first Squire, the 19-foot, 2-inch SQ19, debuted at September's Elkhart RV Open House. The SQ19 floorplan is a copy of the company's single-slideout Model 1985 travel trailer, though it comes in substantially lighter (4,380 pounds dry, compared to 4,950). The weight reduction,

**Lance Camper Manufacturing Corp.** is another OEM opting to explore a lower price point for the first time. The Lancaster, Calif.-based builder recently debuted its Squire, a brand that harkens back to the company's beginnings when it was affixed to its lowest-priced truck camper.

"Lance has always positioned itself as a premium brand in the trailer market ever since we entered it 15 years ago," said Marketing Manager Jim Waters.

"We've had conversations for a while about expanding our line, doing what we used to do with truck campers when we had the Squire (entry-level), Max (mid-level) and Legend (premium level). We decided now was the time to move forward with the product."

The Squire, said Waters, still carries Lance's construction "DNA" — from its dual Azdel walls and CNC-cut and pressure pinch-bonded floors, sidewalls and ceilings to its no-truss roof — while

noted Waters, was achieved by evaluating virtually everything inside and out — the SQ19 features different doors, windows, air-conditioner, furnace, cabinets and more. A larger model, the SQ26, is already on the drawing boards and is, said Waters, a new floorplan to Lance with a large streetside slideout housing both a dinette and theater seating. Future floorplans, he added, will be a combination of new layouts and popular floorplans from existing Lance units.

## Keystone Springdale Classic



### Meanwhile, Keystone RV Co.

ratcheted up its move into more affordable spaces by introducing a broad collection of models with friendlier price points last September that includes new models across eight of its existing product lines. And, while these product extensions encompass travel trailers such as the Hideout Sport, Springdale Classics and the Bullet Crossfire Single — a reference to a pair of single-axle trailers — it also includes two floorplans within its Arcadia fifth-wheel family (Arcadia Select) and new lighter-weight, aluminum-sidewall editions within its Raptor/Carbon and Fuzion travel trailer toy hauler brands (the Raptor Carbon Series and Fuzion Impact Edition, respectively). The latter two come in starting at less than \$39,000 and 7,000 pounds dry (11,000-pound GVWR).

The impetus for the new models, noted Jeff Rank, general manager for the Springdale and Hideout brands, was rising price points due to inflation and increases experienced during the pandemic.

“What was traditionally a \$19,900 unit all of a sudden cost \$27,900 or \$28,900. Our brands just grew beyond the typical price points driving the market at retail,” he said. “We needed to work hard to design floorplans in such a way that we could get back down into those high-volume price points for our dealers with something the customer wants to own.”

The new model extensions actually give Hideout and Springdale three unique market segments. Each starts with compact, single-axle models that, said Rank, retail

for less than \$20,000. Between them and the fully featured full-size units are the new Hideout Sport and Springdale Classic dual-axle travel trailers — limited floorplans that are “generally a bit more price-sensitive that we looked at carefully to take out weight and cost and lower the price.” Changes include a move away from solid-surface countertops, less elaborate furnishings, slightly smaller windows and, in some instances, smaller cabinetry.

“We had to look at every nut and bolt and feature and determine whether it made sense to eliminate it or massage it a bit to drive the price out,” Rank said, adding that the two new model extensions will start around \$24,000 MSRP and go to about \$32,000. Comparatively, retail prices for the full-featured counterparts begin in the high \$20,000s and top out at about \$40,000.



Keystone Fuzion Impact Edition

## Winnebago Towables



Winnebago Towables, on the other hand, never really went after the lower-priced towables market until the recent introduction of its Access (introduced last September) and M-Series (introduced last November) brands. Inflationary pressure on the price points

of existing brands “definitely played a role in us wanting to expand our product lineup and offer products that hit more ‘entry-level’ segments than we have in the past,” said Product Manager Grant Smith.

The first of these, the Access, was

in development for about three years before a normalization of steel, aluminum and wood prices convinced the Middlebury, Ind.-based subsidiary of Winnebago Industries Inc. to move to production. Available in four floorplans from 29 feet to 30 feet in length (a fifth model will be released soon), the Access carries a base MSRP starting at \$32,130; all but one have a single slideout.

Access also is built with the full slate of what Winnebago refers to as “red thread” features, including a 200-watt solar panel, 30-amp charge controller, tire pressure monitoring system, independent electric stabilizer jacks, two-inch accessory hitch receiver, 12-volt tank pad heaters and Wi-fi prep.

The gestation period for the laminated M-Series, said Smith, was substantially shorter, going from concept to finished unit in about a year’s time. Two floorplans are available, with lengths of

25 feet, 8 inches to 26 feet, 7 inches; MSRPs start at \$27,860. Both twin-axle models carry 6,000-pound GVWRs and, with the exception of the two-inch receiver and power stabilization jacks, is outfitted with the same read thread features as the Access.

“Our whole idea with the Access was that we can put an entry-level product out in the market that isn’t completely de-contented,” said Smith. “It has creature comforts that we think consumers at that price point still want, and we could still hit key price points that are attractive to them without sacrificing interior build quality, features or the overall look of the unit.”



**Winnebago M Series**

## Forest River R•Pod Classic



Among the changes to Forest River Inc.’s brands, one new look intended to attract customers is the R•Pod Classic which, said new Surveyor and R•Pod Product and Sales Manager Ben Holdread, “brought it back to what it originally was.”

and power A-frame tongue jack, along with a switch back to a leaf-spring suspension — which had the side benefit of lowering the trailer’s center of gravity. Taken together, the changes resulted in shedding substantial cost: MSRPs for the Classic, said Holdread, begin in the

Like most existing brands, the R•Pod had gotten comfortable over the years, Holdread noted, adding features and weight. Major changes to the Classic edition included eliminating the front window

\$30,000s, while a traditional R•Pod — now known as R•Pod Ultra Lite — is in the \$40,000 range.

The Classic also helps the brand return to its lightweight roots. Five floorplans are currently offered, from the 1,789-pound (dry), 15-foot-long RP-107C to the 3,447-pound, 20-foot-long RP-180C.

“We’ve never been focused completely on trying to capture that entry-level price point,” said Holdread. “And that’s not what we’re trying to do here. Obviously, we’re trying to put a more affordable, appealing product out there to that first-time buyer, but we’re focused on trying to give our customers what they want. That doesn’t always mean just taking content out of a product. It means making the product a better fit.”

## Bean Trailer — Bean Stock 2.0



While “entry-level” means different things to different RVers — and different manufacturers, for that matter — Salt Lake City, Utah-based Bean Trailers (a subsidiary of Sterling ATM) has built its entire brand around relatively low-cost, lightweight teardrop trailers. In the case of the Bean Stock 2.0, that translates into a modest \$15,999 base price. Like all Bean teardrops, the 14-foot, 1,175-pound (dry) Stock 2.0 features a one-piece molded fiberglass shell and composite honeycomb sidewalls; the standard package also includes a Timbren 2,000-pound HD suspension, Goal Zero Yeti 500 499wh and 500-watt inverter and is pre-wired for a solar generator. Available in 18 different standard body colors.

## Cruiser RV Avenir



Threading the needle between affordability and luxury is no easy task, but Cruiser RV seems to have found the “sweet spot” with its new Avenir travel trailer line. With MSRPs beginning in the low \$30,000 range, the soon-to-ex-

pand Avenir lineup is currently available in three floorplans (two bunkhouses and a couple’s coach) from 29 feet, 11 inches to 33 feet, 11 inches, with dry weights starting at just 5,034 pounds. All boast unique new “smooth corrugat-

ed” exterior sidewalls, outside refrigerators, a heated and enclosed underbelly, backup camera and a “deluxe curated kitchen” built for maximum storage and featuring an 11-cubic-foot refrigerator, high-rise pull-down faucet and apron sink and residential seamless counter-tops.



## Coachmen Remote



The ability to explore sites off the tarmac is fueling smaller travel trailer designs — and Coachmen RV’s new lineup of 7-foot-wide, lightweight (3,500- to 4,400-pound GVWR) single-axle Remote travel trailers are designed for boondocking. Built around an alumi-cage framework with dual-layer Azdel, the Remote features a number of standard upgrades for off-grid use — including 16-inch all-terrain tires with a TPMS and 200-watt solar panel — without compromising creature comforts the likes of a full bath, queen-sized bed and standard kitchenette. Four floorplans are offered, from 19 feet, 7 inches to 21 feet, 8 inches, with MSRPs starting about \$30,000.

## Little Guy Mini Max FX Eco-2



Teardrop trailers are the epitome of entry-level RVs — but even here, campers like their creature comforts. For those willing to forego a few accessories, however, the Little Guy Mini Max Eco-2 is positioned as the more economical cousin to the Mini Max without foregoing requisite lifestyle features ranging from a 13,500-Btu A/C to a 16,000-Btu furnace, 120-volt refrigerator/freezer, 2-burner gas stove and queen or dual twin sleeping configurations. Using Azdel composite paneling in the sidewalls and roof and aluminum framing, the Eco-2 weighs in starting at just 2,305 pounds.

## Grand Design Reflection 100 Series



Fifth wheels aren't usually included in a conversation about "entry level" RVs, but Grand Design created the Reflection 100 Series to provide a more affordable gateway into fifth wheel ownership. Priced beginning at \$50,987 — about \$12,000 less than a Reflection

150 Series — the 100 Series is available in three floorplans from 26 feet, 11 inches to 32 feet, 3 inches (a family friendly bunkhouse layout) with one or two slideouts and GVWRs starting at 9,995 pounds (6,930 pounds dry). A redesigned slideout allows for bathroom

access with the slide closed during travel. Standard equipment includes a 180-watt solar system, Goodyear tires, a rear hitch receiver and exceptional counter prep space.

## KZ RV Connect Mini



Features like tankless water heaters, roller shades, larger (10-cubic feet) 12-volt refrigerator, solid entry steps, aluminum wheels, front cap with windshield, outdoor griddle and 14-foot awning usually aren't part of lower-priced

towables, but KZ RV has positioned its new shorter, lighter and less-expensive Connect Mini lineup as a "luxury single-axle travel trailer." Debuting late last year with three floorplans of about 22 feet to 27 feet with dry weights of

3,850 to 4,600 pounds (the CM231BHG bunkhouse model) with MSRPs starting in the mid-\$30,000 range, the Mini "connects" RVers owning cross-over tow vehicles with higher-end camping.

## Gulf Stream Coach Trail Boss



While Gulf Stream is more well-known for its well-appointed fifth wheels, travel trailers and Class C motorhomes, the Nappanee, Ind.-based OEM has found a lot of success in lightweight trailer segments — but its Trail Boss is its first “overland”-style

line. Available in three single-axle floorplans with dry weights of 1,510 to 2,780 pounds, the Trail Boss carries a lot of amenities within its modified teardrop design. Features include a microwave oven, 5,000-Btu A/C, 19,000-Btu furnace, 2-burner cooktop, 6-gallon DSI

gas water heater (with outside shower), all-terrain tires, multiple 120-volt and USB power outlets, Bluetooth portable speaker and docking station and 20-pound propane cylinder. MSRPs start at \$15,995.

**RVE**



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# **NO** Squatters Not Welcome **NO**



*Watching the rear end of a truck dip when a fifth-wheel trailer is hitched is disconcerting — especially after shelling out big bucks for a heavy-duty tow vehicle that’s supposed to handle the weight. Sumo-Springs are maintenance-free and designed to provide a better attitude.*

By Bill Gehr / Photos by author

**T**ow vehicle suspensions take a beating and, in many cases, simply don’t have enough “oomph” to carry the load of a hitched trailer without rear-end sag. Overload springs are claimed to be “bulletproof” and are supposed to take care of the squatting, but they often don’t do the job — and can result in a harsher ride.

Air springs are another alternative (as is the adjustable coil-spring Road-Active Suspension featured elsewhere in this issue) but air springs (also called air bags) can sometimes suffer from problems related to bracket failures when overloaded — and air pressure must be maintained to prevent damag-



*We decided to run the softer SumoSprings (blue) in the front based on earlier experience with the heavier version. The kit is simplistic with very few parts needed. The blue springs for the front provide 800 pounds of capacity at 50% compression; the rear (black) are the heavier of the two, rated at 5,000 pounds at the same compression level.*



*The first step for installing the front springs was to remove the original bump stop from the frame on both sides the truck. A screwdriver was used to release the edge of the bump stop, which then came out by hand.*

ing the bags. In all cases, suspension add-ons will not increase axle weight ratings.

SuperSprings International ([super-springs.com](http://super-springs.com)) has been a major player in this arena for many years. Its SumoSprings are designed to offer suspension support without maintenance of any kind and are simple to install.

These springs are not made of rubber but use micro-cellular polyurethane “blocks” to decrease rear-end sag and vibration while stabilizing sway and softening harsh rebounds. Invented in 2005 when the U.S. Border Patrol contracted SuperSprings to come up with a way to soften the ride of its patrol trucks, SumoSprings have, according to the company, been installed in 3,000 of these trucks with no warranty issues or returns.

These springs are progressive and have a very soft initial engagement. As weight is added, the polyurethane stiffens, which provides more “push back” for greater support and control. The progressive characteristics make it possible to provide the suspension boost without altering the factory ride when the truck is unloaded. The springs and steel brackets are handmade in the U.S. and the micro-cellular polyurethane material comes with a lifetime warranty. Plus, every SumoSpring is inspected and weighed by the company’s quality control department. There are no moving parts and the SumoSprings are not affected by heat or

freezing temperatures.

There are two densities available for pickup trucks: front and rear. Within those parameters, your application may also provide a choice of spring capacities. For this project, the SumoSprings were slated for installation on a 2017 Ram dually. For the rear, kit number SSR-301-40-2 (\$631.99) offers 3,000 pounds of support at 50% compression;

the other (SSR-301-47-2; \$641.99) pushes the capacity to 5,000 pounds. There also are two kits available for the front of this truck — one that provides 800 pounds of support at the same 50% compression level (SSF-302-40; \$221.99) and the other moves that figure to 1,200 pounds (SSF-302-47; \$257.99). The company’s website offers spring recommendations based on truck year, model and drivetrain.

We elected to install the heavier kit in the rear, since the truck is used primarily to tow a fifth wheel with a 3,200-pound kingpin weight and is fitted

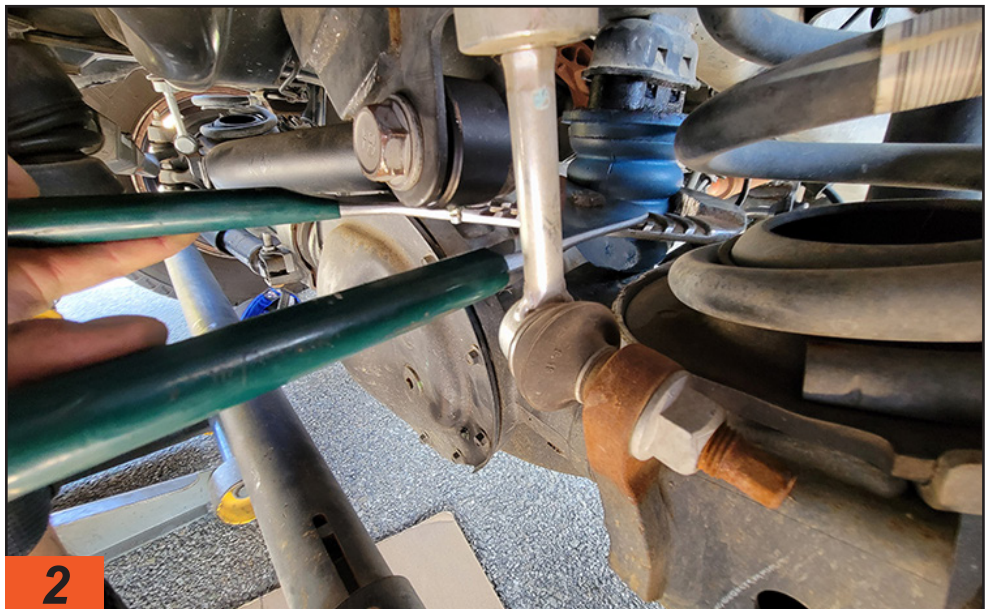
with a 40-gallon fuel tank and a toolbox in the bed, plus the weight of the hitch. The truck also sags in the rear and is driven extensively over rough roads.

For the front, we ended up going with the lighter, 800-pound-capacity kit over the heavier version in order to soften the ride somewhat when hitting speed bumps or other undulations in the road when driving solo. We determined (from an earlier use) that the heavier SumoSprings were too stiff and allowed the front end to “pogo” more than desired.

### Installing the Springs

The front springs were very easy to install because they are designed to fit in place of the bump stops that already exist on the frame to keep the suspension from bottoming out. The first part of the process was to jack up the front of the truck to unload the suspension; the tires do not need to be lifted off the ground. Jack stands were placed for safety. Next, the bump stop on each side was initially pried away from the frame with a large screwdriver. These bump stops simply fit into a bracket without bolts or screws to hold them in place. Once lifted, the bump stocks were removed by hand.

Positioning the SumoSprings in the original holes vacated by the bump stops was a simple press-fit operation. It’s best to spray soapy water on the springs to start the fit in the bracket; we used a 3-foot-long piece of 2 x 4 lumber to hold it in place on each side. The weight of the truck, when lowered,



*A large offset pliers was used to hold the SumoSpring base steady on the plate that was already on the axle housing. The front end was then lowered to force the spring cone into the bump-stop bracket. It’s too dangerous to hold the spring by hand during this step.*



3

*Soapy water was applied to the portion of the SumoSpring that was designed to press fit into the bump-stop bracket. This made it much easier to seat the SumoSprings. Lowering the truck will press-fit the end of the SumoSpring into each bracket.*

pressed the spring into the bracket. A few words of caution: Do not attempt to hold the spring in place by hand (use a large offset pliers) while the truck is being lowered — if the jack slips it could be very dangerous. If you do not have somebody who can lower the jack while you watch the process, you can use a pry bar to maneuver the SumoSpring into the bracket. The total install time for the front was about 45 minutes.

The rear SumoSpring was a little more complicated. We first blocked the front wheels and raised the rear so the tires were barely touching the ground. And, of course, we placed jack stands under the frame. For some reason the factory bump stops were missing, which shortened the job, but that's an anomaly, so plan on removing the ones on your truck. Next, the brackets were assembled for both sides and installed with the included bolts, nuts and Allen set screws.

There are no special tools required, just a couple of wrenches and maybe a ratchet and socket, depending

on the truck model. Note that there may be parts that are in the way of the installation. For example, a gas-powered truck has a narrow tab on both sides. Just follow the installation instructions for any work-around. Figure on an hour or so to get this part done.

### The Test Drives

After the installation, the truck was tested solo and while pulling the fifth wheel. We did not notice any degradation in ride quality while driving solo on

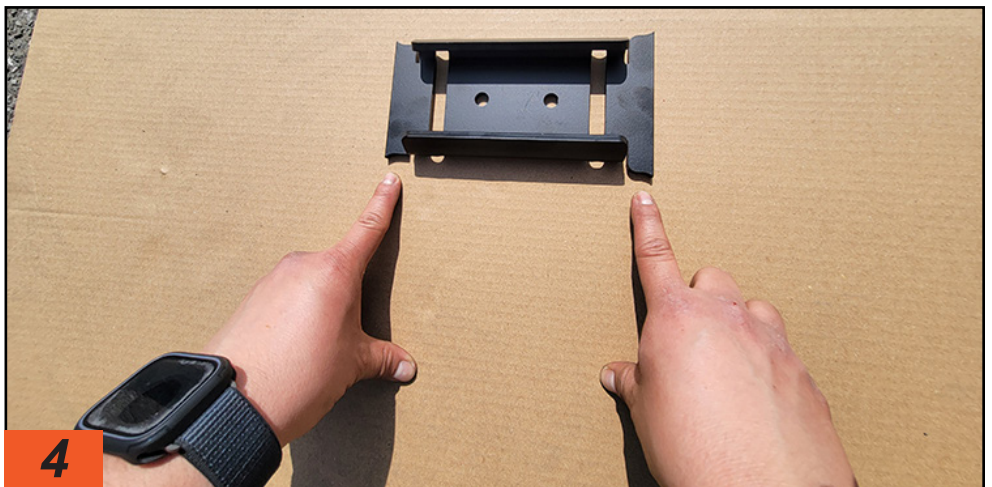
smooth roads after the installation. We did notice, however, a major reduction in the jarring and rocking effect while turning over dips at street intersections. Rather than throwing the driver and passengers wildly from side-to-side, the truck minded its manners with the SumoSprings installed. Overall, the lighter springs were a better fit for this

truck (mitigating most of the aforementioned pogo effect), and the front end was not that impacted when towing a fifth wheel.

Our first objective was satisfied as the truck resisted squatting and the front of the fifth wheel returned to level. The truck's rear axle was not overloaded with the fifth wheel hitched, so we can only speculate that the stock Ram springs are on the puny side for a 1-ton truck.

Handling while towing resulted in a noticeable curtailment of wallowing on some roads. Rougher roads presented less-than-stellar handling before the SumoSprings reduced the bumpiness enough to take the edge off the harshness and make it more comfortable for the driver and passengers. Chucking was not a major issue for this truck, except on certain roads where the SumoSprings reduced the pushing-and-pulling-effect enough to claim success with that aspect of the installation, as well.

Civilizing the ride quality of a dual-rear-wheel pickup truck is a tall order, and most owners just get used to the bouncing and hammering of the suspension. The SumoSprings took a big bite out of the harshness, but don't expect the ride to rival a half-ton pickup. The fact that the project truck now rides level with the fifth wheel attached is a big deal in itself. Too many owners grapple with this issue and are often falsely accused to overloading the rear axle. In our minds, the "attitude adjustment" alone was worth the investment in SumoSprings — improvements in handling were just icing on the proverbial cake.

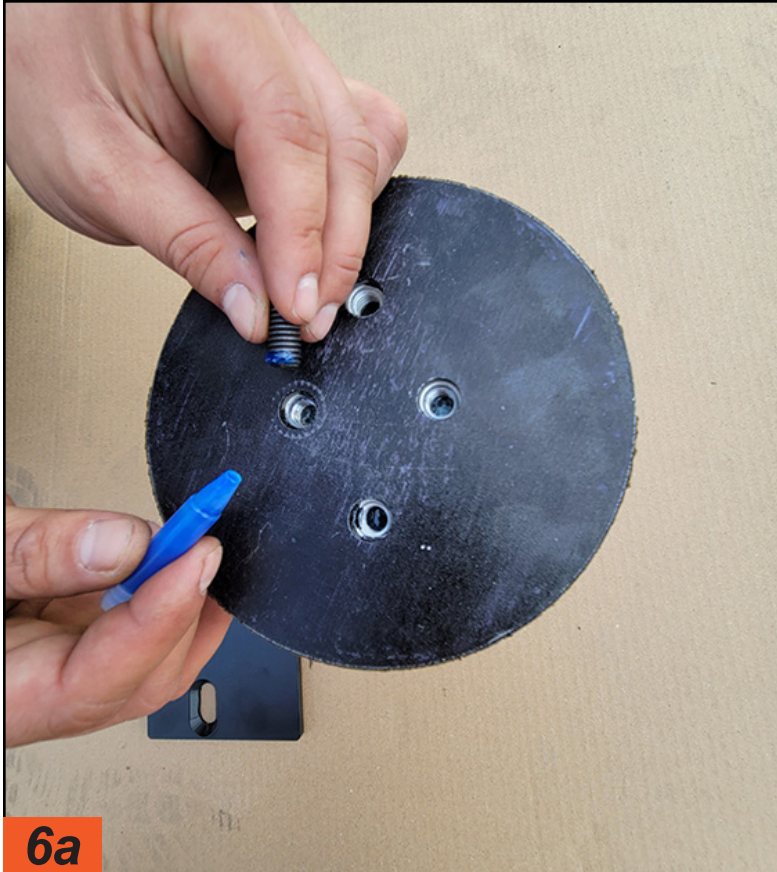


4

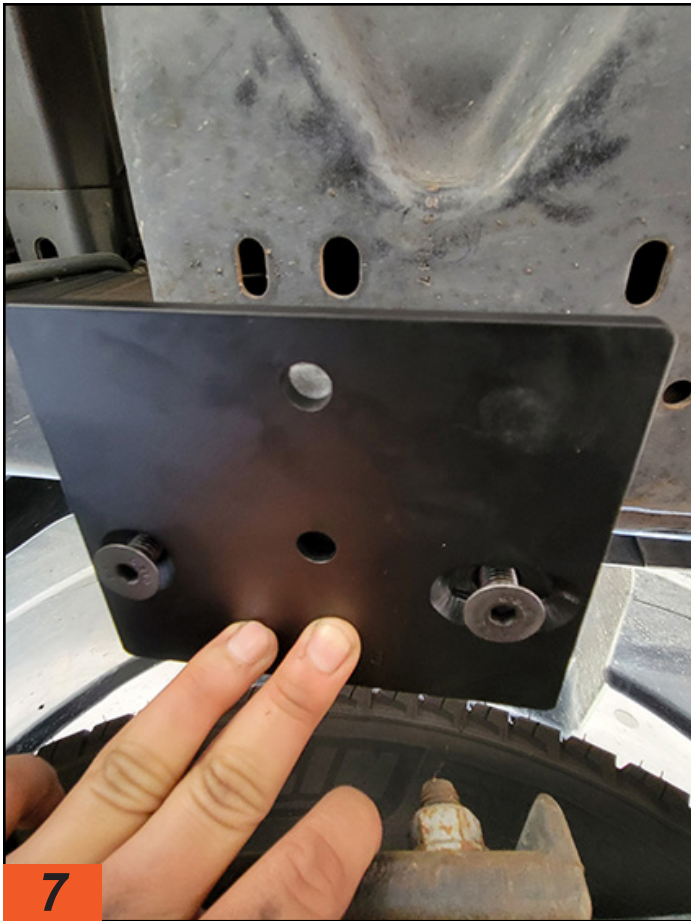
*The tabs on each side of the rear-spring brackets are different and must be seated exactly on the SumoSprings.*



**5a** Blue Loctite, supplied with kit, was applied to the bolt used to attach the bracket to the bottom of the spring. The bolt was at first snugged just enough to allow the bracket to rotate. This bracket was later U-bolted to the axle housing.



**6a** An Allen set screw was coated with Loctite and then screwed into the top of the spring. This set screw must be set flush with the top of the bracket that will be installed on the frame in order to prevent the spring from rotating. The set screw also serves as a positioner when attaching the spring to the top bracket, which was not visible during the installation.



7

Two countersunk bolts for the top bracket were coated with Loctite and threaded into existing holes used to secure the factory bump stops that were previously removed.



8

The Allen set screw was oriented into the top bracket for proper positioning. A single bolt (also with Loctite) was installed through the bracket and into the spring.



9a



9b

At first a ratchet and socket were too big for the available clearance to tighten the center bolt. A ratcheting wrench fit perfectly and made the job much quicker than using a standard open-end wrench.



**10a**



**10b**

Once the top bracket and upper portion of the spring were installed, a U-bolt was positioned over the bottom bracket and axle housing. The saddle bracket was then located on the U-bolt and lock nuts were threaded on and snugged enough to allow the SumoSpring to rotate by hand.



**11**

The bottom spring section was rotated on the axle housing until the cone fit perfectly into the top half of the spring. When set properly, the U-bolt were tightened. Job done. **RVE**

# RV SLIDEOUT FLOOR REPLACEMENT



*Slideouts damaged by water intrusion are one of the most common — and most expensive — repairs that face RV owners.*

By Bruce W. Smith / photos by author

Few RV problems cause owners more distress than wood rot. Given the amount of wood products used in the construction of a typical RV, rotting wood — and its attendant traveling buddy, mold — is like a cancer that needs to be addressed quickly and decisively to prevent doing more damage to the motorhome, fifth wheel or travel trailer.

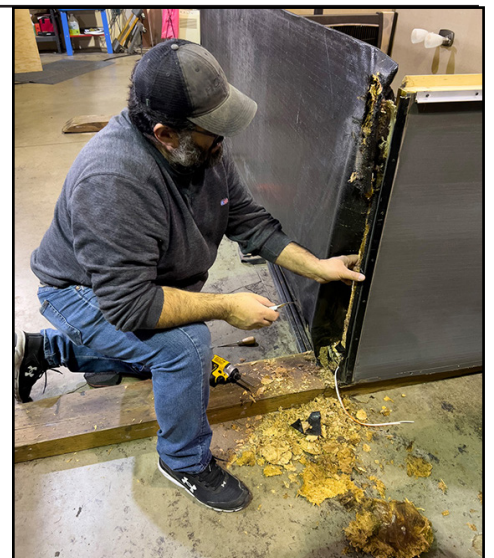
That's especially true when you discover soft spots in your RV's flooring. While wood rot — caused by water incursion — in any area of an RV is cause for concern and immediate action, rotting floors truly compromise the structural integrity of the unit.

Slideout rooms are susceptible to this dilemma. Floor rot in a slideout is usually traced to water accumulating on the sub-floor material through a small tear

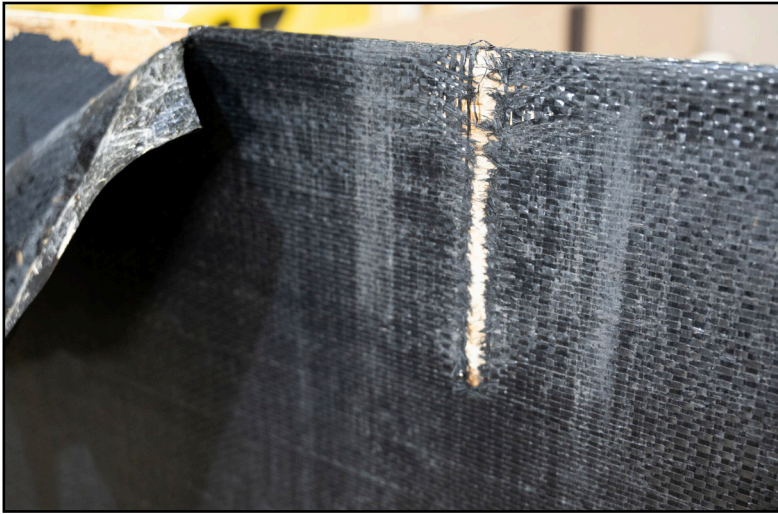
in the vapor barrier and/or a bad seal between the slide and the body of the RV. This can be a real problem if the RV slideout uses OSB ([Oriented strand board](#)), layers that are compressed and bonded with resin into a sheet.

OSB is common in construction applications, including the building of RVs (where it's also used in the construction of slideout sub-floors). The problem with OSB is it doesn't tolerate moisture. Once OSB gets wet, it begins to rot and come apart. This is a common issue with RV slides that are not well maintained.

Slideouts damaged by water intrusion are one of the most common — and most expensive — repairs that face RV owners, whether it's a motorhome, travel trailer or pickup camper. RV repair centers typically charge anywhere



*The OSB flooring used in most of the slides in today's RVs is very susceptible to rot when it comes into prolonged contact with water.*



*This small tear in the vapor barrier that protects the bottom of the slide floor, and a little tear in a top seal, allowed water to penetrate into the OSB sub-floor. The result was severe rot in less than a year.*

from \$2,000 to more than \$30,000 to remove and replace slideout floors, depending on the size of the slide and the type of RV.

If regular slide maintenance is neglected, the end result is going to be an expensive lesson, as it was for the owners of this 31-foot Volante travel trailer that was recently brought in to [Carrier RV Services](#) in Eugene, Oregon.

A small tear in the slideout room's vapor barrier, along with a torn lip of a seal, had allowed water to penetrate the OSB floor. The portion of the floor that started absorbing water saturated the OSB – which, in turn, started rotting along one end of the room. The rot went unnoticed until the slide started hanging up while being retracted.

Unfortunately, when the carpet was pulled up, the extent of the damage was clearly visible. The OSB had completely disintegrated, allowing the front wall of

marine-grade plywood.

One-inch-thick marine-grade plywood, which Carrier RV uses when replacing slide floors, will not come apart when exposed to water. Plywood is also much stiffer structurally than OSB, so it makes the slide room stronger overall. Carrier RV Services recommends customers use marine-grade plywood rather than buying the floor from the RV manufacturer, which is usually made from OSB and covered

with the vapor barrier fabric. According to Carrier's shop manager, Tony Salazar, it's not unusual for the factory replacement floor to cost \$600-\$3,500 not counting the freight truck shipping costs, which can cost as much as the floor depending on how far it needs to be shipped.

the 14-foot-long slideout to droop because it was no longer being supported by the floor in that area. The repair — which we followed — required removing the slide from the trailer, then laying it down so the rotted floor could be removed and replaced with

## Slides

Slides are heavy and off-balance, which pose a safety issue when they are being removed. Expert RV repair techs such as Salazar point out that DIYers need to take that into consideration when deciding if/how to proceed with any floor R&R. Having a few stout friends around to lend a hand is highly recommended when dealing with a small slideout room, but this task isn't one that most hands-on RV owners should even contemplate.

For those willing to tackle the job, Salazar offered up a few experienced observations.

"Most slideouts are built with the sidewalls sitting on top of the subfloor, and slides are built from the inside out," he told us. "With those types of slides it's easiest to remove the unit from the RV so you can lay it on the floor to take the pressure off the sidewalls, making



*One-inch-thick marine-grade plywood is ideal for use as a replacement sub-floor in RV slides. This type of plywood is highly resistant to water intrusion, and provides a stronger, more rigid floor.*

removal of the damaged floor a lot easier than trying to work around the slide while it's sitting in the trailer.

"Smaller slides, those less than eight feet long, can be done by a DIYer with helpers and a strong setup to lay the slide down so the floor can be accessed," Salazar added. "But larger slides really need to be done by a professional shop using a forklift to move them in and out of the RV because they can weigh between 800-1,200 pounds, depending on size."

Regardless of the size of the slide, the methodology in replacing a rotted floor is very similar across all RVs. We followed Salazar as he fixed the bad floor on this six-year-old travel trailer. Along the way he shared a few tips for DIYers that tackle rotted RV slide floor repair themselves.



*RV slides are both heavy and off-balance, so it's important to have helpers and a forklift to remove them from the coach or trailer.*

## Caution When Removing RV

## RV Slideout Floor Inspection



Poor or ineffective maintenance cost this RV owner dearly. Water incursion led to the slideout floor drooping considerably. Left unaddressed, it would have eventually failed altogether.



1a



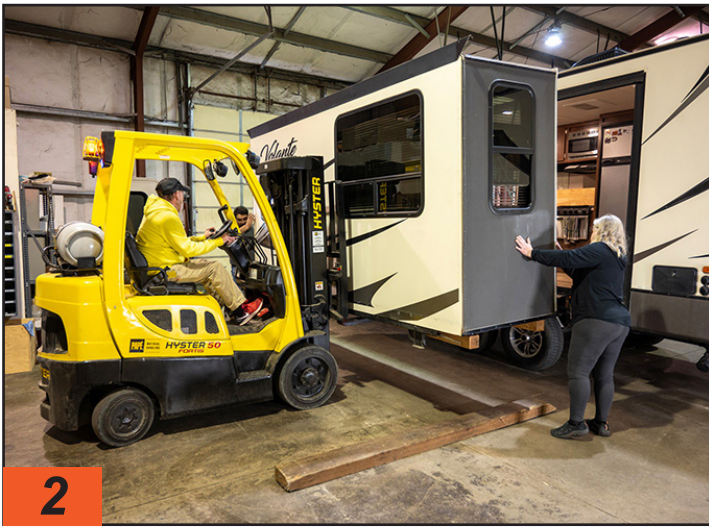
1b

In this particular RV sub-floor replacement, Salazar placed 10-foot-long 4x4s under the slide so it can be lifted by a forklift. Once the weight of the slide is on the forks, it's unbolted from the two rams and carefully pulled out of the trailer.



Slide room wiper seals need to be inspected frequently because they can crack, tear and the corners come unglued, allowing an easy path for water to get inside the RV. They will last longer with frequent cleaning and treatment with a conditioner such as 303 Aerospace Protectant.

To prevent water damage in a slide and a hefty repair bill, perform (at minimum) a bi-annual inspection of the slide's seals, trim moldings, corner trim, screws and vapor barrier. Replace any seals that are torn or not sealing properly. Use vapor barrier sealing tape to cover tears, holes or worn areas. Re-seal along the top and side trim pieces, and around windows. This type of regular **maintenance** is critical to preventing slide floor rot.



**2**

This trailer's 14-foot-wide slideout room was easily removed using a forklift, and a couple extra hands to keep it stabilized. Once clear of the trailer, the slide is set on the floor, then flipped over by hand so the floor is facing outward for easy access.



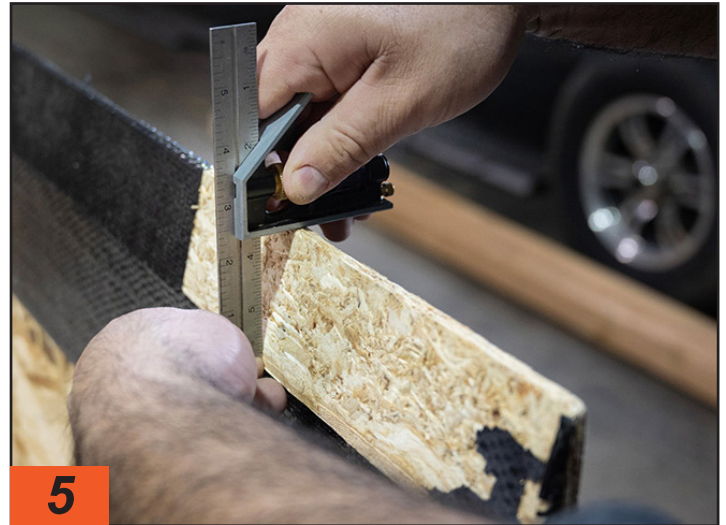
**3**

Before anything is removed from the slide, Salazar notes the exact measurements of the slide ram mounting bracket that runs the width of the room so it can be bolted back in the same location as it came from the factory. This eases repositioning of the slideout so it fits properly in the cutout.



**4**

The results of OSB getting wet is complete disintegration, which means the sidewall it supports droops. Rot in OSB migrates, so the best fix is to remove the OSB floor and replace it with exterior or marine-grade plywood.



**5**

Slide floors are tapered so you don't stub your toes entering the room. It's important to measure the angle and thickness so the new floor material can be cut/routed in the same fashion. The thin leading edge of the taper is usually 1/4- to 3/8-inch.



**6**

Transfer the taper measurements to the replacement floor. The extra 1/2-inch wood pieces shown here serve as a guide for the router that will be used to cut the angle on this 14-foot-long sheet of 1-inch marine-grade plywood.



7a



8



7b

Removing the rotted slide floor is straightforward. Remove all the factory screws, including any that break off during removal (a common occurrence), and pull the floor away from the walls. The screws originally used in this slide were a mixed bag of #6 and #8 wood and metal screws. Many were rusted — and several broke off as they were being removed.

The new slide floor, a sheet of custom-made inch-thick marine-grade plywood, is covered with a quality [vapor barrier](#) using 3M 90 Hi-Strength Spray Adhesive sprayed on both the wood and water barrier material. This job required two cans of the [adhesive](#).



9

The most important part of applying the vapor barrier is to make sure it's as smooth as possible so it glides smoothly over the seal when the slide is extended or retracted. A good heavy-duty [roller](#) helps minimize the air bubbles. Make sure the material is pulled tight over the tapered edge during installation.

## Finding A Replacement Slideout Floor



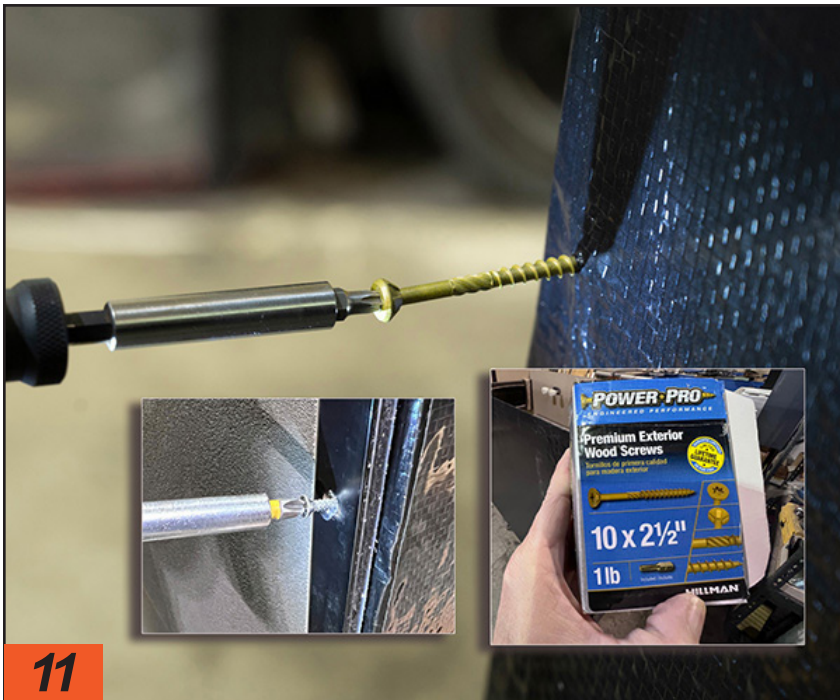
Finding plywood to replace the OSB sheeting used in an RV sub-floor is easy if the width of the floor is 4 x 10 feet or smaller because most home improvement centers carry exterior plywood up to 10-foot lengths. Finding plywood longer than that is much more difficult, forcing RVers to order a replacement floor from the RV manufacturer, or from a custom plywood supplier.

"A 14-foot floor from an RV manufacturer may cost as much as \$3,000 depending on freight truck costs," said Teresa Carrier, co-owner of Carrier RV. "An OEM floor will probably be OSB, which we avoid using. That's why we get our floor material from [Plywood Solutions](#) in Albany, Oregon. They custom fabricate slideout floors longer than 10-feet using marine-grade plywood."



10

The top of the new floor doesn't require full vapor barrier coverage because it is inside and will be covered by carpet or other flooring material. However, it still needs to be very secure to keep the vapor wrap tight, so Salazar glues and [staples](#) it along all the edges and folds.



11

Salazar upgrades the factory #8 wood screws with 2 1/2" #10 decking [wood screws](#). The larger screws hold the plywood securely to the walls, while the epoxy coating prevents them from rusting out over the years.



12

Salazar covers all the screws along the bottom of the slide with a heavy-duty polyethylene vapor barrier [sealing tape](#) to prevent water penetration. He also applies silicone sealant to the screws along the bottom of each side wall for the same reason.



13

Replacing the slide bracket is just a matter of positioning it according to the measurements taken earlier and re-installing the OEM hex head [lag screws](#). Be sure the screws go in straight or else they will break through the walls.



14

Slide floor replaced. "We use the best plywood possible so the repaired flooring will not suffer the same fate as the OEM OSB," said Teresa Carrier, who owns Carrier with her husband, Tom. "We cover the bottom with a moisture barrier exactly like it came from the RV manufacturer."



15

Having a forklift makes the job of removing and re-installing a slide less complicated. Take reinstallation very slow so the seals aren't damaged.



16

Once the slide is positioned correctly into the trailer, the rails can be extended and bolted to the bracket attached to the bottom of the slide. [RVE](#)

continued from page 14

allowing users to control access to their RVs directly from their smartphones.

This integration means that RV owners can now check the door status, lock or unlock their RV doors, and access a host of other lock features without the need for physical keys, fobs or memorized codes.

Winegard has designed the integration with ease of use in mind, featuring a friendly device registration flow that makes setting up a breeze. Additionally, the RV Halo app supports the use of multiple devices within the RV, allowing owners to manage several integrated devices through a single, intuitive interface, the company said.

## Bowlus Debuts 2025 'Rivet'

Looking for something just a tad bit out of the ordinary — like, timeless styl-



ing and modern conveniences? Bowlus, maker of performance luxury RVs, recently unveiled its new rugged travel trailer, the Rivet.

Within its compact 25-foot, 3-inch floorplan, the Rivet offers a large separate bedroom with a king bed, an ensuite bathroom and a roomy living room and kitchen. It can also sleep up to four travelers.

Other features include power management systems with 8 kWh lithium

and up to 660 watts of solar power generation; a three-inch lift kit; a flyweight GVWR of 3,500 pounds; the Onyx indoor decor package, which is a color palette with matte black detailing; plus other add-ons, such as AeroMove, which the company said allows the RV to be self-propelled, self-powered and remote-controlled. The Rivet prices out at \$165,000.

For more information, visit [bowlus.com](http://bowlus.com).

### News & Notes from Jayco continued from page 16

The roof is also pre-wired for additional solar panels.

Available on: 2024 Eagle TT, Eagle FW, North Point, Pinnacle, Seismic and Seismic Luxury Series

#### Overlander 2

With the added power conversion of two 200-watt solar panels, a consistently regulated charge from our 30-amp MPPT RV-C Solar Controller and the added assurance of energy compatibility from a 1,800-watt RV-C Inverter, our Overlander 2 solar package will give you the power you need to run some of the small amenities on your RV worry-free all through solar energy. (Jay Feather products utilize a Digital PWM Solar Controller and non RV-C inverter.)

Available on: 2024 Jay Feather Products, White Hawk, Eagle TT, Eagle FW, North Point, Pinnacle, Seismic & Seismic Luxury Series

#### Overlander 1

With the Overlander 1 package, you can now order your travel trailer factory-direct with a 200-watt solar panel installation without worrying about voiding your warranty to up-fit for solar. As the entry-level package in our solar lineup, we pair the 200-watt panel with a 30-amp solar controller to ensure the power flowing into your battery will not



2024 Jayco Jay Feather

overwhelm the system and you can enjoy your battery investment for a longer duration.

Standard on: 2024 Jay Feather Products, White Hawk & Jay Flight; Available on: 2024 Jay Flight SLX. **RVE**

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# 2024's **Hottest** Parts & Accessories



Sterling Hawkins and basketball legend Bill Walton as well as a performance by American Idol winner Noah Thompson — products were the real stars of the show. Covered in length by *RVEnthusiast's* partner, *RVBusiness*, here are many of the new and proven popular components that attracted attention at the EXPO — and that you will be seeing at your local RV parts emporium this camping season.



When it comes to new product debuts for the RV industry, there are no better venues than the annual winter shows staged by the major distributors responsible for supplying the industry's dealers and independent parts and service facilities with new and replacement parts and accessories — and when it comes to distributor shows, none is larger or has more impact than the program staged

by NTP-STAG.

This year's program, EXPO 2024, presented by Airxcel, was even bigger; the event marked the first-time collaboration with SeaWide Distribution, introducing prominent marine suppliers alongside the RV industry's premier product manufacturers.

And, while the event was highlighted by a number of thought-provoking addresses — including from author

## 2024's **Hottest** Parts & Accessories

### **STROMBERG CARLSON**

#### **Scissor Jack Shoe**

The Scissor Jack Shoe (Model JBP-SJSC.2) by Stromberg Carlson is a "Jack Pad that stays attached," according to the company. Manufactured of molded EPDM rubber that will not crack or break and returns to its shape, the Scissor Jack Shoe means no more storing and handling dirty jack pads so hands and storage compartments stay clean. Also, its patent-pending design includes built-in drain holes to release water. Made in the USA, the Scissor Jack Shoe fits all brands with a bow tie base, and is rated for 2,500 to 9,000 pounds. [strombergcarlson.com](http://strombergcarlson.com)



### **ALTOR LOCKS**

#### **Icon**

ICON, by Altor Locks, provide next-generation physical security for travel trailers. Engineered theft deterrence by design, the ICON is the first and only trailer coupler lock patented to deter thieves using power tools. Unlike conventional locks, the ICON is 100 times stronger and features next-level security with patented brute force and a power tool-resistant design that's pick-resistant and weather-resistant. Secure with confidence. <http://www.altorlocks.com/>



## DUO-FORM

### Screen Door Protector

Inspired by RV owners who travel with their pets and offering an easy and affordable option to protect the RV screen door, the DUO Screen Door Protector Kit is super easy to use and easy to install. Made with a strong, custom-blended plastic material, which ensures a pet can't damage or break through an existing entry screen door. This allows safe air flow into the interior while protecting the screen from pet damage, wear and tear.

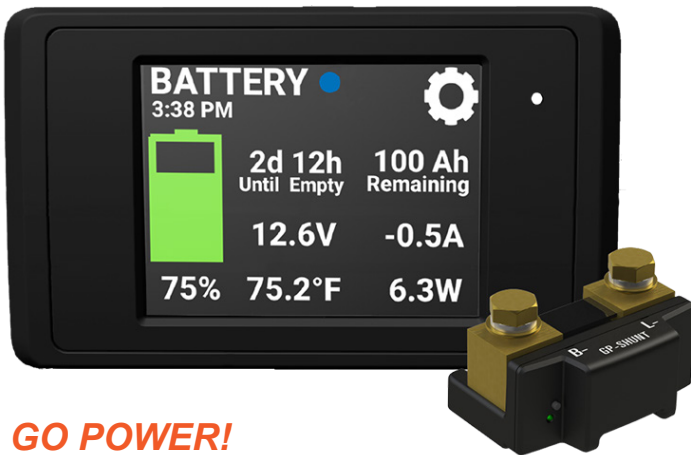
[duoformplastics.com](http://duoformplastics.com)



## BRAND MOTION

### TRNS-2191 Wireless Transparent Trailer System

Available for Chevrolet & GMC trucks (2019-current) and heavy-duty (2020-current) models and also available for Dodge Ram and Ford trucks, the Wireless Transparent Trailer System eliminates blind spots and provides unobstructed visibility whether pulling a trailer or not. The high-definition digital mirror replaces a traditional rearview mirror and provides two cameras: a truck-specific third brake light camera and a wireless camera on the rear of a trailer. Switch between the two views with the click of a button and take the stress out of towing. [brandmotion.com/](http://brandmotion.com/)



## GO POWER!

### Battery Manager Kit

Add connectivity to any battery bank. The Go Power! Battery Manager Kit is an easy upgrade to any RV. The kit pairs an intelligent shunt with a 3-inch color touchscreen display. Customers can easily understand their battery usage via the data on the screen or view the information on their mobile device using the Go Power! Connect App. [gopowersolar.com/](http://gopowersolar.com/)



## BATTLEBORN BATTERIES

### Gamechanger GC3

Gamechanger 3.0 (GC3) is a revolutionary 270Ah 12-volt LiFePO4 battery. Its unique design offers unparalleled installation flexibility. As power, safety and reliability are paramount, the GC3 is rigorously tested and certified to surpass industry standards. Additionally, a proprietary battery management system protects the user and battery from anything unexpected. Lightweight, powerful, and maintenance-free, the GC3 is the perfect way to power an RV boondocking adventure. [battlebornbatteries.com](http://battlebornbatteries.com)



## KUMA OUTDOOR GEAR

### Switchback Heated Chair

Kuma Outdoor Gear introduces the first-ever padded DuoHeat System controlled by Bluetooth technology. "Grab your phone, open the Kuma Heated App and crank up the heat!" As the warmth sets in on both the seat and the lower back, users can micro adjust heat settings from 1 to 10 and view it on an LED-lit Bluetooth/manual button. The chair comes complete with beverage holder, phone pocket, 10,000 mAh rechargeable lithium battery, carry bag and is rated for 265 pounds. [kumaoutdoorgear.com/](http://kumaoutdoorgear.com/)

## ULTRA-FAB

### Fifth Wheel Landing Gear

The easiest landing gear to operate. No more hand cranking. No more looking for rocks or boards to put under one leg. With two powerful legs that operate independently, you can lift, level and stabilize a front end with the flip of a switch. Independent leg operation makes it the easiest to use on uneven ground. 21-inch down-stroke plus adjustable extensions. 38 inches of total lift. 36.5-inch overall retracted length. 3-year warranty. [ultra-fab.com/](http://ultra-fab.com/)



## SAMLEX SOLAR

### Solar SHARE

This is a new package for 2024. The Samlex SHARE Solar + Power Bundles come with everything needed to start boondocking in most RVs. It uses the power of the sun to keep the batteries in RVs charged and healthy with 200, 400 or 600 watts of solar. Run household devices with its robust EVO Series inverter/charger. This all-in-one unit is a pure sine wave inverter, adaptive battery charger, and built-in transfer switch to charge batteries with both shore power and solar power. The SHARE Solar + Power Bundle is ideal for couples, small families, and those weekend or longer getaways in a travel trailer or a Class C RV. It keeps the batteries charged and powers up LED lighting, water pumps, small devices, and fans for four to seven days. [samlexamerica.com/](http://samlexamerica.com/)



## RECPRO RP-RANGE-21BK

The RecPro 21-inch Tall RV Stove Gas Range allows a weary traveler to effortlessly cook a delicious meal after a long day using propane fuel. With three stove-top burners protected by a glass stove-top cover combined with an oven space that offers an adjustable wire shelf, 51-liter inner volume, and 490 degrees Fahrenheit maximum temperature, this RV appliance adds significant function and versatility to the kitchen. Easily operated with the light-up twist knob temperature controls. [recpro.com/](http://recpro.com/)



## GE PROFILE RV

### Dual Fuel Water Heaters

The GE Profile 6G and 10G RV Dual Fuel Water Heaters are engineered for maximum capacity and ease of use. The intelligent design allows for easy replacement with a standard RV water heater cutout for the 6G & 10G. Operate the gas and electric heating options simultaneous or independent with dual fuel innovation. Additional features include quick recovery time (10,000 BTU), secured controls, and a 6-foot power cord. [geappliances.com/](http://geappliances.com/)



## AQUA PRO

### Universal 12V/3.0 GPM Water Pump

The Aqua Pro Universal 3.0 gallon-per-minute water pump is designed with an automatic “on demand,” adjustable pressure switch to easily regulate water flow for multiple fixtures. Compact but capable, it is a great fit for tight spaces. May be configured with different inlet types, each with their own unique fittings to ensure it fits any application. [huskytow.com/water-pumps-hoses](http://huskytow.com/water-pumps-hoses)

## BIO-KLEEN

### Awning Kleen

Awning Kleen is a concentrated cleaner designed to clean awnings and a multitude of other surfaces including carpet, canvas, vinyl, leather and much more. Removes tough stains, mold, mildew, dirt, insect debris, tree sap, bird hits and more. Safe for all awning types, including vinyl, canvas, acrylic fabric and more. Available in 32-ounce, 1-gallon, 5-gallon, and even 55-gallon sizes.

[biokleen.com](http://biokleen.com)



## HUGHES AUTOFORMERS

### SafeView Power Inlets

As the world's first and only circuit analyzer built into an RV power inlet, the SafeView Power Inlets let you know if shore power is wired correctly. They feature patent pending features like LED indicator lights and a “halo” light to visually let you know when it is safe to connect. They can detect open ground and reversed polarity, as well as open neutral. Another major benefit is they are direct OEM-replacement items — no special tools are needed to install them.

[hughesautoformers.com](http://hughesautoformers.com)



## **DUO FORM**

### **DUO Cleaner Kit**

This kit features a hand-picked collection of the finest RV specialty cleaners with clean label specifications paired with an ultra-soft microfiber cleaning cloth and shower squeegee – for a super clean and easy is to use cleaners to make any chore a breeze. The kit includes DUO’s best-selling DUO PURE Plastic Cleaner, DUO PURE Glass Cleaner, and DUO PURE Drain Deodorizer. DUO Cleaners are engineered to clean all DUO Form products. [duoformplastics.com](http://duoformplastics.com)



## **AIRLIFT**

### **Towtal View HD Camera**

This camera with versatile mounts provides a high-quality color video feed via the free mobile app. The HD camera features a quick-connect mount, allowing easy, no-tool swapping between the included permanent hardwired mount and battery pack suction cup mount. The mounts are also multi-position adjustable for various viewing angles. Towtal View has more than 100 feet of reliable range via a strong and secure Wi-Fi connection. [airliftcompany.com](http://airliftcompany.com)



## **B&W HITCH**

### **Continuum Weight Distribution Hitch**

This new hitch offers immediate and continuous friction sway control. It incorporates a single pivot point, which eliminates noise and wear points. Other features include a preset head angle for every setup, which is all done on the driver’s side; bars are loaded by pumping the handle until desired weight is transferred to the front axle. A pressure gauge ensures a repeatable setup, composite bars are lighter-weight and five times more flexible than steel but with similar strength, and up to 1,600 pounds of hitch weight. [bwtrailerhitches.com/](http://bwtrailerhitches.com/)



## **AIRXCEL**

### **InVision Laundry Appliances**

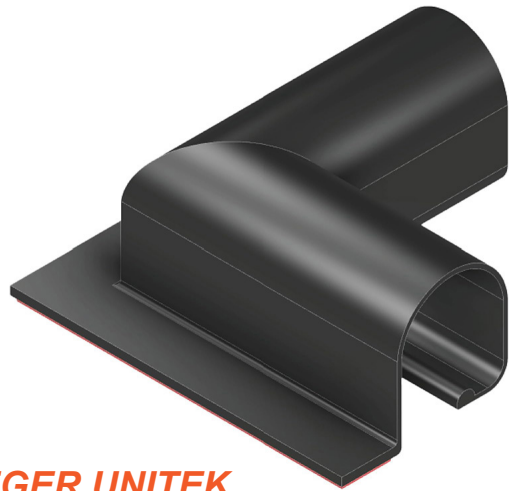
InVision’s laundry solutions include a slim-fit stackable washer and dryer, a front load washer and a front load dryer. With InVision’s space-saving stackable design, RVers can maximize every inch of their interior living space, giving them the freedom to enjoy their travels without compromise. And with all InVision washers and dryers, RV owners can enjoy whisper-quiet operation and hassle-free laundry on the road. InVision is a division of Airxcel. [airxcel.com](http://airxcel.com)



## TRUMA COOLER

### C30 Portable Refrigerator/Freezer

This is Truma's smallest single-zone model at 30 liters (32 quarts). Like all Truma Coolers, it can cool down to -8°F using 12/24-volt DC or 120-volt AC power. The space-saving solution can fit comfortably in any RV or even in the backseat of a tow vehicle for easy access and is perfect for picnic lunches, solo camping trips, or road trip refreshments. [truma.com/us/](http://truma.com/us/)



## JAEGER UNITEK

### Aqua Diverter Flip 'N Seal Slide-Out Sealing System

Touted by the company as the original full package slideout sealing system, the Aqua Diverter Flip 'N Seal Slide-Out Sealing System is an all-inclusive sealing solution to prevent water intrusion and protect your RV. The sealing system plays a significant role in creating a watertight interior, minimizing temperature intrusions while delivering durability under dynamic and static loading conditions over a wide range of temperatures. The system results in a watertight seal in a one-part sealing solution. It incorporates proven automotive polymer sealing technology, full ultraviolet (UV) exposure and meets demanding abrasion resistance and thermal aging requirements to deliver long-term performance. [www.jaeger-unitek.com](http://www.jaeger-unitek.com)



## LIPPERT CURT

### True Course

The CURT True Course plug-and-play sway control system independently applies the trailer brakes to maintain control of the vehicle. It features unique motion-sensing technology that detects trailer movements not controlled by the weight distribution hitch. The system is compatible with multiple truck types, ensuring a reliable solution for all drivers. With True Course's cutting-edge technology and thorough testing, drivers can have confidence in a safer and more secure towing experience. [lippert.com](http://lippert.com)



## CAFRAMO SEEKR D SEEKR

### Sirocco II F

This fan is the perfect companion for days spent exploring by RV or boat. With a 12-/24-volt auto-sensing capability, low power draw, easy direct wire installation and 360-degree gimballed design offering 185 CFM airflow, the Sirocco II fan allows you to direct air where you need it, ensuring optimal cooling throughout an RV or boat. With multiple speed settings, this fan is powerful and energy-efficient, making it a must-have for any adventurer. [seekr.caframobrands.com/](http://seekr.caframobrands.com/)



## EXPION

### 360 Edge Lithium Iron Phosphate Battery

The Edge by Expion360 is a pioneering lithium iron phosphate battery for off-grid and RV enthusiasts. With a slim profile available in 12.8- and 51.2-volt configurations, it incorporates patent-pending Vertical Heat Conduction (VHC) internal heating for unmatched cold-weather performance. Integrated SmartTalk Bluetooth and CANbus communication provide real-time insights, while oversized bus bars ensure reliable internal power connections. Featuring rugged 26650 4.0Ah UL1642 cells and isolated high-voltage terminals, the Edge's modular design allows for easy power system expansion, redefining efficiency and reliability in energy storage. [expion360.com](http://expion360.com)



## CUMMINS

### Onan QG 4000i

Available in late spring 2024 the Onan QG 4000i is the quietest fixed-mount RV generator yet. The QG 4000i is ideal for light- and medium-duty RV applications. This generator set features low fuel consumption, single-side servicing, and an enclosed muffler. Not only does the QG 4000i allow RVers to have power wherever they go, but it also provides a peaceful, quiet journey. [cummins.com/generators](http://cummins.com/generators)



## WFCO TECHNOLOGIES

### WF-8955-AD Power Center

Auto-Detect is a patent-pending intelligent battery detection system that automatically selects the correct charging profiles for both lead acid and lithium-ion batteries. Exclusive and standard on all WFCO converters, power centers and MBA models. Auto-Detect Enables RV owners to optimize their batteries without needing to change out an entire converter or operate a manual switch. [wfcotech.com/](http://wfcotech.com/)



## PINNACLE

### Compact Short Dryer Model

With the Pinnacle's Compact Short Dryer Model 21-852 S, clothing, bedding, and a whole array of laundry can be dried easily with the power of Pinnacle's smart digital drying system. Using a built-in sensor, the Compact Short Dryer can automatically shut off when the items inside reach optimal dryness. The vented unit is perfect for tight spaces and comes in a 28 x 24 x 22-inch product footprint with a 3.5-cubic-foot internal capacity and five drying programs. It requires 120-volt AC electrical power, is rated at 1,500 watts and dries in 90-200 minutes depending on the settings. [pinnaclecombos.com/](http://pinnaclecombos.com/)



## CAMP CHAMP

### RV Odor Abate

This product immediately transforms foul-smelling gases into tiny particles, maintaining optimal wastewater pH. Powered by Stabitol, this solution stays fully soluble and stable in tanks, facilitating the decomposition of waste by natural microbes. One bottle yields 32 treatments for black water (1 ounce each) or 64 treatments for gray water (0.5 ounce each). Effectively banish odors while promoting a healthier RV environment. [campchamprv.com/](http://campchamprv.com/)



## LIPPERT CURT

### Aluminum Bike Rack

This is a bike rack designed to offer the ultimate in versatility, featuring a lightweight and highly adaptable design. The bike rack itself mounts onto any industry-standard 2-inch by 2-inch receiver and securely locks into place with a built-in anti-rattle, key-operated shank. This aluminum platform bike rack weighs only 45 pounds and can accept up to two bikes and 130 pounds in weight capacity. [lippert.com](http://lippert.com)



## RELION

### Battery Outlaw 1072s Portable Power Station

The Outlaw 1072s is a portable power source developed with the safest and longest-lasting lithium iron phosphate (LiFePo4) chemistry, powerful enough to run or charge essential electronics anywhere. The inherently safe LiFePO4 technology is said to deliver seven times longer lifespan compared to other lithium options on the market with 3,500 cycles. With a sleek lightweight design and fresh features, the portable power solution offers high battery capacity with 1000 watts continuous and 2,000 watts peak. Additionally, it can be charged at home or on the go with either an AC wall charger or in the sun with 12-25V/160W max solar input charging. [reliobattery.com/](http://reliobattery.com/)



## VALTERRA

### AquaFRESH Performance Freshwater System

This system includes everything needed to upgrade an RV's water system for high flow and clean water. The two high-pressure drinking water hoses deliver 80% more flow than standard hoses, and the exterior inline water filter removes chlorine taste and odor and limits bacterial growth. The high-flow water regulator increases water volume and flow rate to the RV and regulates water pressure to a safe level for all RVs. Not recommended for older RVs. [valterra.com/](http://valterra.com/)



## GENESIS PRODUCTS

### REVIVE Interiors

There's a new way to update RV Interiors with the REVIVE Collection by Genesis. For the first time, you can reface, replace and refresh the walls, ceilings and cabinets of an RV with overlay kits made specifically for the RV environment. Just peel, stick and transform the interior. No need to rip and replace or deal with messy paint jobs. Choose from trending color collections and personalize your RV the way you've always wanted to.

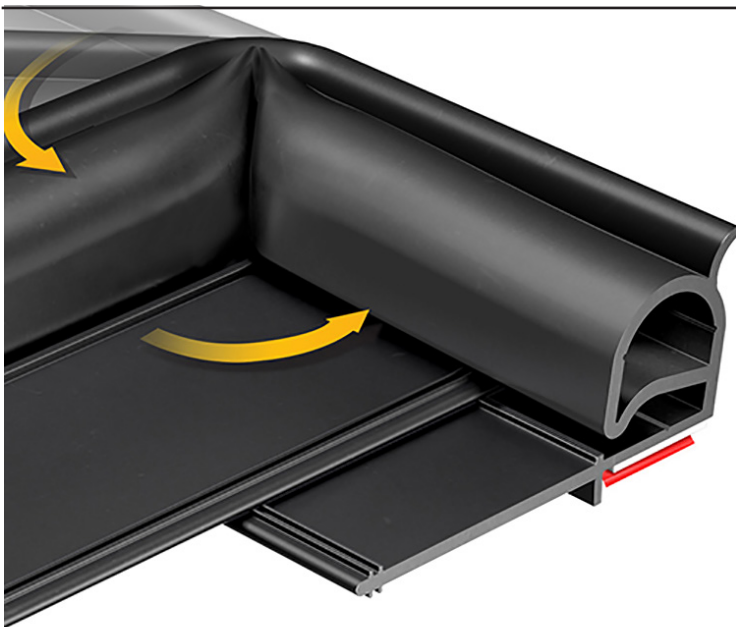
[genesisproductsinc.com/](http://genesisproductsinc.com/)



## CREATIVE PRODUCTS GROUP

### Rotary Pro Baggage Door Lock

The Rotary Pro is a true, two-stage rotary style latching, baggage door lock featuring "secured" and "sealed" stages. It features a durable die-cast metal faceplate, stainless steel latch, and a high-density UV-resistant plastic backplate. This global lock comes KeyALike-ready and is an "exact fit" replacement for the Challenger Nova-style lock making installation a breeze. The Rotary Pro comes with a faceplate gasket seal, mounting screws, strike catch and set of G391 keys. [cpgbrands.com](http://cpgbrands.com)



## TRIM-LOK

### All-In-One Wipe Seal

Trim-Lok's All-In-One Wipe Seal is a single-flap slideout seal with attached bulb and tape featuring a patented seamless corner installation method for the top and sides of RV slideouts. All-In-One Wipe Seal can make a perfect 90-degree corner creating a seamless, watertight continuous seal around the top and sides of the room opening. The result is a simplified installation method and drastically reduced water intrusion. Available in three flap lengths: 2-inch, 2.5-inch and 3-inch. [trimlok.com/](http://trimlok.com/)



## U.S. BATTERY MFG.

### US24DC XC2

Upgrade an RV's power with U.S. Battery's US24DC XC2. It's ideal for the increasing demands of electronics and gaming devices on battery power. This dependable, Flooded Lead Acid battery offers 85 amps at a 20-hour rate and dual terminals for effortless hook-up and parallel connections. A proprietary XC2 formulation produces the highest initial capacity and higher peak capacity, and delivers reliable long-lasting energy. Plus, it's almost 100% recyclable. [usbatterymfg.co/](http://usbatterymfg.co/)



## **XPONENT POWER**

### **Xpanse Solar 1200W Solar Awning**

Xponent Power now offers the Xpanse Solar awning system that produces 1,200 watts of power to RVs. The awning features rigid, robust solar panels that are designed for performance and durability. Built using traditional solar materials, these glass-based solar panels are designed to last — with easy replacement if they ever get damaged. The awning has an innovative design that allows wind to pass through gaps between the panels for stability. In extreme weather conditions, the awning automatically retracts back into its aerodynamic travel cowling. Just reopen with the push of a button to resume charging.

[xponentpower.com](http://xponentpower.com)



## **BLING SAUCE**

### **Tank Sauce**

An enzymatic formula that performs 10-plus critical tank functions in one, Tank Sauce is designed specifically to break down sediment in the black and gray water tanks without damaging the seals or plumbing. A fresh citrus fragrance helps eliminate odors while preventing bacteria growth and build up. It is formaldehyde- and bronopol-free and compliant with all state regulations including California. Just pour into sinks and toilets and let Tank Sauce do the dirty work. [blingsauce.com](http://blingsauce.com)



## **CAMCO POWER GRIP**

### **Heavy-Duty RV Extension Cord**

Extend the reach to distant power outlets with Camco's Heavy-Duty Power Grip RV Extension Cord. This durable RV cord, equipped with convenient handles, simplifies plugging and unplugging. Its flame-retardant PVC sheath ensures longevity and protection against outdoor conditions. With wiring made of copper conductors for optimum performance and an adjustable cord organizer with a carrying strap handle, this RV power cord is both practical and portable. [camco.net/](http://camco.net/)



## **HUGHES AUTOFORMERS**

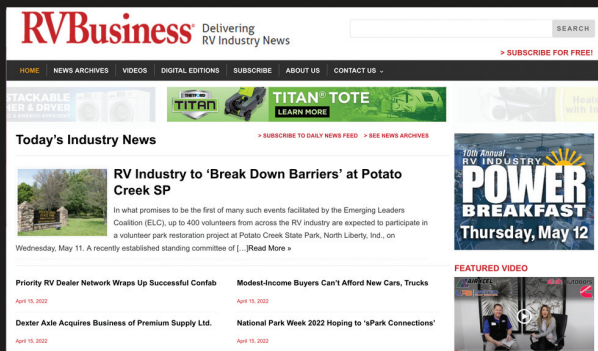
### **Power Watchdog Smartmeter Multimeter**

All RVers should have a multimeter. This is because on RVs, there is both AC voltage from the pedestal, but also DC power as well from batteries or solar panels. Having a smart multimeter is an essential tool to maintain an RV. This smart multimeter can easily detect AC volts, DC volts, continuity, live wire, capacitance and more. It also features a flashlight for working in the dark as well as an illuminated back light — and also has a non-contact voltage sensor. This one tool is loaded with features and replaces the need for several different tools.

[hughesautoformers.com](http://hughesautoformers.com) **RVE**

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