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RV Breaker Tips

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Compass

If you give your recreational vehicle's breaker a break in certain situations, you'll help keep your RV's electrical system in top working condition.

That advice comes from Jim Finch, KOA's assistant vice president/technical services. "There are three times that the campers should turn off the breaker in the campground electrical supply equipment," he says.

Those circumstances are:

- Before you plug your RV into a campground's power pedestal
- Before you unplug your RV from a pedestal
- And when an electrical storm is building in the area.



Jim Finch

Here is why you should turn off the breaker in the first two situations:

"If there's anything inside the RV that is on – if everything were turned off, it wouldn't matter -- in the process of plugging it in and unplugging it, you can get a situation where it can arc across, and it isn't totally safe," Finch says.

"I suspect that if you got an arc, it could damage whatever was turned on in the RV, too," he says, adding that the caution especially applies to 50-amp rigs. And, if lightning is on its way, it's a good precaution to turn off the breaker and then disconnect your RV from the campground's electrical system, Finch says.

"If there's an electrical strike at a transformer or in the supply side of the power company's equipment – and that does happen – it can travel down the lines and burn up equipment in the RV," he says.

Once the thunderstorm has passed, reverse the order of reconnecting your electricity:

- Plug in at the power pedestal.
- Then turn the breaker back on.

"It's just a matter of safety. I know we've had electrical strikes on a transformer inside an RV park. Unlike a normal transformer that maybe supplies two or three houses, a transformer inside an RV park covers dozens of RV," Finch says.

And, lightning doesn't necessary have to strike in the park itself to cause harm.

"If it's close enough to transmit down the line and create a power surge," an RV's system could be damaged, he says. An RV owner turning off the breaker, then disconnecting the rig at the power pedestal has taken similar precautions to putting a surge protector between a wall outlet and a computer.

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