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Winterizing Your RV

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Kompass

Winter, again, is on the horizon, meaning it's time for recreational-vehicle owners in northern climates to protect their campers, trailers and motor homes from the elements.

To help you properly winterize your RV, the Kompass asked an expert to run through the steps: Walter Preble, former owner of the Buckeye Lake KOA in Ohio and a campground owner for 13 years. He now works for KOA specializing in converting campgrounds to KOA facilities.

"The main thing owners need to do is get the water out of the RV system – that's critical," Preble said.

He then outlined a 10-step winterization process that should take less than one hour.

1. Fill all tires to the maximum pressure listed on the sidewalls.
2. Drain and clean all holding tanks.
3. Using low-pressure air, purge all the water lines and open all valves.
4. Drain the icemaker and the washing machine, if the RV has these appliances.
5. Clean the air-conditioning filters.
6. Top all the batteries with distilled water and bring to a full charge. Then, disconnect the batteries and store them in a warm place, if possible.
7. Add a fuel stabilizer to the fuel and start up the motor and generator for 30 minutes.
8. For a motor home, start up the engine and use a fogging oil to coat the cylinder heads, following directions on the can. This prevents rusting of the cylinder headers.
9. Be sure that all food, cans and aerosol cans have been removed from the RV. Leave some rodent pellets and open the cabinet doors, so mice won't chew through them.
10. Upon leaving the RV, set off an insect bomb.

Preble also offered tips on RV storage options and precautions:

- Leave the vehicle in a driveway
- Leave it in a field or campground. Be sure, however, sure that the RV is sitting on a firm surface – place boards under the tires -- to prevent sinking several inches in mud while it is parked.
- If you put a cloth cover over the RV, be careful that the cover is tied down well so wind doesn't get underneath. In a few months, the wind could completely scour the paint wherever the cover touches the vehicle surface.
- If you're using rental storage, check the security of the location since you may not see your RV for 4-5 months. A high-security lock is recommended. Lock the coupler on the tongue as a deterrent to theft.
- If you're using indoor storage, where your RV could be parked several rows from the door, be sure to have an agreement stating when you can get to your vehicle in the spring.

Finally, Preble offered some basic rules of thumb, such as putting a box of baking powder in the refrigerator and cleaning the RV's interior because stains in the carpet aren't any easier to clean in the spring.

"Everything that moves should be lubricated," he said. Also, close the vents and put paper products in a plastic closeable bag to keep mice from scavenging the paper to build a nest.

"What I used to like to do for my customers was, any drain plugs I removed, I'd put in a

plastic bag and write a note about what they went to," Preble said. He would leave the note in the RV for the owner's easy reference the following season.

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