

If there is a way to get in your RV, water will find it. Water leaks on an RV can cause extensive damage and can be extremely costly to repair. When I worked at an RV dealership I saw the damaging effects that water can cause to an RV time and time again. I learned the lesson the hard way. I appraised a unit that was being traded in and didn't identify the extensive water damage, which resulted in a thousand dollars worth of repairs. Hindsight is 20/20 and I quickly learned how to inspect for, and identify potential water damage on RVs. I mention inspecting your RV for water damage in my "Winterizing and Storing Your RV" video and in my "Checklists for RVers" e-book, www.rveducation101.com My recommendation is that you inspect for potential water leaks twice a year at a minimum, once in the fall and again in the spring.

Recently we went camping over the weekend and it rained the entire time. Needless to say we spent quite a bit of the trip inside our motor home. To my surprise we noticed water dripping from around the edge of the dome over the shower. I was surprised because I inspected all of the seams on the roof earlier that spring. I am aware that everything flexes and moves on the RV when you are traveling, and that this leak could have started after my inspection, but this was not the case.

When we returned home from our trip I went up on the roof, bent over, and checked the sealant around the shower dome the same way I checked it during my bi-annual inspections. Everything looked fine so I went back in the shower to look again, wondering to myself if it was condensation that caused the drops of water. I removed the trim ring from around the dome and the entire area was saturated with water. Now, as I stood there scratching my head, I was really confused. I made another trip up the ladder unto the roof. Upon closer examination, ON MY HANDS AND KNEES, I discovered two small splits through the sealant around the dome.

This is when I realized that I wasn't really, truly inspecting for leaks, I was just going through the motions. I also realized how fortunate I was to be in the RV when it was actually leaking. If I hadn't caught it when I did I would be the one paying those costly repair bills.

Every seam on your RV and anywhere the manufacturer cut a hole in your RV has the potential to allow water in. To protect your investment and your wallet take the time to **REALLY** inspect all of these seams and sealants. Water damage on an RV is similar to progressive damage to a tire. The outside of the tire looks fine, but the internal damage over a long period of time causes the tire to fail without any warning. The outside of your RV looks fine but the internal damage caused by water over a long period of time can result in the entire roof, floor or wall rotting away without you knowing it. Here are a few things to look for during your inspections.

Note: Always keep safety in mind when you are working on the roof of your RV. You can be seriously injured from a fall! One reader suggested that you use 2 pieces of 1/2"

plywood, 2 foot by 4 foot, to move around on, and spread your weight out, over the roof rafters.

- ✓ To stop a leak before it starts **thoroughly** inspect all roof and body seams. Consult with your RV dealer for sealants compatible with different types of materials.
- ✓ Look for any discoloration and feel for any soft spots on the ceiling around roof vents, air conditioners, TV antennas, plumbing vents, and any other openings that were cut in the roof.
- ✓ Look for any discoloration or wrinkles in the wallpaper, and feel for any soft spots on the walls around all windows, doors, vents, slide outs, or any other openings that were cut in the side walls.
- ✓ Identify the location of items like the water heater, furnace, outside shower, potable water fill and city water inlet on the outside of the RV and then access those areas from the inside of the RV and look for any indications of water damage around these openings.
- ✓ Open all overhead cabinets and look in the top corner where the walls meet the ceiling for any discoloration or feel for any soft spots. This would indicate a leak at the seam where the sidewall and the roof attach.
- ✓ Check in all outside storage compartments for any indications of water leaks or water damage.
- ✓ Check for any soft spots on the roof itself especially around the roof seams at the front and rear of the RV. Thoroughly inspect all sealants on the roof around every opening.
- ✓ Some Class C motor homes are notorious for leaks in the cab over bed area. Look for any signs of discoloration and feel for soft spots. Reach under the mattress and feel for water.
- ✓ Look and feel on the outside of the RV for any signs of delaminating. Delaminating is caused by water getting between the exterior fiberglass and the sidewall. When this happens the exterior fiberglass separates from the sidewall of the RV. You can stand at the front or rear of the RV and look down the side for any noticeable ripples or what looks like a bubble. You can also press on the sidewalls. If you feel the exterior fiberglass move it is delaminating. Often times delaminating starts around where an opening that was made in the sidewall.

Don't just inspect your RV for water damage; **REALLY** inspect your RV for water damage. If you do this on a regular basis you can locate and repair the source of any

water damage before it has a chance to do a great deal of damage. I think I'll start checking our motor home more than twice a year.

*Happy Camping,
Mark*

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