

How to De-Winterize Your RV

Those chilly, bleak days of winter have now passed, and the warmer weather is quickly approaching; you're probably itching to get out and enjoy the sunshine. But in order to enjoy the upcoming shorts weather, you need to properly prepare your RV so you can savor the joys of RVing rather than fixing problems. In this article, we'll provide a brief overview of the de-winterization process and some additional de-winterization tips to avoid annoying issues in the midst of a camping trip. If you don't feel completely confident personally de-winterizing your unit or are unsure of any of the steps below, it's probably best to have a certified professional complete the process for you. But even if you choose to have your RV professionally de-winterized, it's still helpful to understand the general process.

Supplies

The de-winterization process and RV checks may require the use of certain tools and products that you might need to purchase to complete all the steps.

- Manual screwdriver or [electric powered screwdriver](#)
- Wrench and sockets
- New [anode rod](#) for the water heater (if needed)
- [Freshener](#) for your fresh water holding tank – cleans and deodorizes your water tank and lines
- [Caulking or silicone sealer](#) – for shoring up window seals
- [Roof sealant](#) – inspect the roof before buying the sealant; your roof seals may be fine

Preparing to De-Winterize

De-winterizing your RV means following several different procedures and checklists to complete the overall process. The first and arguably most important process is clearing your water lines of antifreeze. Before starting this process, you'll need to make sure you can access the front and back of your water heater. The **front** of the water heater is always located on the outside of the RV and is the access point for checking the anode rod and inspecting the overall heating system for damage. The **back** of the water heater is located somewhere inside the RV (usually inside a closet or somewhere near the stove), but there are others that are hidden behind a drawer or some paneling. This is where you will turn the water heater bypass on and off.

Procedure

1. **Ensure the black and gray water valves are closed.**
2. **Determine if you need to flush the system before inspecting the water heater:**
 - If there is antifreeze in the water heater, be sure your low point water drains are closed, and proceed to [Step 3](#).
 - If you bypassed the water heater when winterizing, locate the exterior water heater panel where you can inspect the [anode rod](#) for calcification and other damage and replace, if necessary. Once you are finished, proceed to [Step 3](#).
3. **Locate the back of the water heater inside the RV and make sure the bypass is turned off so that water flows freely through your water heater.**

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4. **There are two different ways you can flush out the water system with fresh water:**
 - a. If you have access to a city water hook-up, you will not need to use your RV pump to move water through the system; this means if you have a winterizing kit installed on the pump, you can remove it any time before or after the system flush.
 1. Connect your RV to a city water source.
 2. Open all the faucets (hot and cold) at the same time, including your outside shower if you have one.
 3. Turn on the fresh water source.
 4. Hold the flush pedal down on your toilet for a time until the water runs clear.
 5. Proceed to [Step 5](#).
 - b. If you plan to fill your freshwater tank and flush the system by using the water pump and you have a winterizing kit installed, you'll need to remove the winterizing kit before performing the flush.
 1. After removing the winterizing bypass kit, fill your freshwater tank with water.
 2. Turn on your pump and open all the faucets (hot and cold) in the RV, including your outside shower if you have one.
 3. Hold the flush pedal down on your toilet for a time until the water runs clear.
 4. Proceed to [Step 5](#).
5. **Once the water running out of the faucets is completely clear, close the faucets.**
 - If you are connected to city water, turn off the water and connect the city water source to the inlet for the freshwater tank; fill it with fresh water.
 - If you used your pump, fill the remainder of the tank with freshwater.
6. **Add the [freshener product](#) (if using) into your fresh water holding tank.**
7. **Open up all your faucets one more time and run your water pump until the fresh water tank is completely empty (this will allow freshener to flow through all the pipes as well).**

Deep Clean Your Holding Tanks

Before you hit the road for another summer of fun in the sun, we recommend doing a deep clean of both your black water and gray water holding tanks. We always suggest that you perform a deep cleaning on your holding tanks twice per year, once at the beginning of the RVing season and once at the end before you winterize. So, if you didn't do a deep clean before you winterized your camper, it's definitely a great idea to perform a deep clean on both tanks when you de-winterize. We recommend using [Unique Tank Cleaner](#) to deep clean your black tanks because the concentration of bacteria and enzymes swiftly breaks up any residual waste that is stuck to the floor, walls, or sensors of your black tank. We recommend using [Dawn Ultra](#) to perform a deep cleaning on your gray tanks because it is a fantastic grease-eater and will also not damage the good bacteria you may be adding to your gray tank.

Guide: [Deep Cleaning RV Wastewater Holding Tanks](#)



Summer-Ready Checklist

There are some things you should inspect and test to make sure everything is in proper working order. After all, you wouldn't want to get to your campsite and find that your stove isn't working or you have a leak in the roof when a freak rainstorm hits.

- ❑ **Check window seals** – look for any obvious leaks, cracks, or other damage to the window seals. If you find damage, it's always better to scrape the old seal/caulk off and apply a brand new layer. Applying [silicone sealant or caulking](#) over weathered seals will not provide a strong seal.
- ❑ **Check roof seals** – checking roof seals usually requires walking on the roof and most RV roofs are strong enough for that, but check your manufacturer manual if you are unsure. The sealant on your roof should feel soft and pliable. If it feels hard or has cracks in it, it needs to be replaced, which means it needs to be cleared away completely and a new layer of sealant should be added. Adding fresh [roof sealant](#) on top of damaged or weathered sealant will not provide a strong seal.
- ❑ **Check the charge on your batteries** – it's likely that RV batteries have lost some charge over the winter, so it's always a good idea to charge them before using the RV. If you feel uncomfortable performing battery maintenance, have a professional RV repair service complete this inspection.
- ❑ **Test all your appliances** – this includes testing your LP gas system. We recommend doing a yearly leak test and gas pressure test performed by a professional RV repair service to ensure your gas system is in tip top shape.
- ❑ **Check your RV's tire pressure** – it's very likely that your tires have lost some pressure over the winter, so be sure they have the right amount of air before you head out.
- ❑ **Check your RV's engine or portable generator** – perform normal maintenance for these items, which might include changing oil, topping off fluids, etc.

Note: Again, if maintenance on any of these items is something you are not comfortable with, take your RV to a professional.

