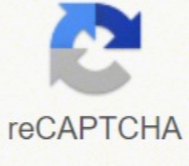




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Why is my camper hot water heater not working

RV Hot Water Heater: Troubleshooting and Parts RV hot water problems are an inconvenience, so check out these RV hot water heater troubleshooting and parts tips and hints to help you figure out what is going on. No Hot Water If you have no hot water, check to see if the bypass valve is in the correct position. The bypass valve is used for winterizing. Perhaps you forgot to switch the bypass valve back? Photo Credit: Forest River Check for open faucets. If you have more than one faucet open at the same time, cold water will flow from one and hot from the other. RV hot water heaters are small and cannot handle having two faucets open at the same allowing for hot water to flow to both. Noisy Propane Burner Does your propane burner make loud noises? An improperly tuned propane burner will make a "roaring" sound. Too much air mixing with the propane will cause this sound. An insufficient flame will also cause soot around the exhaust area. If you have a weak yellow flame, your burner isn't getting enough air. An ideal flame would be one that has a blue flame with yellow tips. Propane Won't Light Check to see if the burner nozzle is clogged. Spiders and other insects like the smell of propane and they will get inside the gas supply tube, this will cause the burner not to light. Check to be sure the exhaust area is clear too. If your RV has been in storage you may need to bleed air out of the line. This takes time, so be patient. If you have an electronic ignition for your hot water heater and it's clicking, you should check for corrosion, or check to see if it's loose or has loose wires. Hot Water Odor Does your hot water have a rotten egg smell? Bacteria in your tank will cause the smell, especially if the water is stale from sitting too long. Yes, water can go stale, but it is easy to remedy. Turn off the hot water heater and let it cool off. Drain and flush the tank. Flushing the tank first will get rid of any loose sediment. Use household bleach to sanitize the tank. Use 10 gallons of water to 5-6 ounces of bleach. This should sit for a bit while it's doing the work. Flush out the bleach until the smell is gone. This most likely will need to be repeated a few times. Close up the tank and fill up the hot water tank again. Slow Hot Water Flow Mineral deposits can build up on the little screen that is inside of the faucets, which will cause slow water flow. A vinegar soak will help take care of this. Soaking the faucets in vinegar should dissolve the calcium deposits. Heat the vinegar in the microwave so it's warm, not boiling. Repeat if necessary. Sooting Check the exhaust area on the outside of the RV for sooting. The following could result in a soot problem: LP gas pressure, dirty orifice, dirty burner, misaligned burner, and a blocked exhaust grill. You may need an expert to check into these to ensure proper repairs. Temperature and Pressure Relief Valve The temperature and pressure valve helps release pressure when it reaches 210 degrees or when the pressure inside the tank reaches 124 to 150 PSI. It's a safety feature. You may see dripping from the valve. With age, the air is absorbed inside of the top of the tank, and you will need to replace that air to prevent the valve from dripping. However, if the valve drips while the tank is being heated, it does not necessarily mean the valve is defective. Photo Credit: RVNet To replace the air do the following: Turn off the water heater and let the water cool down. Check to see if the tank and system are full. Turn off the water supply. Open a faucet to release pressure that is inside. Open the handle of the temperature and pressure valve until water stops. Close the valve, then close the faucet, finally turn the water back on. Maintenance Draining the tanks on a regular basis will alleviate some of the above-mentioned problems. Drain the tank every 6 months if used constantly. Annually, if used only for occasional outings. Drain the tank if you are storing your RV for long periods. Winterize before the first freeze. Following these simple RV hot water heater troubleshooting and parts tips should offer you some of the help you've been searching for. Water heaters raise the temperature of water for use in bathing, cooking, irrigation, industry and other hot-water applications. Here's how the three basic types of water heaters work. Electric Tank-Style Water Heaters The standard water heater found in most households is a tank-style heater powered with electricity. The water heater resembles a large cylinder made of metal and is insulated. At the top of the electric tank-style heater is a connection to a cold-water dip tube that's inserted into the tank. The dip tube is long enough to supply cold water below the electric heating elements in the water heater. The heating elements or burners heat the cold water, which rises to the top of the water heater. A heat-out pipe is connected to the top of the water heater and delivers hot water from the top section of the tank. Gas-Fueled Tank-Style Water Heaters Gas-fueled tank-style water heaters work similarly to electric tank-style water heaters. A dip tube brings cold water into the tank, and a heat-out pipe delivers hot water to hot water plumbing fixtures from the top of the tank. However, gas-fueled heaters work by heating the water in the tank via an internal metal chimney. A gas burner supplies a flame that raises the temperature of the metal chimney. The fumes and hot air from the gas combustion rise up in the chimney and flow outside via the chimney vent system. Both gas and electric tank-style water heaters heat and store water, so hot water is always available. Tankless Water Heaters Tankless water heaters are also called demand-type water heaters. While tank-style heaters act as storage units for hot water, tankless water heaters only heat water as needed. You turn on the hot water tap, cold water begins flowing into the tankless appliance, and the appliance begins heating the water immediately with a heat exchanger. Tankless water heaters are available in gas-fired and electric versions. Tankless water heaters save money because they aren't constantly heating stored water. Hot water continues flowing as long as you need it, and the appliance shuts off as soon as hot water taps are closed. However, tankless water heaters have a limited ability to provide continuous hot water. Gas-fired water heaters offer higher flow rates of hot water than electric tankless water heaters. If a home or business needs a large quantity of hot water for simultaneous uses, several tankless water heaters can be installed. Water Heater Thermostats All types of water heaters include thermostats that the user sets to their preferred temperature. Lowering the water-heater thermostat can help save energy and protect small children from scalding. Higher water-heater thermostat settings can ensure that there is ample hot water for a large family, a busy restaurant or a business that uses a large quantity of heated water. Water Heater Safety Tank-style water heaters include anode rods and temperature-pressure relief valves. Anode rods are sacrificial devices that protect the tank from corrosion. Temperature-pressure relief valves let pressurized hot water out of the tank to reduce risks of water-heater explosions. Both anode rods and temperature-pressure valves must be maintained and tested periodically. MORE FROM QUESTIONSANSWERED.NET RV water heater troubleshooting is relatively simple if you understand the basic operation of the unit. While a book would be required to cover everything that can go wrong with an RV water heater, this entry will serve as a brief overview of water heater operation and the most common and easily solved problems. After all, camping without hot water is not any fun. By knowing the basics of RV water heaters in advance, you might just save yourself the headache of breaking camp and heading to an RV repair facility. "It's definitely not impossible to live without warm water, but it can sure be inconvenient if you haven't planned for it. Most people would probably agree that stepping into a cold shower is definitely one way to wake up on the wrong side of the bed, especially on those already chilly summer mornings." Says Art at RV Care Disclaimer: Working with propane and electricity can be dangerous. Take your RV to a service center if you are not familiar with safely working with these two energy sources. Types of RV water heaters This entry will focus on the most common types of water heaters found in RVs, which contain a tank primarily heated by the burning of propane gas. Some will also contain an electric element which can be used in place of propane or used in conjunction with propane to heat water faster. Manual Gas Valve: As the name suggests, the gas valve that controls the propane is manually activated. The valve is located on the exterior side of the RV and utilizes a standing pilot light which has to be lit from the outside of the RV. DSI (Direct Spark Ignition): This is the most common type of water heater in today's RVs. These models allow the user to flip a switch inside the RV to light the propane burner on the water heater. Click here for an explanation on how DSI works. Electric: As noted above, RV water heaters can also be equipped with a submerged electric element that can be used to heat the water within the tank. RV Water Heater Troubleshooting Before you can attempt to fix your RV water heater, you need to determine why it is not operating as designed. Start by verifying the problem is not an issue with supply. Here is what you will need to check: Pressurized freshwater is reaching the inlet of the water heater. This is most easily tested by opening the pressure relief valve located near the top of the water heater. If water comes out, it is not a supply problem. Use caution when opening the valve as scalding could occur if hot water is present. Propane: Make sure your propane cylinders are turned on and other appliances are operating correctly. Next, try to light the water heater and look or smell for any signs of propane coming through the gas valve. Finally, if you are unsure whether you have propane coming to the water heater (with no nearby ignition sources present) you can "crack" open the gas line where it enters the gas valve to check for propane escaping the gas line by smell, sound, or using soapy water sprayed on the fitting. Secure the fitting when done and check for leaks using soapy water sprayed onto the fitting. Click here to see what can happen if you leave a gas line open. 12 Volts DC (aka battery power): If you have a DSI water heater, you will need to verify that a full 12 volts DC is reaching the water heater when the water heater switch is turned on inside the RV. A wiring schematic can be found in the water heater owner's manual. 120 Volts AC (aka shore power): If your water heater is equipped with an electric element, verify the switch(es) that controls the electric element is turned on and 120 volts is present by safely using a volt Ohm meter. RV Water Heater Repairs If you didn't find a supply issue using the above steps, here are the most common problems with RV water heaters and how to hopefully correct them. Manual Valve Water Heaters Problem: Pilot won't stay lit A) Make sure the thermocouple is free of soot, centered in the flame of the pilot light, and is screwed in tightly to the control valve. B) Remove and clean the pilot burner, pilot orifice, and tube. Note: Only clean an orifice with compressed air as drill bits and other abrasive items can enlarge the opening. Click here to learn how to test a thermocouple using a volt Ohm meter. If the above two steps do not correct the problem, you likely have a bad thermocouple or control valve. Gas valves are not serviceable. Repair should never be attempted. Problem: Pilot stays on, but main burner won't light A) Make sure the valve is turned to the "On" position. B) Check for obstructions in the orifice - clean if needed. C) Pilot is on, but no gas flows from the valve when turned to the "On" position. Valve most likely needs replacing. DSI water heaters Problem: Won't ignite (Nothing happens when the switch is turned on inside the RV) Check to make sure 12 volts is reaching the control board. Voltage can be interrupted by the thermostat or high limit switch which has a reset button. A) When 12 volts reaches the board (assuming the board is properly grounded), three things should happen: 1) The board will begin discharging high voltage to the igniter. 2) The board will send 12 volts to the gas valve. 3) The board will sense if a flame is present and if so, continue sending 12 volts to the gas valve. If no flame is sensed, the board will shut power off to the gas valve. If items 1 and / or 2 do not occur, check the fuse in the board, if so equipped. If the fuse is good, the board is most likely defective and needs replacing. Most RV service centers have a circuit board tester that can check all three functions of the board. Problem: Sparks appear at the igniter, but won't ignite A) No gas from valve - verify 12 volts is reaching the valve and it is grounded. If 12 volts is present, try lightly tapping the valve as it may be stuck, otherwise the valve most likely needs replacing. B) Valve opens, but no gas to burner. Check for obstructions in the orifice. Problem: Ignites, but won't stay burning A) Check the wiring connections for the igniter as the signal that a flame is present may not be making it back to the board. B) Make sure the igniter is centered and can "sense" the flame. Adjust if needed. C) Clean soot or corrosion off the igniter. Both manual and DSI water heaters Problem: Main burner "roars" excessively, causes soot around the exhaust port, or has a yellow flame A) Make sure burner tube is free of obstructions like spider webs, wasp nests, etc. Clean as needed. B) Air / gas mixture is incorrect. Adjust the air following the manufacturer's instructions until the flame is blue in color. Electric Element Problem: There is no hot water when operating the water heater solely on electric A) Check to make sure 120 volts AC is reaching the element. Voltage can be interrupted by the thermostat or high limit switch which has a reset button. B) With the power shut off and the wires disconnected from the element, check the element for resistance using a volt Ohm meter. The correct resistance can be found in the owner's manual. If no resistance is present, the element is bad and needs replacing. Note: Make certain there is water in the water heater tank when operating on electric, as an un-submerged electric element will quickly burn up. Here is a helpful video outlining the different components of RV water heaters, what they do, where they are located along with maintenance, and some additional RV water heater troubleshooting tips. RV water heater trouble shooting can be easily and quickly performed with a little knowledge and basic tools. Hopefully the information you have learned will help you be more prepared. Track your RV maintenance Be sure to keep track of all your RV maintenance with an online tool such as Maintain My RV. Not only can you keep all your maintenance records and documents in one place, you'll receive timely reminders via email when maintenance is due and potentially avoid a costly repair or serious accident. It's the wanderlust, the freedom of the open road. It's not the destination, but the journey. It's exploring the world. You don't need a house because when you travel, you're home. That's RV LIFE. The problem is, planning epic RV journey is somewhat complex. At RV LIFE, we believe it should be simple. As RVers ourselves, we understand the process and have helped millions of RVers journey with confidence and make their travel dreams come true. 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