

# RV Fire Safety



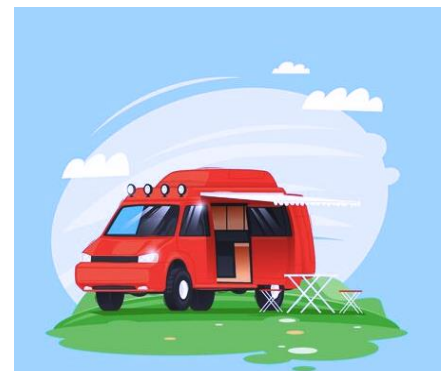
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## **Parked**

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**Whew! We finally made it to a campsite.** There are a variety of interior and exterior fire reports, such as a generator fire, faulty wiring, propane stove, heater, hot water heater, and an overwhelming number of propane refrigerator fires. Thousands of fires were reported in years past due to the propane refrigerator, which was a huge fire hazard. There have been numerous recalls from Dometic and Norcold. Aren't you glad most RVs have switched to using 12 volt compressor driven refrigerators instead of propane?



## **Exterior Fire**

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**Grass Fire** - The exhaust system and catalytic converter have been known to catch dry grass on fire when pulling into a campsite. The catalytic converter operating temperature can be up to 1,600 degrees. You can reduce the fire hazard by parking on dirt or asphalt and avoiding areas of long, dry grass.

**Awning to awning** with a buddy – Years ago, at a FMCA rally, two coaches parked so they could have a large covered area between them. One coach had a fire, and it spread across the awnings and destroyed the second coach. FMCA no longer permits awning to awning parking. (Good idea).

**Campsite Pedestal** - Before plugging in, check it for proper voltages and that no receptacles are charred. Use an Electrical Management System (EMS) to protect your RV against voltage fluctuations, power surges, and incorrectly wired power pedestals.

[https://rvxplor.com/beginner\\_rv/#electricalhookup](https://rvxplor.com/beginner_rv/#electricalhookup)

The number of electrical fires has been rising with the transition away from gas appliances in favor of electric. Faulty wiring is suspected to be the cause of 35% of RV fires. As more and more electronics are added into coach layouts, I expect those statistics will continue to rise.

**Li3 Battery** - Many newer RV models have replaced the lead-acid batteries with a large lithium house battery. A lithium battery fire is a **chemical fire** and does not require oxygen, so extinguisher materials have no effect. Smoke from a li3 battery may contain hydrogen fluoride, which is extremely damaging to the lungs. Even inhaling small amounts can result in damage and fluid in the lungs.

We've all heard how difficult it is to extinguish a lithium battery fire in electric cars. The only way to put them out is by cooling the battery off. In Copenhagen, one method is to bring a large dumpster like tank, pull the car in, close the door and flood it with water, like a little Tesla hot tub.



**Campfire** - Many people like having a nice fire when out camping. (It's more fun than watching TV, especially with some color flame crystals thrown in). Campfires should be at least 25 feet away from your van (and your neighbor's rig).

**Grilling** - If you're doing a lot of grilling or other cooking outside your RV, you may want to have an easy-to-access extinguisher near your grill as well!

**Generator Fire** – Like engine fires, generator fires can be caused by leaking fuel or oil, overheating, and electrical problems when not properly maintained. Rubber fuel lines can deteriorate over time and leak fuel onto hot engine components. Most van generators use LP gas, which can leak and cause an explosion. You already know that generators need to be used outside. They produce CO2 that can leak into your RV through holes, open windows, and vents.



## Interior Fire

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**Electrical fires** – The 12-volt system is the cause of approximately 75% of RV fires, and they usually smolder for a long time before bursting into flames. In fact, many RVers who have had an electrical fire report that their fire detectors never went off.

**Electrical Fire:** The only way to extinguish a Class C (electrical) fire is to turn the power off at its source.

**Cooking** – Use caution when cooking on a propane stove. Make sure curtains, paper plates are well away from open flames. Paper towel holders should not be mounted near stoves. It is hard enough battling a grease fire without having the paper towel roll go up in flames too.



**TIP:** Consider using a Fire Smothering Mat for a kitchen fire instead of blasting extinguisher powder everywhere.

**TIP:** Your mother was right - Never use water on a grease fire. You should listen to her. Keep a box of baking soda handy in lieu of an extinguisher for a kitchen fire. Baking soda is the main ingredient in many powder extinguishers.

**TIP:** Never leave the kitchen while food is cooking or an appliance is plugged in and in use. Unplug all electrical appliances when they are not in use.

**NOTE:** Double check that your propane stove is turned off properly when you're finished, and never use a propane stove to heat your RV.

**Space Heaters** - Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that from 2008 to 2010, portable electric heaters were involved in approximately 1,200 fires per year. Place the heater on a level, stable surface where it won't get knocked over and don't leave them running unattended. Keep combustible material at least 3 feet away from space heaters. (3 feet?? These folks must not have ever camped in a Class-B).

## Odds and Ends

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Here are some subjects I just didn't know where to stick them:

**In Storage** - When parked in storage, we learned the hard way to power everything off once the house battery is fully charged.

**Extension cords** - Everybody knows that extension cords can cause fires. And yet we still don't take the proper precautions as we overload outlets or use the wrong type of extension cord for the RV.

**Mice** - will look for a home in your RV when it is in storage. Mice love to chew on everything, including electrical wires. Cords that are frayed, chewed or damaged in other ways can cause a fire.

**Fueling** – Fortunately, I'm seeing fewer and fewer people fueling their car or truck with a cigarette dangling in their mouth. What is increasing though, is people on cell phones while filling up. Even though diesel is less flammable than gasoline, you should always turn off the engine. The person on the other side of the pump may be spilling gas all over and you could provide the spark.

**Propane fill** – after having your propane tank filled, pull well away from the station before turning the propane switch back on.

**Helping at an active vehicle fire** - If you stop to assist another vehicle on fire, park well back, be aware of the vehicle's fuel type. If it is an alternative-fueled vehicle, do not approach it and call 911 from a safe distance. It could be an electric vehicle battery fire, fuel cell, hydrogen, natural gas, or propane powered. This shouldn't stop you from helping, just be aware before you go rushing in.

**Towing** - Practice quickly unhooking a tow vehicle or trailer in case one or the other is on fire.

**Secure all Items** – I once heard a story from a private pilot and his wife who were flying along in a small plane when they had an engine failure and made an emergency landing in a corn field. The tall corn stopped the plane instantly and when they recovered their senses, they noticed a square hole thru the windshield. It was from an unsecured tool box that had missed their heads by inches. In a crash or roll over, what will make holes in your windshield?

**Location** – Always have GPS location services turned on in your phone when traveling. Emergency responders can get your coordinates from your phone in an emergency, saving valuable time. It also helps to be location aware when calling for assistance – highway, mile markers, town, landmarks, etc. Also be aware that cell phone signals could be limited in your location.

**Document the Contents** – If you ever have the misfortune of being involved in a theft, crash, or fire, the insurance company will want an inventory of the contents of the RV. If possible (it isn't easy), as you buy major items, write them down in a text file or log book, along with the date, store, cost, etc.

## **Be Aware Of the Potential Fire Hazards in Your RV**

It is up to all RV owners to prevent a fire hazard from happening to their RV. Whether brand new or used. We all need to understand and recognize the areas in your RV where a fire could start and take the best precautions to reduce those chances.



**We intend to keep updating these publications with fresh information. Please feel free to contact us if you have any recommendations or notice an error. Our purpose is to ensure the safety of our fellow RVers. Thank you very much.**

## **Forums:**

Facebook – Coachmen Galleria-Beyond-Nova RV Class “B” Owners & Prospects

Sprinter Forum - <https://sprinter-source.com/forums/index.php>

