Tech Talk

by Dwayne Kuemper

Why's My RV Water Heater Always Dripping?

TIM: Hello everyone, welcome to another Tech Tips.

AL: What's the topic today Tim?

TIM: Well Al, I've had a few people ask me why their RV water heater is always dripping.

AL: There are a couple of things you can do to reduce or possibly even eliminate the drips.

TIM: We've got a few Drips around here I'd like to get eliminate.

AL: Ah..Yeh, but seriously folks, the drips we're talking about are the ones from the Temperature and Pressure Relief valve on your water heater, also called the T&P Relief Valve.

TIM: What about the Coffee & P Relief?

AL: Speaking of Drips we'd like to get rid of... Just because the T&P Relief valve is dripping doesn't mean it's necessary to be replaced. In fact the valve is designed to leak, or relief the pressure.

TIM: You see when a tank, or water system, is filled with cold water and heated; the water expands creating the potential for a lot of pressure. If the pressure is not released it could get to the point that the water system is damaged.

AL: So the T&P Valve drains off water to keep the pressure in the water system at a safe level.

TIM: Another question I get asked is, "why doesn't the water heater in my house leak?"

AL: Well, the water heaters, or entire water system, in most houses is much larger than RVs. This not only gives the pressure a much larger area to dissipate over but the water in a house water heater is seldom completely replenished with cold.

TIM: It's when the water heater is full of cold water and then heated that the largest pressure increase occurs and if the pressure is not released, by water usage, the T&P Valve will release the pressure.

AL: The T&P Valve will continue to release the pressure as the water in the system cools and is reheated.

TIM: OK, so how can we reduce or possibly eliminate the water drips from the T&P Valve?

AL: Well an easy method is to follow these five steps:

1. Turn off water heater
2. Turn off incoming water supply (Pump and/or city water)
3. Open the closest hot water faucet in the coach
4. Pull handle of T&P valve straight out and allow water to flow until it stops
5. Allow T&P valve handle to snap shut, turn on water supply and close faucet

If these five steps don't stop the leak, you may need a new T&P Valve.

TIM: Yes but, what exactly does these five steps do?

AL: It creates an air expansion pocket at the top of the water heater tank giving the water some room to expand as it is heated. The water heater is designed to create this air pocket as it is filled.

TIM: In time, the expanding water will absorb this air and the procedure will need to be repeated.

AL: If you find you need to replace the air pocket frequently you may want to consider a small water system accumulator tank.

TIM: Shurflo makes an accumulator tank specifically for RV's. You can get one at Arbutus RV,

AL: An accumulator tank will help with the drip and reduce water pump cycling, giving you a more consistent water flow. This is really nice when you're in the shower.

TIM: Well, that's all the time for today.

AL: If you have any questions, drop in and see the great folks at Arbutus RV.

TIM & AL: Happy Camping.

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