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THIRTY-FOUR FIRE FACTS THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

by Mac McCoy

At best, a fire in your GMC Motorhome can delay or ruin a vacation. At worst, it can mean injury, financial loss and even death. Unfortunately, motorhome fires are one of the largest causes of complete motorhome loss in America today. The following tips can help you recognize the most common fire hazards, and protect yourself from the damage and injury fires are notorious for causing.

1. A pinhole-size leak in a radiator or heater hose can spray antifreeze on hot engine parts. Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol concentrate and water. When the water boils off, the remaining ethylene glycol can self-ignite at 782 degrees F. During your monthly fire inspection, check all hoses for firmness, clamp tightness and signs of leaking.
2. Rubber fuel lines are used to connect metal lines in the fuel system. Check all the lines and connections between the fuel tank and the engine on a monthly basis. If there is any sign of a leak, have the lines replaced and the entire system inspected by a qualified mechanic as soon as possible.
3. A hard-working engine manifold can get as hot as 900 degrees F. The heavy insulation in the compartment reflects the heat back to the top of the engine, and a fire can easily break out. Inspect your radiator and have any problems repaired by a qualified person as soon as possible.
4. Grease, oil and road dust build up on the engine and transmission, making them run hotter. The grime itself usually doesn't burn, but if combined with a fuel leak or short-circuited wire, a fire could start. Keep your coach's underpinnings clean, and it will run cooler, more economically and last longer.
5. A dragging brake can create enough friction to ignite a tire or brake fluid. Some of the worst fires are those caused when one tire of a tandem pair goes flat, scuffs and ignites long before the driver feels any change in handling. At each stop, give tires at least an eyeball check. When tires are cool, tap them with a club and listen for a difference in sound from one tire to the next. You can often tell if one is going soft.
6. Spontaneous combustion can occur in damp charcoal. Buy charcoal fresh, keep it dry, and store it in a covered metal container. Rags soiled with auto wax or cleaners that contain petroleum products or other oil-based cleaning materials can also spontaneously combust if disposed of in a combustible container. Put dirty cleaning rags in a metal container with a lid.
7. A hot exhaust pipe or catalytic converter can ignite dry grass.
8. Driving with propane on can add to the danger if you are involved in an accident or have a fire. Most refrigerators will keep food cold or frozen for eight hours without running while you travel. Shut the propane off at the tank.
9. If you store your coach, be sure to check the flue before starting your refrigerator on propane. Birds and insects can build nests and clog the flue, causing a fire.
10. Batteries produce explosive gases. Keep flame, cigarettes and sparks away. Be sure your battery compartment is properly vented. Keep vent caps tight and level. Check your batteries monthly. Replace swollen batteries immediately. Use extreme care when handling batteries. They can explode and severely injure with sulfuric acid.

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