

Winterizing Your RV

When we purchased our RV it was December - a great Christmas present! However, using our new RV in colder weather was a bit of a learning curve. We were camping in North Georgia and it had not occurred to us that we should be concerned with freezing pipes in an RV. We quickly discovered that water plus cold temps equal trouble. About half-way through our first winter trip, our water stopped flowing. A quick inspection revealed a frozen water filter. It was at the exposed end of the hose and connected to the camp water supply. Jim unhooked the filter and put in the shower to thaw, then examined the hose and camp water hook-up for any signs of freezing. It was all clear. You can bet we paid more attention to the weather forecast after that adventure!

Nonetheless, when we returned home we set out to learn as much as we could about winterizing our RV. Although we live in Georgia and are accustomed to warmer weather, we appreciate the beauty of winter camping. The campgrounds are uncrowded and the weather is delightfully crisp for hiking. We don't venture where the temps are very low, but we have weathered many nights in the RV with outside temps in the 20's.

Here is our checklist for winterizing our Leisure Travel Van Unity

- [Check the forecast!](#) It sounds simple, but we need to know how cold it is going to get to determine how much we have to prepare the RV. We try to stay away from temps below the twenties. It is usually too cold for us to hike, and unless we have a lot of reading and writing to do, staying in our small RV for extended periods of time is not that much fun.
- [Inspect the weather stripping](#) around the fan vents, skylight, windows and doors. Check for dried out or cracking weather stripping and replace it if needed.
- [Cut foam pieces to fit the fan vents and skylight.](#) Insulating those keeps it cozy. If we need to use the fans, we simply remove the foam and replace it when we are done.
- [Invest in windshield covers.](#) We have a set of insulated covers for the windshield and doors but there is a problem with condensation behind the curtains. A friend suggested a fitted, thermal curtain on the **outside** of the glass. It worked like a charm!
- [Heated water supply hose.](#) We learned from our frozen water filter that wrapping it in pipe foam would help with the freezing problem. Having a heated water hose makes sense too, even though we didn't experience a problem with the hose, we think it is worth the investment.
- [Insulating the service bay](#) with fiberglass blankets. Since so much of the plumbing is accessed in the service bay, it just made sense to insulate it. We use thin insulation bats cut to size and loosely tucked into the bay.
- [Keep the water heater on.](#) That keeps the pipes under the sink (where the water heater is located) warm.

- [Test the furnace](#). We have a heat pump and an LP furnace, but the furnace is what keeps us warm in the really cold weather. Check the LP tank to make sure it is full before a cold-weather trip.
- [Consider a ceramic heater](#) to supplement your furnace. They are quiet and reduce the use of the LP. We love this to take the chill off the floors in the morning. Please follow all safety precautions from the manufacturer.
- [Skirt the RV](#). If you are going to be in one place for more than a few days, consider skirting your RV from the ground to the floor of the RV. It may be just enough to keep things from freezing and it will keep the unit warmer too. You could try an RV skirt made of bonded insulation (the kind used in engine compartments) or, try space blankets. These are used by campers to insulate under their sleeping bags and are multi-layered fabric with a reflective outer layer. They are waterproof and can be folded up and stored easily. Attach with Velcro dots, avoiding exhaust and air intake areas.
- [Use RV antifreeze](#) in your black and gray holding tanks. Just pour it down the shower drain and toilet. The amount depends on the size of the tank and how much water is in it. Figure on adding more to the tanks if you continue to use them (from showers and toilet use). The antifreeze also helps keep the "P" traps and valves from freezing. Make sure you purchase the non-toxic RV antifreeze.
- [Consider using RV antifreeze in your fresh water tank](#). You won't be able to use it, but it will keep it from freezing. Use bottled water for cooking, washing up, and drinking. For those who go this route, many campgrounds have decent shower facilities to help you through the cold weather. (This is where we draw the line on temperatures and camping. If it is so cold for so long that we need to put RV antifreeze in all the tanks, then maybe we need to find a warmer destination!)
- [Insulate any exposed pipes](#). A little pipe insulation can make all the difference!
- [Don't forget the slide-outs](#). We have not had any issues with our slide-out, but several friends camping in very cold climates suggest pulling in the slide at night. Apparently, there can be issues with the slide freezing. They also suggested spraying the gasket with RV antifreeze. You may want to check with your manufacturer before spraying anything on the gaskets.
- [Inside, prepare for cold weather](#) just as you would at home. Take extra blankets, warm clothing, bottled water stored in a heated space (in case your lines freeze), a hairdryer to help thaw frozen connections, extra food (in case you get stuck).

This is not an exhaustive list for cold weather camping! If you are camping in freezing temperatures and/or snow, there may be additional precautions you will need to take. Always check with your unit's manufacturer for recommendations.