

RV Pre-Trip

I. Pre-Trip Inspection (Before Every Trip):

- **Exterior:**

- Check tire pressure (including spare) and adjust to recommended levels.
- Inspect tires for wear, cuts, bulges, or uneven tread.
- Check wheel lug nuts for tightness.
- Secure all doors, windows, and storage compartments.
- Check mirrors for proper alignment and cleanliness.

- **Lights:**

- Test all lights: headlights (high and low beams), taillights, brake lights, turn signals, running lights, and clearance lights.

- **Brakes:**

- Test brakes for proper function.
- Check brake fluid levels.
- If towing, ensure trailer brakes are functioning correctly.

- **Hitching/Towing (If Applicable):**

- Ensure hitch is securely connected and locked.
- Check safety chains/cables for proper attachment and condition.
- Verify electrical connections for lights and brakes.
- Check weight distribution and sway control (if applicable).

- **Fluid Levels:**

- Check engine oil, coolant, transmission fluid, power steering fluid, and windshield washer fluid.
- Inspect brake fluid and power steering fluid.

- **Propane:**

- Check propane tank level.
- Inspect propane lines and connections for leaks (use soapy water test). *
- Ensure propane detectors are functioning.
- Confirm propane tank is properly secured.
- Turn off propane while driving.

- **Battery:**

- Check battery connections for tightness and corrosion.
- Ensure battery is properly charged.
- Verify generator is functioning properly (if applicable).

- **Safety Equipment:**

- Verify fire extinguisher(s) are charged and accessible.
- Check the smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detector batteries.
- Ensure first-aid kit is stocked and readily available.
- Confirm you have emergency flares or reflective triangles.

- **Interior:**

- Secure all loose items to prevent them from shifting during travel.
- Close and lock all cabinets and drawers.

- **Water and Waste Systems:**

- Check water pump operation and inspect for leaks.
- Empty black and gray water tanks; ensure valves and caps are secure.
- Fill freshwater tank if needed.

The Soapy Water Test

What you'll need:

- A small container (bowl, cup, or spray bottle)
- Dish soap (any kind will work)
- Water
- A small brush or sponge (optional, for applying the solution)

Steps:

1. **Mix the solution:** In your container, mix a solution of equal parts dish soap and water. You want it to be sudsy but not too thick.
2. **Apply the solution:** Apply the soapy water solution to all propane connections, including:
 - The connection between the propane tank and the regulator
 - All connections along the propane lines
 - Connections with appliances (stove, water heater, furnace, etc.) You can use a brush or sponge to apply the solution or simply pour it over the connections.
3. **Observe for bubbles:** Carefully watch the connections for any signs of bubbles forming. If there's a propane leak, the escaping gas will cause bubbles to appear in the soapy water.

4. **Listen for hissing:** In addition to looking for bubbles, listen for a hissing sound, which can also indicate a leak.
5. **What to do if you find a leak:**
 - **Immediately turn off the propane supply at the tank.**
 - Do not operate any electrical switches or devices, as a spark could ignite the propane.
 - Extinguish any open flames or sources of ignition.
 - Ventilate the area by opening windows and doors.
 - Have the leak repaired by a qualified RV technician before using the propane system again.

Important Notes:

- **Perform this test regularly:** It's a good idea to perform the soapy water test every time you refill your propane tank or before each trip.
- **Don't use open flames:** Never use a match or lighter to check for propane leaks.
- **Trust your nose:** Propane has a distinct rotten egg smell added to it specifically to help detect leaks. If you smell propane, even without seeing bubbles, take immediate action.