

# Safety First!



**OH&S are more than just capital letters, says our resident Techspert from [Southern Spirit Campervans...](#)**



***gauge must be in  
green area***

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In our work shop we have noticed over the years that a lot of RV owners forget about 'health & safety' in their vehicles, especially once 'occupation' is removed from their daily routine.

Very recently a customer's pop-top awning caught fire and he only noticed when the canvas skirt was flaming away! Unfortunate there was no working smoke alarm and therefore the damage was much more extensive and expensive to repair than it would have been with early intervention.

When an vehicle is first registered or modified to become a campervan/motorhome the following is on the MUST HAVE list to get on the road:

- Fire extinguisher
- Smoke alarm

In states like Queensland, where vehicles don't have to undergo annual road worthy inspections as long as they are owned by the same person, there is no one 'official' to oversee any safety checks. For your own protection – and that of fellow travellers – you shouldn't miss the following basic checks on a very regular basis:





# *gas detector*

### **Fire Extinguisher:**

- Check the overall condition and especially check if the handle/release is loose or wobbly
- Check the nozzle isn't cracked or blocked, otherwise replace
- Check the pressure gauge: If needle not in the green zone replace the whole unit immediately
- Check the manufacture date of your fire extinguisher. Most often you'll find this as a stamped number on the bottom (see picture).

While manufacturers say a fire extinguisher works for around 5-15 years we recommend changing it ever 3 years. Once you've used the extinguisher – even if just a little – replace the whole unit. Last but not least, spend a second thinking about the actual location of your fire extinguisher. Is it easy to reach? Is it in the right place? For example, if you're in bed

and need to pass through the kitchen area to evacuate? Make sure its not hidden and buried behind or underneath luggage or fixtures. And while one extinguisher is the minimum legal requirement there's no law against having two, three or more!

### **Smoke Alarm:**

- Test it on a monthly base
- Use top quality batteries and change them once a year.

Tip: Most smoke alarms have a test button on the outside that you press to hear the alarm beep (so you don't have to hold a frying pan with burning food underneath to test it!).

Changing the batteries: Most smoke alarms have a twist opening mechanism, so turn until the clip releases the unit from the wall/ceiling base plate. Turn the unit over and you will see the batteries. Make sure after changing batteries to test the alarm immediately.



manufacturer date is May 2012

### Gas Detectors – LPG & CO

While a gas detector is not on the must-have list for manufacturers I believe one is a good investment if any gas appliances are fitted. For example, an LPG fridge, stove or water heater. There are different set-ups available; some are wired into the 12 V system while others are battery powered.

LPG gas detectors range in price from \$40 to \$120 and are really worth considering. For installation make sure it's less than 30 cm above the floor as LPG, like natural gas, is heavier than air. Also, make sure it's not too far from your gas appliances and/or gas sources.

The other type of gas worth detecting is carbon monoxide (CO), an odourless and colourless gas that's the byproduct of combustion. In high concentrations it causes drowsiness, unconsciousness and leads to death.

In an RV your gas appliances give off carbon monoxide, but especially the cooker as it's

unflued and inside your living area. CO is slightly lighter than air so position a detector around head height. Detectors range from less than \$10 to more than \$100, but skip the cheap imports and go with a name brand around mid price. Unlike an LPG alarm a CO detector should have a digital readout of parts per hundred million. Anything over 35 is – literally – cause for alarm! 🚚

#### Ask The Techspert!

If you have any maintenance questions or problems email us at [techtalk@imotorhome.com.au](mailto:techtalk@imotorhome.com.au) and we'll see what we can sort out. Please include photos as well as a description of any problems and we'll share them and the answers with all our readers.