

Water Quality and Sanitizing Issues

Traveling around the country, you will find that the taste and purity of the available water changes as much as the scenery. There are a lot of things that we can do to assure safe water and improve the taste of the water we put into our rigs. Let's talk about safe water issues first.

Safe Water Issues

Safe water means water that won't make you sick. Safe water is water that doesn't have excessive bacteria, cysts, viruses, chemicals, heavy metals or other health threatening substances dissolved in it. The easiest way to protect yourself from these nasties is to only use water from an approved city water supply or well. This isn't a guarantee, but it does improve your chances of getting water that won't kill you. Chlorinated water is safest and usually won't have infectious bacteria or organic yuck in it, but you are at the mercy of the water supplier when it comes to other contaminants. Thankfully, most of the water you encounter in your travels won't kill you or even make you sick but you can improve your odds by remembering a few simple tips:

- * Only hook your hose to a potable water source. Watch out for faucets at dump stations and heed the warning signs.
- * Use only drinking water safe hoses to supply water to your rig.
- * Never use your drinking water hose for any other purpose.
- * Stow the drinking water hose empty and connect the ends together to keep them clean.
- * Don't drag the end of your drinking water hose on the ground.
- * Always let the water run for a bit at the spigot before connecting up.
- * Sanitize your fresh water tank at the start of the season and drain it if it will be unused for more than 2 weeks.

Sanitizing Issues

To sanitize the tank and the fresh water system, follow your RV manufacturer's instructions or do the following:

1. Prepare a chlorine solution using one gallon of water and 1/4 cup of Clorox or Purex household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite solution). Pour one gallon of solution into tank for 15 gallons of tank capacity.

2. Complete filling of tank with fresh water. Turn on the pump. Open each faucet and let it run until all air has been released from the pipes and the entire fresh water system is filled. You should be able to smell chlorine strongly at each faucet.
3. Allow the chlorinated water to stand for three hours.
4. Drain and flush the tank and system with potable fresh water.
5. To remove any excessive chlorine taste or odor which might remain, prepare a solution of one quart vinegar to five gallons water and allow this solution to remain in the fresh water tank overnight or longer.
6. Drain the tank and, again, flush with potable water.

If in doubt about the quality of the water going into your fresh water tank, add a small amount of common household bleach to the water in the tank. A teaspoonful of bleach per 20 gallons of water is plenty!

If you are really worried, buy bottled water and use it for drinking and cooking!

by Frank Folkmann

