



## **CUSTOMER GUIDE: USEFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

As the motorhome you have purchased is a large investment, we have put together this basic customer guide to explain some useful tips and advice covering both the mechanical and habitation side of your motorhome. We cannot stress enough the importance of following these basic guidelines as this will help protect your investment both in the short and long term.

As many motorhome systems and specifications can differ, as well as our guide below, please also refer to your habitation and mechanical handbooks for general advice.

### **Preparing for the Road**

Before setting off on your travels, please take time to double check the following:

- Check mains hook up lead has been unplugged
- Check all gas appliances have been switched off and turn off all gas bottles (*from the bottle itself*)
- Check all accessories such as awnings and bike racks are stowed away and mounted securely
- Check step has been retracted
- Check levelling blocks or rear steadies have been moved or retracted
- Check free standing table has been stowed away and secured
- Check cooker lid and sink top have been put down
- Check all cupboards and lockers are closed and locked with no heavy items stored in high level cupboards
- Check all loose items such as pots, pans, kettle, cups, plates, tv's, etc. are put away in cupboards/lockers
- Check all windows and roof lights have been closed and locked
- Check the tv aerial/satellite dish has been lowered down safely
- Check grey waste water tank has been emptied
- Check fridge has been switched to 12v operation and secure items for travelling
- Check all swivel seats are in the forward facing position
- Check all cab blinds have been retracted back with latch secured to avoid flying shut during your journey
- Check control panel has been switched off

### **NOTE: FOR ALL ELEVATING ROOF MODELS:**

Please ensure all of the following are carried out prior to driving:

**Ensure sliding door is left open prior to pulling roof down** (as this improves airflow when the roof is lowered).

**Use both hands and handles to pull the roof slowly and evenly into the down position. Before the roof is fully lowered, ensure the canvas is completely clear of the hinges** (as this will avoid bending or breaking the roof hinges and the scissor hinges cutting the canvas).

**Once the roof is down, ensure canvas is fully tucked into the roof lid. Then, using the roof straps provided, fully fasten by pulling these through the clamp removing any slack. Then loop back through and tightly double tie.**

### **Service Intervals (Mechanical and Habitation)**

With a motorhome you have two different servicing requirements – especially if the vehicle is new or still under the balance of the manufacturer's warranty. As well as for your own safety and peace of mind, failure to have both the mechanical and habitation servicing done in accordance with the manufacturer's terms and conditions, could result in the warranty being void.

#### **Mechanical Service Intervals**

Most manufacturers require the engine to be serviced once a year or every 10,000 miles, however, for clarification, please refer to your owner's handbook.

- The MOT is due every year once the vehicle becomes three years old.

#### **Habitation Service Intervals (SMMT Check)**

All of our new vehicles manufactured by Auto-Sleepers, Auto-Trail, Bailey, Elddis and Swift Group come with a minimum of three years manufacturer's warranty.

**NOTE: All new motorhomes must have an annual SMMT habitation check carried out every year to avoid the risk of the warranty being void. This can only be carried out by an authorised dealer holding the franchise for the relevant product(s).**

This applies to any used motorhomes purchased whilst still under the balance of the manufacturer's original warranty.

**For all used motorhomes purchased outside of the original manufacturer's warranty period, for your safety and to ensure you protect your investment, we strongly recommend you have an SMMT habitation check every year from the date of purchase. However, this is not a legal requirement.**

### Preparing your Motorhome for Winter

During the autumn and winter months, it is vitally important that you protect your vehicle against frost. Frost damage to your water systems can cause hundreds of pounds worth of damage and this will not be covered under any warranties or insurances. This includes water heaters, tanks, pipes, valves, taps and toilet systems.

Every season we receive a high volume of customer calls around March time where vehicles have been laid up without the correct care resulting in high repair costs. By following these simple steps, this will help avoid any potential issues.

### Water Systems

- Run your water system with all taps open (kitchen, bathroom, shower), then turn off pump and leave all taps open. This will allow water to run out of pipes and allow air to pass through them. It is also worth removing your shower head (if applicable).
- Drain your fresh water tank and leave open (consult handbook/dealer if you are unsure of its location).
- Drain your waste water tank and leave open (consult handbook/dealer if you are unsure of its location).
- Drain your water heater boiler and leave open (consult handbook/dealer if you are unsure of its location).
- Remove your water pump strainer and leave off to prevent it cracking (if applicable).
- Empty toilet cassette and drain off the flush tank (if it is separate to the fresh water tank).
- Please be aware that you may struggle to lock your water filler cap during the colder months as the cold can affect them. This does not mean that you need a new lock, all you have to do is put the cap in boiling water and leave it until it cools down. This will expand the internal mechanism and the lock will work again.

### General Winter Tips

- Fit your winter fridge vents (if applicable) and also your water boiler cover (*Truma Ultrastore only*).
- Ensure all your windows, skylights, doors, outside lockers are all locked and secured.
- Remove all bedding, clothes, towels, etc., as the rapid drop in temperature can sometimes leave mildew and this may prevent it from appearing. Keep upholstery away from sidewalls as these can also suffer the effects of mildew.
- Run your heating periodically during the winter months.
- Do not leave flyscreens and blinds in the down position. Unless in use, all blinds and flyscreens should be left in the up position to prevent them from losing tension.
- Remember to book your vehicle in for its annual SMMT habitation check if applicable for this time of year. However, please ensure you read through the check list to see exactly what is undertaken on these checks as many of the items in this guide may not be included.
- Keep all ventilation holes free as this is vital to ensure a constant air flow through your motorhome and keep it dry inside.
- Make sure gas bottles are turned off at the bottle and stored in an upright position.

### Mechanical

- Please also refer to your vehicle handbook for engine management during the winter months.
- Check levels of anti-freeze in your engine coolant and windscreen wash.

If you are storing your motorhome or it is parked up for a long period of time, it may be best to leave your handbrake off as this can seize. You will need to ensure you place chocks under all your wheels or/and leave the vehicle in gear.

- As with any motor vehicle engine, we strongly advise you not to leave your motorhome parked up for long periods of time. We suggest you take your motorhome for a good run for at least 1 hour every week as this will help avoid seizures, battery issues, tyre walls crazing, etc.

### Batteries

We receive numerous telephone calls every year, particularly after the winter period, from customers reporting that they have left their vehicles parked up for more than 2-3 weeks causing the engine batteries and sometimes leisure batteries to run flat. Therefore, it is very important to understand that both your motorhome's engine and habitation electrics are running in a constant circuit even when everything is turned off. This can cause a natural drain on your battery and is enough to flatten the battery within 2-3 weeks and the more the battery is left to go flat and recharged, the quicker the life of the battery will deteriorate. To help avoid this issue, there are a few ways of protecting the life and condition of your batteries both in the winter months and any time when your motorhome is parked up for a period longer than 2 weeks:

### **Option 1:**

Take your vehicle for a good drive (1 hour approximately); this will recharge the vehicle and leisure batteries at the same time and this should be done at least every 2 weeks.

### **Option 2:**

Whilst plugged into the mains, your motorhome may have the ability to charge both your vehicle and the leisure batteries (*consult handbook/dealer*). If so, we suggest you plug into mains every two weeks to charge both batteries for 24 hours each. However, please note, you should not leave the charge constantly on as this may cause the batteries to over charge and sulphate.

### **Option 3:**

Disconnect both your engine and leisure batteries and remove them from your vehicle before storing them in a dry ventilated area sat on a piece of wood/carpet (*i.e. avoid leaving them on a concrete floor*). These will still need to trickle charge every 4-6 weeks to keep them topped up.

**NOTE: IF A BATTERY IS LEFT TO GO FLAT AND STAY FLAT, REGARDLESS OF AGE, IT IS COMMON/LIKELY THAT THE BATTERY WILL BE DAMAGED BEYOND A POINT WHERE IT WILL RECOVER (*please refer to our engine battery information below*).**

### **Preparing your Motorhome after the Winter**

Just as it is very important you prepare your motorhome for the winter, it is also vital you ensure the vehicle is checked over ready to get back on the road and for the season ahead. At the start of every season we receive a high volume of calls where the correct steps have not been taken prior to booked holidays resulting in issues whilst away. As this is the last thing you/we would want whilst you are away, we strongly recommend following these steps:

#### **Water Systems**

- Close off your drain taps for your fresh water tank, waste water tank and hot water boiler.
- Refill your toilet flush (*if separate to main fresh water tank*)
- Refit your strainer to the water pump (*if applicable*)
- Fill fresh water system, leaving all taps in the open position during this process to push air out of the pipes. This will help prevent any air locks.
- Turn on the water pump and leave running until you have a steady flow of water coming through.

#### **Batteries**

- Reconnect both your engine and leisure batteries before charging them for 24 hours each or taking on a long drive for approximately one hour.

#### **General**

- Check and run all appliances on gas, electrics, diesel heating (if applicable) until all functioning correctly.
  - cooker hobs
  - ovens and grills
  - heater
  - water heater
  - fridge
- Check tension and operation of all roof lights and blinds, and lubricate if necessary.
- Lubricate all locks, catches, habitation doors, lockers and water filler cap.

#### **Mechanical**

- Check oil, lights and levels
- Check tyre pressures and general condition
- Check brakes and handbrakes

### **Engine Battery Information**

As mentioned previously in this guide, we receive numerous telephone calls every year where customer's motorhomes have been parked up for 2-3 weeks causing the engine battery to run flat. A lack of general maintenance can easily result in even a new engine battery requiring replacement after a short period of time. Therefore, it is vital you follow the battery procedures above not just in the winter months but throughout the season whilst your motorhome is not being used for more than a week.

The information sheet below details a more technical explanation on how to maintain an engine battery:

### **Essential Engine Battery Characteristics and Fault Diagnosis**

Lead acid automotive batteries are built to the highest standards. They are manufactured, in most cases, to correspond with vehicle manufacturer's requirements and specifications. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that a wet battery is 'alive'. Whether it is in service or storage, it has a limited life span. If stored in a wet (filled) condition, all batteries will slowly self-discharge. The higher the ambient (storage) temperature, the greater the rate of self-discharge.

To ensure the batteries are not allowed to discharge to the point where they are either damaged (sulphated) or so that they are incapable of starting the vehicle or operating equipment, regular voltage checks should be made monthly.

Batteries with a voltage of 12.4v or below should be recharged. Recharging must not be effected by the means of a rapid charger. Ideally a recharge rate of 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the battery's capacity should be applied for up to 12 hours. At the end of this period, a fully charged battery will read over 12.65v and all cells should be gassing freely. **Remember, if a battery has vent plugs, these should always be removed before charging.**

### **Battery Problems Caused by Non-Manufacturing Faults**

#### **SULPHATION**

If a battery is allowed to stand in a discharged state for an excessive amount of time, a chemical reaction takes place which can permanently impair performance – this is sulphation. Sulphation can be seen as a fine white/grey coating on the plates. In most cases this signifies **irreversible damage and the battery will not be serviceable.**

This damage can occur either in storage or if the battery is installed in a vehicle (or equipment) that is not used for a period of time, for example, a motorhome, tractor, motorcycle or a boat. Even a car or truck that is stored with the battery connected can still damage a battery in this way. This is because there is a permanent drain on the battery from the clock, alarm, etc. As a result, the level of charge in the battery falls and after a period of time, sulphation will build up on the plates.

The sulphation (lead sulphate) hinders the chemical reaction between the acid (electrolyte) and the active mass (lead compound) in the plates and prevents the battery from operating as normal. **This is not a manufacturing fault.**

#### **Battery Wear and Tear**

During the charge and discharge cycle, material from the battery plates (active mass) is in motion, and through the electrochemical the action produces electricity. Every time the battery goes through a charge and discharge cycle, a small amount of the active mass is lost from the plates. As the ultimate life of a battery depends on so many factors, it is impossible to stipulate a minimum/maximum life expectancy. This process of normal ageing through the charge and discharge cycle will eventually cause the battery to lose capacity and it will come to the point where the battery can no longer start the vehicle/equipment. **This is not a manufacturing fault.**

A battery only has a limited number of cycles (x) it can go through before it loses its capacity to perform. Vehicles with high usage such as taxis, mini cabs, trucks and buses will often subject the battery to its (x) number of cycles but over a much shorter time. As a result, batteries on these vehicles can display the above symptoms after 12-24 months. **This is not a manufacturing fault.**

#### **DEEP CYCLING**

As mentioned above, every time a battery goes through a charge and discharge cycle, a small amount of the material from the plates is lost. If a battery is subject to deep charging (i.e. over 40%) and then rapid charging, this process is accelerated. Additionally, if during the recharge the battery is not adequately compensated for the discharge cycle, the battery will quickly exhibit loss of performance. Even after recharging the voltage will be low (under 12.4v) but the cells will generally give even readings. **This is not a manufacturing fault.**

**TO AVOID THE ABOVE, PLEASE ENSURE YOUR MOTORHOME IS STARTED AND THE BATTERY IS FULLY CHARGED AT LEAST EVERY TWO WEEKS OR TAKEN OUT FOR A DRIVE FOR APPROXIMATELY 1 HOUR.**

#### **Declaration**

I confirm that the above Useful Tips and Advice Guide has been fully explained to me and I have been passed a copy for my records.

**Customer Name:** .....

**Customer Signature:** ..... **Dated:** .....