

Several Issues with the Black Tank

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All from the same RVer

Q: After hearing your presentation on holding tanks at Lazydays about a month ago, and purchasing your set of books, I was excited about getting on top of holding-tank issues. I bought the Johnny-Chock and the probiotic tank treatment.

The service people at Lazydays were very wary of using 3000psi on holding tanks, as is the local mobile RV service tech I'm using here in Naples. I have not done that.

R: Hydro jet cleaning of RV holding tanks has been around since early 2007 (that I know of) - many thousands of tanks cleaned without any damage. The techs who use it are very competent. Most dealerships don't have or know about Hydro jet technology; therefore they are skeptical about it. Remember, this is water pressure, not air pressure.

Q: I was having reasonable success quarter-filling the black tank, added extra water before emptying, and filling it again to flush. I never saw water come up the toilet pipe, though I thought I heard some change down below and stopped. Last Sunday, I decided to wait until I saw water.

R: Did you use a 40 to 50 psi water pressure regulator at the bibb and calculate the fill time based on your tank's capacity and the flow rate of the regulator?? (Double check the Topics Index at the back of the Holding Tank book - Black Tank Rinsing System.)

Q: After an unreasonably long time, I stopped, went outside, and found water pouring out of the underbelly, which was bulging all around under the weight of the spilled-over water. Happily the aforementioned mobile tech guy was able to come Monday and cleaned up the mess, getting rid of the awful smell, all at a cost of just under \$ 350.00 to me. He said that where the pipe goes into the black tank, there is not a really tight seal, at least on the Redwood. At least it is feeding into the tank. Is there anything I can do?

R: You certainly have located a defect in the RV manufacturer construction habits. The down pipe should be securely fastened (possibly glued) to the tanks inlet connection. I've run into a similar problem with the plumbing from sinks into the P-traps. The "belly bulge" mentioned in the answer to the question below may have been the cause of the lack of a "tight seal."

The black tank may have to be removed in order to see exactly how to fix the problem. I recommend contacting the RV manufacturer to discuss this situation with them. If it leaks at the inlet, it is clearly their fault - especially since there is a belly pan covering the undercarriage of the RV (a 5th wheel, I presume) and because of their technique of minimally securing the black tank in place. Since he had the belly pan removed, I'm surprised the tech who cleaned it up didn't discuss options to fix the problem with you.

Q: Now I am totally nervous about my tanks. Though Lazydays said they replaced sensors on the black and galley tanks, both read empty only once, so I can't trust those. Additionally, while the membrane was dropped, I saw that the black tank has a huge bulge in the bottom, and is only supported by a lip halfway up around the sides. This can only be a place that collects sludge. I am tempted to have the tech guy suspend a plywood "floor" under the tank. Is this a good idea? Any other suggestions?

R: You have certainly encountered what is called a "belly bulge" in the Holding Tank book (also listed in the Topics Index). Plywood would work, but another possibility would be to use a 1/8" (or thicker) aluminum sheet firmly secured under the tank with additional lateral braces. Plywood may rot out if a leak persists. You are 100% correct about a belly bulge being "a place that collects sludge."

Hope this helps.

Dale

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