



New Year's Resolution - Clean the Fresh Water Tank



Now, Sanitize the Fresh Water Tank ... You made this same resolution last year but did not quite know how to accomplish the task. It seems like a simple project, but depending on the chassis of your RV, it can turn into quite a chore.

- How do you get any cleaning solution into the blasted tank?
- What kind of cleaning solution can be used?
- Where is the drain to flush the tank?

There are only a few things to know about sanitizing tanks:

- Hopefully your RV never needs a replacement tank, however, it is best not to try to patch it.
- In freezing conditions, drain or use potable antifreeze to keep tanks from bursting.
- It is a good idea to follow this sanitation procedure when you first purchase your used RV, right before you take your first trip.
- Sanitize the water system at least once a year if boondocking frequently or storing for a season.
- Expect to spend 5 to 10 hours on this task. Most of this time is spent watching monitors or waiting out the sterilization time, so you can read or do other chores. **Do not leave the RV unattended during this process.**
- Change the internal and external water filters (and RO filters) after you finish sanitizing the water system.

- Flush out your hot water tank at the same time (see [Flushing the Hot Water Heater](#)).

Sanitizing the Fresh Water System

1. Drain all of the water out of the water system, this includes hot water tank, fresh water tank, and the water lines. You can use the built-in water pump and open the faucets until the water drains out through the sewer hose. To make this process quicker, find the drain valves under the water heater and fresh water tank and drain directly to a bucket, if feasible.
2. Close all of the drain valves. You do not want to start this process with water that is questionable or of unknown quality in your RV water system.
3. Determine the size of your RV water system, the fresh water tank plus the hot water tank and 2 to 3 gallons for water lines depending on the size of your recreation vehicle. (See formula below.)
4. Prepare a 5% solution using chlorine bleach (non-scented and non-gel) and water. Example: For a 60-gallon (227 litres) water tank, add 1.5 cups (360 ml) bleach to 6 gallons of water.
5. Add the bleach mixture to the water tank - **never pour straight bleach into the RV fresh water tank** as this destroys any gaskets along the way. There are two common ways to get the bleach mixture into the tank (see below).
6. Top up the fresh water tank with water.
7. Run the chlorinated water through all lines (hot and cold, one at a time) for **one or two minutes**. You should be able to smell the chlorine.
8. Top up the fresh water tank with water again.
9. Let it sit for 4 hours minimum, overnight is better. **The most important thing is to wait the appropriate amount of time for the tank to be properly sanitized.**
10. Drain and rinse the water tank and water lines several times with fresh water.
11. To handle the chlorine smell and taste, add a mixture of 1/2 cup of baking soda and a gallon of water to the fresh water tank, repeat the fresh water flush.

Note: If you boondock often, consider filtering the water that goes into the tank. (See [Filtering Water Tips](#).)

Two Ways to Add Bleach Solution to the Fresh Water Tank:

1. Using an empty fresh water hose, hook up the park water faucet end first. Using a funnel or spout, add the chlorine mixture to the hose, being careful not to spill (or add over a bucket). Securely hook the hose to the RV outlet. Turn on the water to its highest pressure. Watch the monitor until the tank is half full (careful not to overfill). Turn off the water and open the faucets as described above.



2. Affix a drill hose pump, purchased at the local hardware store, between two small diameter hoses using hose clamps. Using a large bucket

containing the bleach solution, lower one section end of the hose into the bucket, pushing the other section end deep into the RV outlet. Insert your drill and turn it on.

Just in case you need to figure out how much water your fresh water tank really holds, here is the formula: Length x Width x Height divided by 231 equals the Gallons of the Tank.

$$L \times W \times H / 231 = \text{Gallons}$$

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