

Section 4: Tiny House Maintenance

1. Tiny House Trailer Maintenance

Basic Trailer Maintenance. When living in a tiny house on wheels you don't want to overlook what should be the most carefully maintained part: the actual trailer. A tiny house trailer only consists of a few simple things to include the axles, wheels, and brakes, however, the role of the tiny house trailer is crucial. These frames of steel are our foundations. The trailer rests your tiny home, your family and life. Trailers allow you to sit still without motion and with comfort and also allow you to travel. It's for these reasons that you want to make sure and take the proper steps to help keep your trailer safe and lasting long-term.

Check the bearings. Most trailers used in the building of tiny houses have leaf spring axles so checking the bearings is a maintenance performance that must be made. To do this you start by removing the hub cap, removing the dust cap, then use a pair of needle-nose pliers and wait. Checking the bearing is so important to trailer performance and you want to have the proper grease levels in the wheel hubs at all times. This keeps your tires from overheating, your breaks from wearing unnecessarily thin, and more. Some mechanics suggest doing this every 12,000 miles or so. If your tiny house on wheels has been parked for a while and you are preparing to move it you want to check the bearings for proper grease.

Check tire pressure. Before each trip on the road, you should make sure to check the tire pressure in all tires. You want to always inflate the tiny house trailer tires to the maximum inflation indicated on the sidewall. This number varies with each tiny house trailer so be sure to observe what your inflation psi is. You also want to check inflation when the tires are cool and have not been exposed to the sun or after traveling on the highway. And while it may seem okay to underinflate the tires, underinflation is actually the number one cause of tire failure. Tire pressure is essential to performance.

Check Trailer Lights. When your tiny house trailer lights aren't operating correctly you are at risk of being pulled over and getting a ticket, becoming a road hazard, and damaging your tiny house trailer. Before you travel to make sure you have connected the plug from your tiny house trailer to your tow hitch. Verify that both turn signals and the brake signals are fully functional.

Check Lug Nuts. The lug nut tension on your trailer should be checked at least twice during the first 1,000 miles of travel to catch any loosening of the lug nuts if the lug studs creep slightly after being tightened for the first time. From then on you should check the trailer lugs each time you have your oil changed (5,000 to 6,000 miles), your tires rotated and/or balanced or your brakes serviced.

Grease your trailer hitch. Before every 5 to 6 trips out it is a good idea to grease both the trailer ball and the hitch with standard automotive grease just so the natural movement of the tiny house trailer while in tow doesn't cause an annoyance of loud sounds, a buildup of heat around the distribution area, lack of turn radius, or other issues. Use a gun and a tube of automotive grease or a can of multi-purpose grease and a latex glove.

2. Preventative Maintenance

Regardless of the type of tiny house you have, regular maintenance can go a long way to ensuring your tiny house stays at its best. Preventative, regular maintenance can also catch problems before they become too big. It helps to have a maintenance schedule so you don't have to do everything all at once.

Once a Month

Electrical. Check your smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.

Spring

Check exterior caulking and recaulk if necessary.

Clean gutters and downspouts.

Check the roof for defects.

Recaulk showers and countertops if necessary.

Lubricate door hinges.

Summer

Clean exterior cladding.

Seal grout.

Wash range hood filter.

Service heating system.

Fall

Check exterior caulking and recaulk if necessary.

Check weather stripping and adjust if necessary.

Check the roof for defects.

Winter

As the outside temperature drops, so does the ability of inside air to absorb moisture. To reduce the humidity in your tiny house use exhaust fans and/or open your windows periodically to exchange the inside air.

Inspect your tiny house from time to time from top to bottom, inside and out. Check underneath the sink, and the back of cupboards to ensure there are no leaks or pests. If you have tiles in the kitchen and/or bathroom, caulk and fill any

cracks to prevent water from getting into the all behind the tiles. Look for dampness at the base of outside walls and for water staining on the walls and ceilings.

3. Ongoing Costs of Maintenance

For tiny houses with solar power, the solar panels generally require very little maintenance. Solar panels are very durable and should last around 25 to 30 years with no maintenance. The only maintenance you should need to perform is to carefully wash the solar panels clean of dirt and dust two to four times a year, which you can easily do with a garden hose.

Appliances will need to be regularly maintained just as you would in a larger sized house. Make sure to thoroughly clean appliances so they are running their best, and clean out dryer vents.

4. Saving Money

Preventative maintenance of your tiny house will help save you money in the future as you will be aware of problems before they get worse. If you purchase a tiny house with new appliances make sure to deal with any potential problems before the warranties run out. Be aware of all your warranties and keep them in a safe place and check that all appliances are running properly.

5. Tiny House RV Winterizing

Appliances. Propane appliances require a bit of extra help to prevent them from freezing. You might consider adding a propane heat blanket to the tank. This will help you to receive the proper amount of propane pressure in the colder winter months. Appliances that automatically heat up is another way to protect them from freezing. Keep in mind that some appliances are not meant for cold winter weather, so you'll want to research before installing.

Carbon Monoxide Detector. Air quality can be significantly reduced in the winter months because of the lack of airflow, as the windows are closed most of the time. Don't forget to keep your carbon monoxide detector charged. You can also purchase an air quality monitor.

Humidity. It is especially important to protect your tiny house from moisture problems during the colder winter months. Purchase a dehumidifier to help reduce the humidity and/or keep a window slightly open. If you find that there is a lot of condensation on your windows, wipe away the excess moisture when necessary.

Keep the Interior Warm. It's important to make sure that the inside of your tiny house doesn't freeze. If you plan on leaving for a long time, you can shut off and drain your appliances before you go. Some appliances may require some

anti-freeze.

Off-grid Winterizing. If you are parked in an off-grid location, you will need to properly winterize before the cold weather starts. Your solar power may not be enough if your climate has a lot of overcast skies. It is a good idea to purchase a gas generator for those cloudy days. You will also need to direct your greywater disposal correctly. Try digging a french drain (in areas where this is allowed) below the frost line in the early fall.