

Winter brings a unique set of challenges for RVers, and among them, ensuring your furnace runs optimally is crucial for a cozy and comfortable journey. Let's explore practical tips and strategies to keep your RV furnace operating at its best throughout the winter months.

## **9 Tips for a Cozy Winter in Your RV**

### **1. Regular Maintenance: The Foundation of Optimal Performance**

Start your winter preparation with a thorough furnace inspection. Proper maintenance is key to ensuring your RV furnace runs efficiently and reliably, especially during the colder months.

Look for visible signs of wear, such as cracks, rust, or loose wires, which could lead to system malfunctions. Check the heater's ducts and vents for dirt, dust, or debris that might obstruct airflow and reduce heating efficiency. Keeping these components clear helps your furnace distribute warm air effectively throughout your RV.

Don't overlook the air intake and exhaust vents, as blockages in these areas can hinder airflow or cause the furnace to overheat.

Additionally, cleaning internal components like the blower motor and burners can prevent buildup that impacts functionality. Regular maintenance on your RV furnace not only boosts performance but also helps extend the lifespan of your furnace, ensuring you stay warm on every winter adventure.

**Pro Tip: Schedule a professional furnace inspection** annually, especially before winter begins. A technician can catch hidden issues, replace failing components, and ensure your furnace is in peak condition, saving you from costly repairs and unexpected breakdowns.

### **2. Check the Thermostat Settings**

Your RV's thermostat plays a vital role in maintaining a consistent and comfortable interior temperature while also helping you conserve energy and propane.

Start by checking that the thermostat is set to the correct mode (heat vs. cool) and that the temperature setting accurately reflects your preferred comfort level. If the thermostat is not responding correctly, it may need recalibration, replacement batteries, or even repairs.

This not only keeps you comfortable but also reduces unnecessary wear and tear on your heating system.

**Pro Tip:** If your thermostat isn't functioning properly, check for dirt, dust, or debris inside the unit, as these can interfere with the sensor. If you suspect the thermostat is outdated or faulty, upgrading to a newer model with digital or smart capabilities can provide better precision and control over your RV's heating system.

### 3. Inspect and Seal Ductwork

Leaky or poorly sealed ductwork can significantly impact your RV furnace's efficiency, leading to uneven heating and wasted energy.

Warm air escaping through cracks, gaps, or loose connections never makes it to your living areas, leaving some parts of your RV cold and forcing your furnace to work harder.

Start by inspecting all accessible ductwork, focusing on joints, corners, and where ducts connect to the furnace or vents. Look for visible gaps or damage and use specialized HVAC tape or mastic sealant to secure any leaks. Avoid using regular duct tape, as it's not designed to withstand the heat and wear inside HVAC systems.

In addition to sealing leaks, check the insulation around your ductwork, especially if ducts pass through unheated areas like storage compartments or under the RV. Proper insulation helps maintain warm air as it moves through the system, preventing heat loss before it reaches your living spaces. Well-insulated and sealed ducts ensure your furnace runs more efficiently, keeping your RV evenly heated and reducing energy costs.

**Pro Tip:** For hard-to-reach areas, turn on your furnace and feel for escaping air around the ductwork using your hand. If you can't locate leaks or suspect hidden damage, a professional inspection can help identify and repair more complex issues for optimal furnace performance.

### 4. Power Source and Battery Health

A reliable power source is essential for your RV furnace to function properly, especially when temperatures drop.

Your furnace relies on your RV's power supply, which is often supported by the leisure batteries, to operate components like the blower motor and ignition system. Weak or failing batteries can lead to inconsistent furnace operation or even prevent it from running altogether.

Before winter sets in, inspect your batteries for signs of corrosion on terminals, low fluid levels, or reduced voltage. Clean the terminals if necessary and top up battery fluids with distilled water if your batteries are not sealed.

In addition to checking the batteries themselves, test the overall power supply to ensure it is delivering sufficient energy to the furnace. This includes verifying that the charging system, such as your converter or inverter, is functioning properly to keep your batteries at an optimal charge level.

If your RV runs off propane for heating, ensure the propane system is in good working order as it complements the electrical power used to ignite the furnace.

A properly charged and maintained power source ensures that your furnace performs efficiently, keeping you warm even during the coldest nights.

**Pro Tip:** Invest in a multi-meter to regularly monitor your battery voltage and overall power health. Fully charged leisure batteries should typically read between 12.6 to 12.8 volts when not in use. If your batteries drop below this range, it may be time for a replacement or further inspection of the charging system. Staying proactive about battery health will help avoid unexpected furnace failures during winter travels.

## 5. Utilize Extra Heaters Wisely

Extra heaters can be a great supplement to your RV furnace, especially in areas where the heat doesn't distribute evenly, such as colder corners or high-traffic spaces.

Strategically placing extra heaters can help reduce the workload on your furnace, allowing it to run more efficiently and last longer. Use extra heaters in areas where you spend the most time, such as the living area or bedroom, to keep those spaces warm and cozy without overtaxing your main heating system. This approach can also help minimize energy consumption while maintaining a comfortable environment.

When using extra heaters, safety should be a top priority. Choose heaters that are designed for small, enclosed spaces like RVs and include built-in safety features such as tip-over protection and automatic shutoff. Make sure the heater is placed on a flat, stable surface, and keep it away from flammable materials like curtains or furniture. Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines and never leave an extra heater running unattended. By utilizing extra heaters wisely, you can create a warmer and more efficient environment during your winter travels.

**Pro Tip:** Opt for energy-efficient extra heaters with adjustable thermostats and timers to better control heat output and save on power consumption. Infrared or ceramic heaters are excellent options for RVs, as they provide consistent warmth while being compact and safe to use in tight spaces.

## 6. Manage Humidity Levels

Maintaining the right humidity levels in your RV is crucial for both comfort and heater efficiency during the winter months.

Excessive humidity can make the interior feel colder and cause condensation to build up on windows and walls, leading to potential mould or mildew growth. On the other hand, air that is too dry can lead to discomfort, such as dry skin, irritated sinuses, and static electricity. Both conditions can affect how efficiently your RV furnace operates and how comfortable you feel inside.

To manage humidity, consider using a small dehumidifier in humid conditions to prevent excessive moisture buildup. If the air inside your RV feels too dry, especially when running the furnace for extended periods, a humidifier can add moisture back into the air, creating a more comfortable environment. Be mindful of the placement of these devices to ensure they are not obstructing airflow or vents. Proper humidity control not only makes your RV more comfortable but also helps your furnace maintain consistent heating by keeping the air at an optimal balance.

**Pro Tip:** Use a hygrometer to monitor the humidity levels inside your RV. Aim for a humidity level between 30% and 50% to ensure comfort and efficiency while protecting your RV's interior from condensation-related damage.

## 7. Keep Vents and Registers Clear

Blocked vents and registers can severely impact your RV heater's efficiency and cause uneven heating throughout your space. When airflow is restricted, your furnace must work harder to distribute warm air, leading to higher energy consumption and potential strain on the system.

Before running your furnace, inspect all vents and registers to ensure they are unobstructed. Items like furniture, rugs, or curtains that are placed too close to vents can restrict airflow, causing heat to build up in certain areas while leaving others cold.

In addition to clearing obstructions, make a habit of cleaning your vents and registers regularly. Dust, dirt, and debris can accumulate over time, reducing airflow and affecting the air quality in your RV. A quick vacuum or wipe-down can go a long way in keeping your system running efficiently. By maintaining clear and clean vents, you ensure consistent airflow and even heating throughout your RV, maximizing the performance of your furnace.

**Pro Tip:** Use vent deflectors to redirect airflow in areas where heat distribution is uneven. These small, affordable attachments can help direct warm air into cold spots, improving overall comfort in your RV.

## 8. Prepare for Extreme Cold with Insulation

When temperatures drop significantly, even the most efficient RV furnace can struggle to keep up with heat loss. Adding extra insulation to critical areas can make a big difference in maintaining warmth and reducing the workload on your furnace.

Focus on insulating windows, doors, and vents, as these are the most common areas where heat escapes. Use thermal curtains or window coverings to trap heat inside and consider weatherstripping around doors and windows to seal any gaps.

For RVs in exceptionally cold climates, skirting the undercarriage is a highly effective way to reduce heat loss and protect your plumbing from freezing. Insulating materials like foam boards or reflective insulation can be placed underneath your RV to keep cold air out and warm air in. This extra layer of protection not only helps your furnace work more efficiently but also keeps the interior more comfortable, even in freezing conditions.

**Pro Tip:** Invest in vent cushions or covers for roof vents to block heat from escaping through the ceiling. These lightweight, affordable items are easy to install and can significantly improve your RV's insulation during extreme cold.

## **9. Enlist the Help of a Professional**

While DIY maintenance is essential for keeping your RV heater in good condition, a professional inspection can help identify issues that may not be visible to the untrained eye.

Before embarking on your winter travels, consider scheduling a service appointment with a certified RV technician. Professionals can thoroughly inspect and clean your furnace, check for potential problems like gas leaks or failing components, and ensure your system is running at peak performance. Regular professional maintenance reduces the risk of unexpected breakdowns and extends the lifespan of your furnace.

If your heater isn't performing as expected or showing signs of trouble—such as inconsistent heat, unusual noises, or a failure to ignite—don't wait to call in a professional. Attempting to fix complex furnace issues without the right tools or expertise can lead to further damage or safety risks. A trained technician can quickly diagnose and repair the problem, ensuring you stay warm and comfortable throughout the winter.