

Wheels: Gary asks in an e-mail, “You frequently answer questions about the problems of starting an engine for short periods of time. The moisture that is produced in the engine and exhaust system, and the excess unburned gasoline can work its way into the crankcase of a cold engine. So answer this dilemma: I add STA-BIL to the gas in my motor home and store it for the winter in a rented storage lot (no electric available for a charger). If I don’t start the engine occasionally during the winter, the batteries lose their charge. Yes, I could remove three heavy batteries and store them in the garage, but that’s a major and unacceptable task for a 65 year old. And if I do occasionally start the engine, I risk the problems you have mentioned. With tire covers and other storage preparations, driving it is a major operation. What’s the best solution?”

Halderman: I don’t think that moisture in the exhaust should be your primary concern. Because you do not have electrical power where the motor home is being stored, means that you cannot install a floating type battery charger. This type of charger keeps the battery charged without allowing it to overcharge. Here are the steps I would recommend:

1. Continue to use STA-BIL to help keep the gasoline fresh. Be sure to fill the tank just before storing it for the winter to reduce the volume of air in the fuel tank(s).
2. Change the engine oil before storing the vehicle.
3. To help prevent the batteries from being drained, remove the main negative battery cable from each battery.
4. Because it would take driving the vehicle at least 20 miles to fully warm the engine and drive train, and because that is a hassle, don’t do this during the storage season. Instead, try delaying the storage date as late as possible and bring it out of storage as early as possible. If the storage time can be delayed for two weeks and brought out of storage two weeks earlier this means a month less time in storage.

Wheels: Do you have any other suggestions?

Halderman: Yes. Be sure that the tires are properly inflated when the vehicle is being stored. Also replace any tires that are over 6 years old. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), tire age is as important as tread depth when it comes to tire safety. Check the DOT number on the sidewall of the tire (the last three or four number after the word DOT). For example, 1001 means that the tire was made in the 10th week of 2001 and therefore should be replaced.

