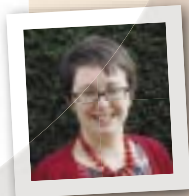


GET PRACTICAL...

with Deputy Editor Rachel Stothert



So, after an unusually warm autumn, we are now in no doubt that winter has definitely arrived. But, while I love this time of year, I know it also brings its own set of challenges for motorhomers.

With the darker skies, colder weather and rain, sleet and snow, there's no denying that winter can be a miserable time.

But with the insulation levels and equipment in modern motorhomes, they can certainly be used all year round.

And that's often the best way to keep the damp away, by constantly using the motorhome and not allowing moisture to build up. It's not a sure fire solution for all motorhomes though.

If you have identified a damp problem in your motorhome, the best thing is to tackle it before it has a chance to take hold.

And that's why annual damp inspections through regulated dealers are worth the money.

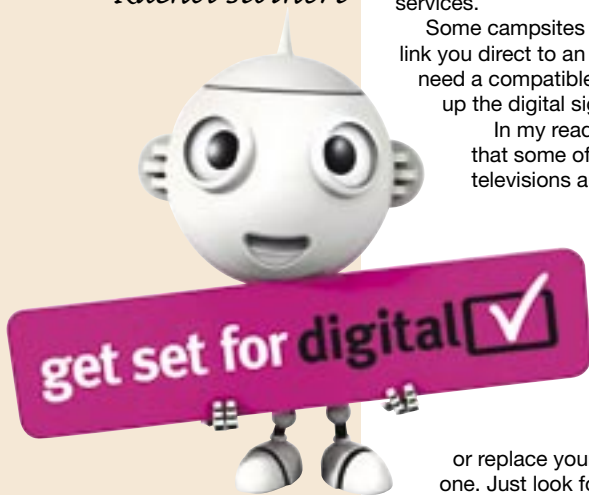
If this has not been done and you discover that damp has taken hold, it can be an expensive problem to repair.

One reader discovered just such a problem and decided to tackle it himself – you can read all about Neil Houghton's determined efforts on pages 161.

I was also surprised to learn that modern commercial vehicles, and therefore motorhomes, come with little or no rust protection underneath. Peter Rosenthal explores the issue further after realising his motorhome needed attention.

And maybe now is that time to sort out some of those other problems that have been affecting your motorhome. Read the Interchange pages (171-180) where you'll find motorhomers with similar concerns getting their questions answered by our motorhoming experts.

Rachel Stothert



DIGITAL

In 2012, the remaining few areas of the UK will be switching over to a digital television signal. If you haven't yet felt the effects at home or away in the 'van, now's the time to start thinking about your box watching wherever you are.

Although you may not be a soap addict, it is always handy to be able to catch the weather forecast to find out what the skies have in store for the next day. Some manage without a TV, but even the least addicted normally carry a box for occasional use.

First thing's first. Assess what equipment you currently own. This includes aerial and television. Although you shouldn't need to replace your aerial, if it is a particularly aged example you might want to look at something newer. Technology in directional aerials has moved on since the early days of fitted aerials; I remember wedging those small set-top ones in windows and even having to sit there with the aerial in a specific position to get a decent telly signal when on holiday with my parents. Either way, you may not need to upgrade your aerial, either set-top or roof-mounted, to receive a digital signal.

Look for the digital tick when it comes to choosing a TV or checking your existing one. This means the TV is likely to work through the whole switchover process.

There are various ways to get a digital Freeview signal in your 'van. Add a set-top digital box to your motorhome kit to plug into your TV (the aerial then plugs into the back of this). Or you could buy a new TV with a digital receiver built in.

The final option involves a satellite dish, and either a paid for service like Sky or Virgin or a free service such as Freesat. Many motorhome accessory specialists offer systems already integrated and set up for Freesat and it negates the monthly bills for the paid-for services.

Some campsites also offer TV points, which link you direct to an aerial on site – you will still need a compatible TV or set-top box to pick up the digital signal.

In my reading it has been mentioned that some of the earliest digital televisions and receivers may not be compatible with the enhanced Freeview signal being broadcast today. If you've got one of those TVs (find out which are affected at www.digitaluk.co.uk/2kequipment) you'll need to buy a box or replace your existing box with a new one. Just look for the 'digital' tick.



SIGNAL STRENGTH

As with the old analogue signal, depending on where you are parked up, the signal strength is going to vary. It's just that with the digital services the signal is either strong enough to provide the channel or it isn't. No fuzzy pictures here, you'll either get TV or you won't.

And, as I've discovered, the range of channels on offer will also vary. Certain places in the country won't be able to receive a digital signal through an aerial and so this is where Freesat and other satellite services come in. However satellite has its own disadvantages as the signal can be blocked if you are pitched up near to or surrounded by trees.

You'll also have to retune the TV every time you move to lock onto the channels available at your next destination. There are comprehensive instructions on the Digital UK website on how to do this, but simply look for the set-up or installation menu on your TV and select the first time installation (or factory reset, full retune or default settings) option. If a message about deleting all channels appears, this is normal and simply click okay. Channels will then reload and be stored.

The whole process can take a few minutes, which can be a bit of a hassle just to watch the weather forecast.

GETTING HELP

If all this sounds daunting the BBC has set up a Help Scheme. You can take advantage of this if you are 75 or over or get certain disability benefits. Those who are eligible will get the equipment to convert one TV set, installation and demonstration of said equipment and follow-up support. The fee is £40. You need to have a valid TV licence too.

I have been informed that this only applies to the main place of residence and not the motorhome. But once you've got the hang of the way everything works at home you can apply your newly found knowledge to the 'van.

CONTACTS

- **Digital UK Advice Line**
Tel: 08456-505050
Web: www.digitaluk.co.uk
- **Switchover Help Scheme**
Web: www.helpscheme.co.uk