To Repair or REPLACE

By Tom Gonser #57082

Photos courtesy of RV Glass Solutions.
It happened to my Country Coach, and it happened to my Alpine coach. Just when you think you have everything working to your satisfaction, you find your view out one or more of your side windows has become increasingly impaired. At first, you think the windows are uncommonly dirty on the outside, so you clean them. That doesn’t work, so you clean them on the inside. But that doesn’t work either. It’s not on the outside, and it’s not on the inside. It’s between those dual panes, and there’s no way you can get it off.

Your first reaction is there must be some unusual temperature change, atmospheric condition or other explanation, and pretty soon the windows will clear up. In time, you reluctantly concede that the window has failed. Usually it looks like condensation or fogging between the two panes. In other cases, you see the spacing material that should be at the outer edge of the glass beginning to creep inward, creating a giant worm-like object weaving across the interior of the window. Either way, your side window has failed. And it won’t look like a healthy window again until you either replace or repair it.

This is a dilemma experienced by RVers far too often, and the experience is a costly one. Replacing a window with a newly manufactured one is likely to cost several hundred dollars. Repairing a window, which involves reusing the same glass panes (which will insure the proper fit) is a better option when the pane is still repairable, but it will still cost on average of $200 or more per window. And, while the repair option is preferable, there are precious few places across the country that are qualified to offer that sort of expertise. Finding a qualified person to do the job may require traveling considerable distances. In my search, I found a few mobile RV service technicians offering this expertise and one nationwide company, RV Glass Solutions (www.RVGlassExperts.com), that specializes in repairing RV side windows. This company has facilities in Oregon and Arizona, but it also is affiliated with a national network of independent RV glass specialists.

Since we live in Oregon, we chose to have our windows replaced at their headquarters facility in Eugene, Oregon, an hour from home.

In the process of repairing four failed side windows, we learned some valuable information.

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Frequency and Causes
We learned from Doug Rutherford, the director of operations for RV Glass Solutions, that glass failure is frequently reported somewhere in the two- to five-year period after purchasing a new RV. RV glass is subject to potentially damaging conditions. The seals on these dual panes are stressed from conditions such as extreme heat and cold, plus major (and sometimes rapid) changes in air pressure resulting from high altitudes. Another fact is that if slide rooms are extended or retracted with the door and windows completely closed, the resulting air pressure on the seals can be sufficient enough to cause the seals to fail over time.

Options For a Fix
Where a failure has occurred, clearly the preferred solution is to repair rather than to replace. There is a savings in cost, and the repaired window is certain to be a good fit. A repaired window will likely include a warranty of at least two years, which seems awfully short to the purchaser but certainly beats the 30-day warranty from one of the major manufacturers of new RV dual-pane windows.

Should you happen to be in Oregon or Arizona where the national provider, RV Glass Solutions, has a facility,
you’ll have an option to have the work done there. You’ll have access to an overnight parking spot if needed. They also will provide information on certain places throughout the country that are able to do RV side-window repairs. If no nearby options are available, they can refer an RVer to a local RV glass shop to remove the window and ship it to their Oregon or Arizona facility for repair. While a cumbersome and time-consuming process, for some it might be an option of last resort.

**Warranty Considerations**

The warranties offered on RV window replacements vary greatly. RVers choosing to buy brand-new replacement windows from one of the major RV dual-pane manufacturers will likely receive only a 30-day warranty that begins the moment the glass ships from the factory. By the time it gets installed, precious few days are left.

More common in the repair of side-window glass is a two-year warranty. Some may provide coverage for up to five years, though likely on a prorated basis. It’s a bit discouraging to find that warranty protection on either new or repaired RV windows is so limited in duration, yet that fact seems to reflect the known failure rate of RV side windows.

The fine print in the warranty for repaired RV side windows is especially important. Does the warranty include both the repair and cost of labor to remove and reinstall the window? And, if a warranty claim is made, do you have to return to the provider’s location to have the warranty work done? We noted a particular advantage in this latter regard to the national provider, RV Glass Solutions. If one of their replacement windows should fail within the coverage period and the RVer is not in or near their Oregon or Arizona facility, the company will remanufacture a new replacement window, ship it to an RV glass specialist near you and have it installed at no charge.

One footnote to our research into this issue involves possible insurance coverage. It seems that side-window failures are especially common in the glass immediately adjacent to the driver’s seat in a motorhome. This has the potential to impair the driver’s vision when looking to the left and/or possibly into the left rear-view mirror. Should this condition be sufficient to be a safety hazard, an RVer would be well advised to see what, if any, insurance coverage he or she may have that could mitigate the cost of needed repair.

**Solution Choices**

The choices for pursuing a solution for premature failure of dual-pane glass can be challenging. However, if your home base or travel plans make Oregon or Arizona an easy destination, you may opt for the national provider that offers the ultimate in glass repair specialization, coupled with the peace of mind of what is likely the most comprehensive warranty coverage available. You can contact RV Glass Solutions at 90 N Polk St., Eugene, OR 97402, call 888-777-6778 or e-mail info@RVGlassExperts.com.

Although our policy is to avoid promoting specific companies or service providers, RV Glass Experts is the only national provider of RV glass repair, and they are quick to recommend some of the small independent shops around the country. This article, as well as many other RV-related articles, appears on Tom and Stephanie Gonser’s online publication [www.rversonline.org](http://www.rversonline.org).

[Editor]

Tom and Stephanie Gonser are extended-time RVers and maintain homes in both Bend and Florence, Oregon. They are both retired from professional careers in law, with Tom having served as executive director of the American Bar Association. Since 1995 they have published the non-commercial information Website, *RVers Online*. Tom has maintained a close working relationship with Escapees for many years on key issues of interest.