

Fuel Stop Etiquette

by Sharleen Nelson

You've recently purchased a Marathon coach and you're off on your first motorcoach adventure. It's springtime. Pretty pink and white blossoms adorn the trees, birds are singing, and "Born to be Wild" is playing on the stereo. Ahhh, the exhilaration and freedom of wide open spaces; nothing tops the joy of cruising in luxury along America's scenic byways. But wait, uh oh, you gaze at the gas gauge and realize that you're low on fuel. You drive by a number of "normal" gas stations, but as an owner of a large, diesel-powered luxury coach, you know that many of these cannot accommodate you. You start to feel a tad panicky, but then across the cerulean horizon, shining like a convivial symbol of hope, you spot it ahead in the distance, an enormous blinking neon billboard: Joe's Truck Stop.

With a sigh of relief you pull around the back where the diesel pumps are located. Perfect! You're the lone customer. You maneuver your coach into the island. This'll be a piece of cake, you think, but wait; you hear a roar of engines. A convoy of big rigs are lining up for fuel behind you.

In the past, the truck stop was solely a truck driver's domain, but with an increasing number of motorhomes now on the road, truck stops have opened their doors to customers other than truck drivers. Truck stops are equally beneficial for RVers because they are easily accessible from interstates, the islands and driveways can accommodate the largest of RVs, and pump nozzles on both sides can fill two tanks at once.

Yet, genial RV/truck driver relations can become strained when certain fuel stop etiquette and procedures are ignored. The most basic consideration for RVers to remember is



that truck drivers are working, so as soon as you are finished pumping, and before you go inside to pay, pull your RV forward to clear the island and allow the next person to pull in. Most truck stops have a line drawn on the pavement so you know exactly how far to pull up. "Time is money for a driver," said Marathon Service Transporter Driver Bob Bomar. "If they're not driving they're not making money, so for a driver, a 15-minute delay at the pump is like an hour."

Marathon Coach Technical Support Technician Leon Snider offered these tips for fueling at a truck stop:

- Depending on the truck stop, go inside and leave your credit card with the cashier. If the fueling island has a telephone handset, you can use it to request that the pumps be unlocked; however, truck stops have been phasing out the practice for RV enthusiasts and limiting phone use to truck drivers only.
- Do not leave your generator or Webasto system running while you fuel. The exhaust fumes are bothersome to those who are behind you.
- If the only tank you are filling is on the right-hand side, you must remove the nozzle from the left pump and turn it on before the right pump will operate. This happens because the pump on the right side is a "slave" to the "master" controlling pump on the left.
- 45' Marathon coaches have tanks on both sides. To fill the tanks, position the vehicle so

each nozzle reaches its respective side. This allows you to fill up more quickly, using both pumps simultaneously.

- Once your tank is full, *do not* top it off because fuel will shoot out. Don't round off the dollar figure, don't top it off. Once it clicks, you're done!
- Cleaning windshields is acceptable while pumping fuel, but not after, and do not use the window brush on anything other than the windows. Depending on the year made, Marathon coaches have a fuel tank capacity range of between 160 and 250 gallons. Although pump flow rates vary from truck stop to truck stop, the approximate time to fill a 160-gallon tank using 2 hoses simultaneously is 4 ½ minutes; using 1 hose takes approximately 9 minutes. Filling a 250-gallon tank using 2 hoses takes ~7 minutes; using 1 hose, ~14 minutes.
- When you replace the fuel nozzle, make sure the hose is not in the driveway. Hoses that have been run over will eventually go flat

and no longer pump fuel.

- Again, when you have finished fueling, pull forward so the next customer can pull in.

In addition to following the proper fueling etiquette, Snider said there are a couple of other ways to promote safety and good will. "General rules of thumb when visiting a truck stop is if you have pets, for their safety as well as the safety of others, take them to a designated area away from the fueling island," he said. And if you park next to trucks, remember to be courteous to truckers who might be sleeping inside. "Avoid banging around in your bays if you're near a truck, even during the day," Snider said. "Some drivers sleep during the day because they prefer to drive at night."

So, there you have it. With a measure of common sense and some simple courtesy, you'll have done your small part to help maintain and advance harmonious relationships between truck drivers and recreational vehicle enthusiasts. Adventure awaits...back on the road you go! •