

## Re-sealing a caravan's shower compartment

It's often said that damp ingress is the biggest killer for caravans, settling as it does between inner and outer skins and causing the wooden frame to rot. Mind you, why manufacturers don't Tanalise the timber they build with, using the pressure-impregnated treatment that is used on my garden fence to make it last 20 years, is beyond me. It's because it would cost an extra two pence halfpenny per caravan, I suppose.

Anyway, grousing aside, modern manufacturers do pay a lot of attention to making sure that caravans' outer skins are proof against rain water but it's surprising how shower compartments may not be so well sealed. This is something that can be relatively easily remedied at home, though there are several issues with regard to sealant that are not widely understood – incidentally the same information shown here applies in the great majority of cases to domestic bathrooms, although some sealants react with metal and manufacturers' data sheets should be checked carefully before purchase.

# Keep it SEALED

Lindsay Porter completes two tasks on his caravan this month, firstly sealing the upholstery against stains and then sealing his shower compartment against water damage

### Sealant: the facts

You mustn't apply fresh silicone sealant on top of set silicone sealant. If you do, the new application won't stick or seal. All the previously applied sealant, whether applied years or a couple of hours earlier, must be cleaned off first.

It's not enough just to clean a surface for

sealant to adhere to it. Any trace of silicones (and they're used extensively in polishes and bathroom cleaners) must be eradicated first.

The best way of removing traces of silicone is with car bodyshop technology, where silicone from polishes ruins any newly applied paint (see the picture captions for more information).



**1** I removed the screws holding the shower head unit in place but found that the Dometic cassette blind would have to be removed as well. This will involve removing the fixing screws...



**2** ...and lifting away the complete cassette assembly. It's nice to see that Dometic have made it easy to remove and refit these units



**3** Cut old silicone sealer away from the nozzle with a craft knife. Use silicone remover to help with the rest. Silicone sealer is tenacious. There are two brands sold by Screwfix Direct



**4** To bond panels with maximum adhesion use an automotive sealant such as Würth Bond + Seal and apply the relevant primer (for plastics, in this case) to the panels



### SAFETY FIRST!

Work only in a well-ventilated area – window/s open. Panel wipe is highly flammable. Keep away from all sources of ignition



**5** I didn't want to permanently bond the plastic shower back unit in place in case it needed to be removed in future. I just wanted to bend the flexible panel out of the way...



**6** ...and apply Autopaint's Panel Wipe to remove traces of grease and silicone. Apply the wipe with one cloth and wipe it off with another so you don't spread contaminants



**7** In the event, it was easier to take off the whole unit, shown here after removal, but with pipes and 12v electrics still attached



**8** While the unit was off I tidied up the wiring by lightly strapping it to the water pipes with cable ties. This ensured that nothing would get trapped when the unit was refitted



**9** I happened to have black butyl to hand but since it wasn't going to show, the colour didn't matter. I placed it round the inner face of the shower unit



**10** Before screwing the panel back into place I placed a blob of silicone sealant in the hole so the screw would seal when fitted

**Top tips!**



Apply masking tape down the edges of where you want the silicone to finish, as shown below.

Have rags and plenty of panel wipe handy. If your first tries go wrong you should stop, wipe off the silicone you've applied with rags and Panel Wipe and start again. You improve with practice!

**>> Info**

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**11** I used masking tape to protect the shower room walls while applying flexible sealant, after re-fixing the unit. You must remember to peel the masking tape off before it sets



**12** I then extended the application of silicone away from the shower head unit to cover any areas into which water might run