

or a squeegee to help it adhere to the surface and to eliminate air bubbles. The resin will begin to cure immediately, so work swiftly but carefully. Allow the resin to cure the full amount of time specified in the product instructions.

If possible, apply a layer of fiberglass to the back side of the damaged area to serve as reinforcement before beginning work on the exterior. When applying a layer of fiberglass cloth to the back side of the injury, make sure that area has been thoroughly cleaned so the reinforcing piece will adhere well. Allow this layer to fully cure before starting to work on the more visible exterior damage.

Depending upon the thickness of the area to be repaired, you may need to apply several layers of fiberglass cloth to gradually build up and match the original thickness. First, use a grinder to bevel the edge around the perimeter of the damaged area. This bevel should be on a 12-to-1 ratio. In other words, if the original fiberglass is a ¼-inch thick, the bevel should extend 12-times that in width — or 3 inches back from the edge of the actual damage. With a reinforcement layer behind

the damaged panel, this beveled edge will allow you to apply multiple layers of fiberglass cloth to the damaged area, each succeeding piece slightly wider than the one previous.

Begin at the very center of the opening and lay in a piece of cloth that reaches just beyond the edges. The next layer will reach a little wider onto the beveled edge and the next will do likewise, gradually building thickness and extending wider over the beveled edge. This process builds strength into the repair. Allow each layer to cure before applying the next, always making sure to eliminate air bubbles between the laminations.

After the resin has fully cured on each layer, grind and sand the area to make the repair patch blend with the surrounding surface. Apply additional layers of fiberglass as necessary until the repair is built up to the original contour and strength.

Grind and sand each layer before applying the next, taking care to maintain the proper body panel contour. Use a block sander to prevent ripples. After the final layer of fiberglass has been applied, cured and sanded, a body filler (such as

Bondo) may be used to blend the repair work. Feather the edges until, by running your fingers over the area, you cannot detect where the original panel transitions into the repair. Naturally, to make the repair invisible, the area must be painted to match the surrounding panel.

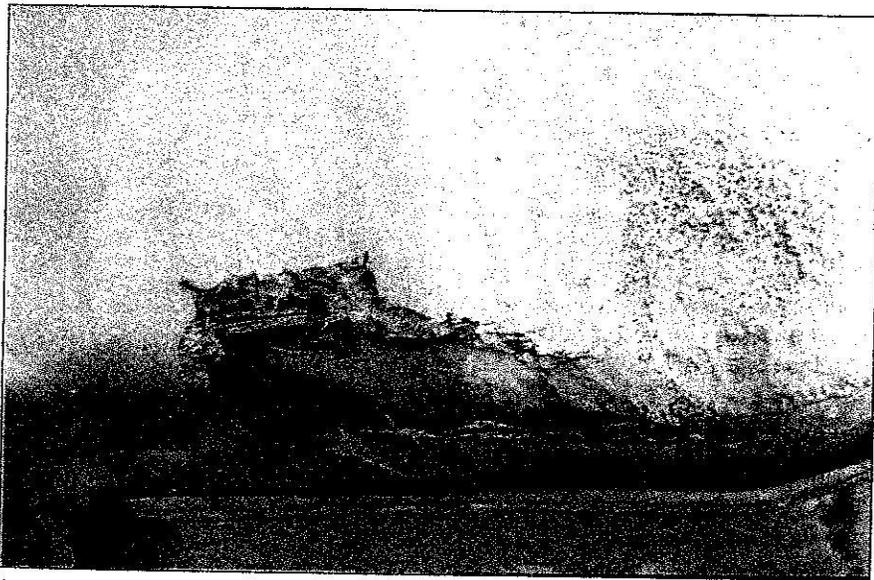
Repairing Cosmetic Damage

It doesn't take long for an RV to begin showing signs of aging. If you look closely, you may find hair-line cracks in the gel coat that have resulted from vibration and flexing of the body. Cracks typically show up radiating from around a point at which some item of exterior equipment is installed to the body. Small cracks such as these are not normally cause for concern, but there are ways to seal them before they increase in size.

One product that is especially made for sealing cracks in gel coat is called Captain Tolley's Creeping Crack Cure. As the name indicates, this is a sealant that was developed for use primarily in the marine industry. The Creeping Crack Cure is a copolymer sealant that is thinner than water, so it seeks cracks and finds its way inside. When it cures, it sets to a clear, flexible and permanent finish. The sealant is very versatile and is compatible with fiberglass, rubber, metal, ceramic, glass, wood and some rigid plastics. It can be applied directly from the bottle or can be injected with a syringe (not included).

Gouges and deep scratches in the surface are concerns of a cosmetic (rather than structural) nature, so they pose no real threat to the integrity of the RV exterior. Nevertheless, most owners don't want to ignore these blemishes. Fortunately, problems of this type can be easily corrected by applying a coat of clear fiberglass resin, allowing it to cure and then sanding until it blends with the surrounding surface.

An excellent product for surface repair is Marine Tex, available at



The leading edge of this fifth-wheel trailer suffered a severe impact, leaving a gaping hole in the fiberglass skin. The owner applied a quick patch over part of the damaged area and painted it white to match the trailer's color. It isn't pretty, but it is a suitable temporary repair.