

# SMOOTH OPERATOR

## IF REGULAR SLIDEOUT MAINTENANCE DOESN'T DO THE TRICK, CLEAN SEAL MAY HAVE A SOLUTION

**T**here is no question that slideout rooms have revolutionized RVing, adding space that can almost double the size of a travel trailer, fifth-wheel, motorhome or truck camper. Whether your RV is fitted with a wardrobe slideout or a full-wall extension, or multiple slides in the living room, bedroom, galley or dinette, maintenance and repairs are important. Defective seals, which are often overlooked, can be the root cause for operational problems.

By following regular maintenance guidelines and understanding where to acquire parts, if necessary, you can ensure slideout performance and protection from the elements. In the event the slideout seals fail, Clean Seal of South Bend, Indiana, offers solutions with an extensive line of sealing products for just about any RV.

Clean Seal has been manufacturing seals and gaskets since 1978 and supplies all types of edge guards,

roof-vent gaskets, pop-up camper seals, and door and window seals, as well as D-seals for various slideout applications. The company has even simplified the process by developing a single-wiper seal to fit most slides. Clean Seal's patent-pending Flip-N-Seal Slide Out Sealing System is unlike anything else on the market and fits a multitude of wall thicknesses. The 3M ST1200 adhesive is designed to keep the seals in place as long as the material is intact.

### INSPECTING AND MAINTAINING SLIDEOUTS

Before ordering any type of seal, it's best to inspect the slides to determine if the seals need attention and make sure any issues that have caused the seals to become damaged are mitigated.

Start by checking the alignment. Ask a helper to extend and retract the slides while carefully watching the action of the seals and the motion of the slide room. If the slide has a topper

(cover), use a ladder and a bright flashlight to watch the way the seals perform under the fabric. Slide toppers are nice, but they don't prevent the seals from shrinking or rainwater from entering the RV.

Make sure the seals are not rubbing against sharp or protruding objects that can damage them. Many screwheads can be covered with EternaBond to protect the delicate seal material.

Measure the clearances on both sides of the slide to be sure it is centered in the opening. Slides that are not centered can apply added pressure that results in premature seal wear.

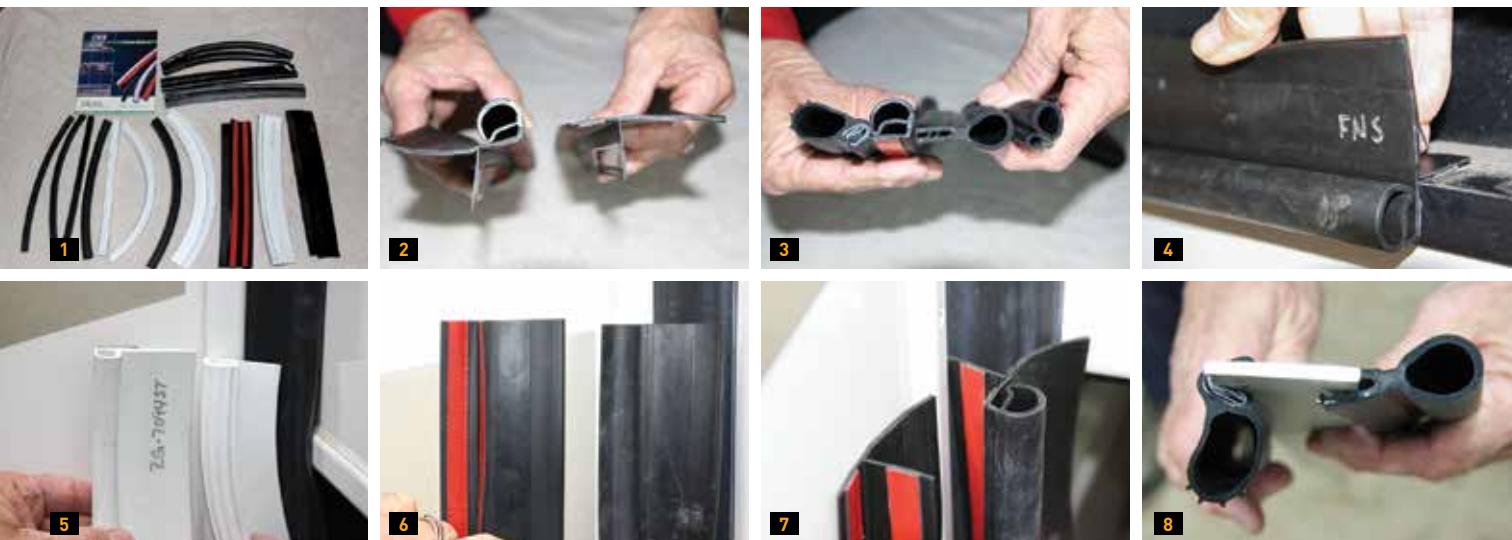
Examine the wiper seals for dirt and debris that can lead to damage when extending and retracting the room. For example, one small piece of a broken tree branch can damage the seals and even scratch the side of the slideout. It's best to repeat the inspection after camping under messy trees. It may be necessary to remove the slide topper to clean out debris and check the seals.

Examine the framework and moldings for loose screws or sharp edges that can harm seals. Repair any seals that are beginning to come loose before long-term damage occurs. A good weather-strip adhesive, available from 3M, makes it possible to reglue sections of self-adhesive seals that have come loose. With proper preparation, a dab of silicone rubber caulking

**Slideouts dramatically increase RV living space, but the seals require regular maintenance and need to be replaced if they fail.**



PHOTO BY SHAWN SPENCE PHOTOGRAPHY



can be used to repair a hole or a small tear. This repair may not last a lifetime, but it might last a fairly long time or get you out of a jam.

Once the seals are free of dirt and debris, apply a generous amount of Protect All Slide Out Rubber Seal Treatment or 303 Aerospace Protectant. Ozone, sunlight and smog have a propensity to rot neoprene, ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) and latex rubber seals over time, and these products are designed to protect against UV radiation and help reduce friction, extending the life of seals. Treatment of the seals should be done at least three times a year. Silicone spray is not recommended for RV seals.

An unnoticed defective seal can cause a serious rain leak, resulting in wood rot and unsightly stains. Proper maintenance can extend seal life for several years. Servicing slideout mechanisms and adjusting the clearances play a big role in preventing seal destruction. Once the seals are damaged, the only recourse is to install new ones.

## REPLACING SLIDEOUT SEALS

Preparation is the key to success when installing self-stick slideout seals.

**9 and 10)** Side views show the hollow core of the rain seal specifically designed to be flattened without crushing the seal permanently. **11 and 12)** After several years of sunlight and ozone exposure, slideout rain seals can deteriorate and become ineffective.

**1)** Clean Seal offers a multitude of seals and gaskets to fit many RV needs. **2 and 3)** Shown here are side views of some of the company's most popular slideout seals and a custom wiper seal. **4)** The universal Flip-N-Seal Slide Out Sealing System combines a wiper seal with a rain seal and is designed for easy application in most slideout rooms. **5)** Available in white or black, these two seals fit a multitude of Alfa fifth-wheel slideout rooms. **6 and 7)** Clean Seal utilizes a patented 3M self-adhesive strip on most of its slideout seals for a solid bond and long-term holding strength. **8)** Metal-reinforced edge-gripping seals are designed to last for the life of the RV.

Removal of self-adhesive seals can be a painstaking process taking several hours. Take your time and use either a plastic scraper or a razor tool, cutting the adhesive tape loose while pulling the seal back at a 45-degree angle.

Careful use of a razor blade with a slow jabbing motion will remove most of the tape as you go down the line. Acetone

will remove small amounts of the tape but not thick sections of glue. Using acetone will help loosen the adhesive, making it easier to scrape off. Be careful with the acetone, as prolonged contact can damage the paint.

The longest-lasting seal material is EPDM. This material is well known for its excellent resistance to ozone and



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aging. It also maintains flexibility at low temperatures, resists alkalis, acids and solvents, and is color-stable.

Start the installation by examining the intended area for any leftover

debris or uneven surfaces. Wipe the surface with a clean lint-free rag and alcohol. Allow the surface to dry before attempting to install the new seals. Note that Clean Seal recommends



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**13 and 14)** This 1996 fifth-wheel slideout seal has deteriorated beyond recognition. The universal Flip-N-Seal slideout seal provides an ideal replacement. **15, 16 and 17)** Whether you use a putty knife or a razor blade, or peel off the old adhesive by hand, all material must be removed before the new seal can be installed. **18)** As always, preparation is the key to success. Be sure to use alcohol to degrease and clean the surfaces before installing the new seals so the adhesive strips will form strong bonds.



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**19 and 20)** Installing the rain seal in a straight line is not an easy task. Follow the edge of the slideout carefully before firmly pressing the seal permanently into place. **21)** All slideout moldings are installed with screws. **22)** If the screwhead is damaging the wiper seal, a little trick for smoother operation is to use a piece of EternaBond to mask the screwhead. **23)** Wiper seals are notoriously difficult to replace. To make the seals last longer, give them a quarterly dose of 303 Aerospace Protectant.

against installing any of its 3M self-adhesive seals or gaskets in temperatures below 60 or above 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

Peel off the release liner in 1- to 2-foot increments. This will prevent the material from contacting an unintended surface or picking up foreign matter. Press firmly while placing on a clean, dry surface. Do not stretch the seals during the installation; doing so will lead to delamination over time.

Installing seals on extended areas can be a bit of a challenge when trying to make a straight line. A good method is to use a 1x2-inch strip of wood or a straight edge clamped at either end of the slide to guide the seal into place. Gently run your fingers over the seals to ensure good adhesion. Allow 24 hours before retracting the slide.

Clean Seal's line of sealing products makes it possible to keep slideouts from leaking and operating smoothly. While it's possible for experienced DIYers to complete the job, it may be something better left to the professionals. Prices for the seals vary by style and length. 📞

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