

Tarp Care and Maintenance

Truck covers perform best when basic care and maintenance guidelines are followed. Tarp manufacturers are the best source of information to ensure optimal performance and product life from truck covers. The general care guidelines listed here will extend a truck cover's service life.

SECURE TIE DOWN

Wind whip is one of the most damaging tarp wear factors. A loosely tied down cover can get torn apart. Wind can damage any fabric and can make a vacuum under a loose cover, drawing in dirt and moisture. Winch straps should never be used over the tarp, only over the load.

- Keep the cover under slight but firm tension. Excess tension puts unnecessary strain on the fabric and tie down points.
- Rubber straps, elastic shock cord or rope arrangements work as tie downs. Check with the cover manufacturer for correct strap size. Note that when using rubber straps, the hook on one end should either be permanently crimped closed onto the tarp or turned away from the tarp so it does not wear through.
- Ensure the cover is snug and tie down points are not pulled much lower than the rest of the cover hem. After the cover is securely tied down, the hem should be straight.
- Tuck corner tabs under the end flap. Loose corner tabs act like scoops and draw dirt and moisture into the load.
- Use batten ropes to prevent billowing, especially on oddly shaped loads or when the cover is not fitted. Billowing creates wind whip and increases wind drag, reducing fuel efficiency. Some truck covers have webbing to prevent billowing.

SELECTION

Choose the correct cover for the job. Custom designed covers are great for their intended uses, but may perform poorly in other applications.

PADDING

Pad sharp corners and edges on the load. New fabrics resist tearing and rubbing, but precautions are still necessary. Premium materials are not required. Pieces of foam, batting, cardboard, or carpet pad all work well.

MOISTURE

Keep covers reasonably dry. Most fabrics are water-repellant and mildew resistant, but covers should be stored as dry as possible. Where condensation is a problem, it is better to store covers on wood pallets rather than floors. Store canvas covers with special care, since cotton fibers absorb water.

HANDLING

Install and remove covers carefully. Overhead cranes may damage tarps. Be wary if a colleague insists on using an overhead crane.

CLEANING

Keep covers reasonably clean. New fabrics are designed to resist dirt and clean easily. Caked-on grime can eventually shorten a cover's service life as well as add weight to a tarp. Some pollutants and chemicals can build up on the cover, degrading certain coatings and fibers. The usual recommended cleaning interval is between three and six months. Harsh cleaning solutions can degrade the special properties of the cover fabric. Check with the cover manufacturer before using cleaner stronger than soap and water. A good truck cover will last for many years, but normal use will eventually show on any cover.

QUESTIONS?

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Tarp Repair

Every type of truck cover fabric has a best patching method. It is very important to use the correct material and method for the fabric. Truck cover manufacturers usually supply repair kits for small patching jobs for a nominal fee. Patch kits normally include vinyl fabric, vinyl adhesive and cleaner; direct questions to the manufacturer.

If the tarp costs more (including time and cost for doing it yourself or professionally) to repair than to fully replace, replacement is recommended. The Tarp Association can help you find a tarp manufacturer that fits your needs.

EMERGENCY REPAIR

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Glue

- To patch vinyl fabric, HH-66 by RH products is recommended. It is used to glue vinyl to vinyl found in RV Awnings, vinyl mats, truck tarps, or almost any product made of coated or laminated vinyl.
- Gluing is best used for small holes and tears, worn areas, and areas exposed to rubbing.
- For vinyl-coated fabric, glue and other adhesives can be a permanent solution.
- Glue and other adhesives will keep water from getting through a rip or hole in fabric.
- All patching should be done from the underside of the tarp. If the area being patched is larger than 10" - 12", both the top and bottom of the tarp should be patched.
- The patch may be sewn or hot air welded.
- Clean tarp material with soap and water or an approved cleaning solution and dry thoroughly before application.

Adhesive Tape

- Peel and stick adhesive for a quick fix.
- Apply to both sides of the hole or tear.
- Clean tarp material with soap and water or an approved cleaning solution and dry thoroughly before application.

LONG-TERM REPAIR

Sewing

- Sewing is one of the strongest repair techniques and is used on large and small repairs.
- Any tarp can be sewn as long as it can be removed and run through a sewing machine.
- Use UV thread to prevent degradation and rapid wear.
- Be careful with waterproof materials. Water can make its way through needle holes especially if water pools in that area of the tarp.

Hot Air Welding

- A hot air gun and a silicone roller are needed. It is recommended that a professional with experience in hot air welding make the repair.
- This method typically requires removing the tarp or awning.
- This fix keeps your tarp 100% waterproof.

General Tips

- Practice on a scrap piece of fabric before you work on your expensive tarp.
- Always cut a patch that is round or oval shaped. Avoid cutting a patch with corners. Corners peel up easily and the rest of the patch will follow.
- A hot air welded or sewn patch may be applied to a glued patch for reinforcement. The glue alone, for example, would not be sufficient for a bounce house that is under pressure.
- Holes in knitted materials can be closed using zip-ties. This repair is unique to knitted materials.
- Zip ties are used on woven materials will typically worsen the problem.

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