

Removal/Re-install of Westfalia Refrigerator

Date: Fri, 30 May 1997 13:58:48 -0400

From: Sean Bartnik

Subject: Re: 85 Westy fridge removal

Removing the Westy fridge is not that big a deal. Getting it back in, though, is a huge Pain In The Ass.

Removing:

Reference Bentley. There are directions in there.

TURN THE PROPANE OFF AT THE TANK.

Remove the refrigerator door. Simply open it, and then lift up, it will come off the hinges.

Do the same with the under-sink cabinet door. Then remove the middle shelf in there. There are little peg-like doohickeys that hold it in. Grab these with pliers and pull them out, they are nothing more than nails.

Remove the silverware drawer, it just pulls out.

Now remove the fridge "faceplate." On the wood face of the fridge, you will find 3 screws, covered with little push-on caps to match the surface. Pry off the little caps and then remove the three screws. Pull the facia out from the right side, then grasp it on the right edge and pull toward the front of the van. There is a notch on the left side that engages the cabinetry, and you are trying to disengage that. Don't break it.

Now you're almost ready on the inside. Go outside and remove the fridge vent cover. I think there are three screws holding it on. Under that, there is a metal plate. Remove the two screws that hold the metal plate to the body of the van. Then there are two more screws that hold the metal plate to the fridge intake/exhaust pipes. Undo those screws and remove the metal plate and rubber gasket. I hope you remembered how it goes!

Now, go back inside. There are four screws that hold the fridge in place. Two are accessible from the under-sink space and two from the storage compartment to the left of the fridge. You'll see them in the side of the cabinet. For the left-side screws, one is in the upper compartment, and one is in the lower. From the under-sink cabinet space, unplug the 120v plug from the outlet. Then get your adjustable wrench and undo the propane fitting union nut. It's left hand threaded, so clockwise loosens. That's how it was on my '81 anyway. Now find the three-prong electrical conector that comes from the fridge and connects in that cabinet space. Pull the connectors apart.

Now your fridge is ready to come out.

Pull it out a bit and then go outside and watch the progress of the intake/exhaust pipes. They like to hang up on the body or on the fiberboard panel inside the van. Make sure they don't. You will have to fiddle with them a bit throughout the removal process.

Once you get it out far enough that the intake/exhaust pipes are inside the van, what works for me is to tilt the fridge back at a pretty good angle so that the intake and exhaust pipes can get past the stove equipment. Then just slide it out. It's not too heavy, just bulky.

Take this opportunity to clean out the hole where the fridge resides. Mine was dusty w/ bits of broken glass, a remnant from a break-in that the PO had.

Also clean off the fridge.

Do what you have to do for 120v to work. While you're back there, make sure the fridge cooling fan works. You'll see it on the back of the fridge when you remove it. It is controlled by a temperature switch mounted to the rear fins on the fridge. When they get to a certain temperature, the switch closes and the fan operates, blowing air over the fins to help circulation, heat transfer, and ultimately, inside cooling.

My fan wasn't coming on when it was supposed to and the culprit turned out to be the switch, which was not bad, but was not in contact enough with the fins to get hot enough to close. I took care of that and it works fine now.

Getting the fridge back in is pretty much the reverse of removal. A note here: The only way you will ever get that fridge back in is if you bend the intake/exhaust pipes so that they will fit under the stove stuff without tilting the fridge. You cannot put the fridge back in at an angle, I've tried it and it just won't go. You have to bend the intake/exhaust pipes, then, through the access panel under the side window and to the rear (not the one that runs the length of the cabinet, but the square one on the cabinet, to the left of the fridge, below the window) try to bend them back so they will go through the hole in the side of the van. It's not easy.

Once you get that done, hook everything back up. Another installation note: Make sure that the plug for the 120v operation doesn't get caught behind the fridge as mine did the first time. Had to pull the fridge back out. It sucked. Reconnect the propane lines, and make it tight. I didn't have any problems with leaks on mine, but make sure.

The fridge probably will not start up right away on propane when you get it back in. You've let a lot of air in the line. It helps to try to light the fridge while the stove is running. Even so, it will take some time before it will start, so be patient.

Make sure you've got everything hooked back up and no parts left over and you should be set :-)