



2010 43QGP Allegro Bus

10/1/2015

126 - FYI – REPLACING THE SLIDE TOPPERS. Our coach is over five years old, when not on the road it is stored inside an enclosed garage so we were surprised at seeing light shining thru all four slide toppers recently while parked under bright lighting, tailgating at our favorite college. As many other owners have done we ordered the four slide toppers thru Tough Top Awnings. From time of order to delivery was five days that time included a weekend. After reading the replacement information on the Tough Top Awning website, we were ready to install the new slide toppers yes, WE I drafted my wife to assist me with replacing the slide toppers. After the new toppers were delivered and before stopping outside work for the day we removed the awning topper cover from the passenger side front slide. The next morning everything was ready to start replacing the toppers until the phone rang, Cathey's niece called to tell us Cathey's sister had been taken to the ER with chest pains during the night. So off to the hospital we go, after lunch Cathey told me to go home no sense in me sitting there waiting for test results.

At a loss (no assistant) I decided to at least remove the old PS front topper. The method used in this case was to partially extend the slide then using a pair of locking oil filter pliers the roller tube was unwound, a half turn at a time. After each half turn a 10 gauge (1/8") steel wire six inches long was inserted thru the left end cap shaft preventing the spring from unwinding. The pliers were rotated locked in place the wire was removed allowing the tube to be rotated another half turn. The wire was reinstalled locking the tube in place this sequence was repeated until the fabric was completely unrolled from the tube leaving the roller tube groove accessible for the next step. Screws installed in the coach mounted topper bead were removed prior to pulling the old fabric from the roller and side wall of the coach.



After the slide topper fabric had been removed, the next step was to prep the roller tube for installation of the new fabric. Foil tape around the left end of the tube was cut than removed allowing easier access to the groove in both roller tube and end cap.

As seen in the previous photo installing the new slide topper bead into the groove is hard work with very little space to work, based on suggestions seen on a Tough Tops Awning video a few modifications were made, making the installation of the topper fabric easier. A 1/8" Dremel with a high speed tapered cutter was used to remove some of the aluminum from the left end awning housing along with widening the bead groove in both end cap and roller tube about two inches tapering back to the original groove width in the roller tube. A small file was used to smooth any rough edges on both end cap and groove preventing damage to the new fabric.



Photo below shows the slide after old topper removal and after the top of the slide had been cleaned, than checked for seal damage or potential leaks.



In an effort to work extra safe while home alone the right end of the roller tube was secured with a second piece of wire along with a pair of locking oil filter pliers preventing possible injury if the wire securing the spring tension on the left end were to break allowing the roller tube to suddenly release the spring tension on the tube.



Needle nose pliers were used to open the left end of the bead channel mounted on the coach wall, then the metal was filed smooth preventing damaging fabric snags, it was now time to begin installing the fabric. Now the fun begins, installing the topper fabric without assistance. Both fabric beads were carefully started into the bead grooves, the fabric was worked an INCH at a time side to side as far as safely possible from one ladder. After that two ladders were used, moving back and forth between the ladders as stated an inch at a time until the fabric was worked into both grooves.



After all the fabric was pulled thru the two beads, the fabric was centered on the roller tube leaving about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch on each end of the tube exposed.

The next step is to prevent the fabric from crawling toward either end of the tube as the slide was extended and retracted. The method chosen by me was to install a six inch long piece of aluminum foil tape over both fabric and tube at the center of the roller tube.



Three hours were needed for me to install the NON ASSISTED slide topper, the aluminum cover over the roller tube waited for help from my assistant.



The remaining three toppers required about six additional hours with the assistance of Cathey. I worked the feed end of the fabric making sure the fabric did not snag on the metal while Cathey pulled the fabric near the beaded edge of both sides of the topper. While installing the two smaller topper awnings we not easy they were not nearly as hard to installed as the two longer and wider front slide toppers.

Cathey paid a physical price from pulling on the front DS topper while sitting on the slide it is an awkward position pulling on the topper fabric working an inch at a time working side to side. Due to the weight of the fabric and the seated position necessary to pull the fabric she has been experiencing lower back pain and arthritic pain in both hands for the past week. She has not complained however in hind sight I should have drafted my Grand-Son-In-Law to assist me rather than risk injury to my wife. The screws normally installed to keep the topper awning centered on the side of the coach have NOT been re-installed. I decided to wait until the toppers have time to seek their happy centered position before installing those screws.



The old topper fabric shown above was removed from the PS bedroom slide, as seen in the photo the portion of fabric left rolled on the roller when the slide was extended was 30 inches long, when the slide was fully EXTENDED the roller tube had 30 inches or about 3.8 revolutions of fabric still rolled on the tube.

Tough Top Awnings cuts the new topper fabric providing only about 1.8 revolutions of fabric left on the tube when the slide is extended plus the width of the slide, IMO those two spring tension revolutions make the tension on the new fabric GREATER than the tension on the OEM fabric. For the long term, will more tension on the fabric be better or will more tension cause the fabric to break down sooner?

I am giving thought to installing center support tube rollers on the two longer and wider slides.