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Installing new slide-topper fabric isn't difficult, and costs just a fraction of a new hardware assembly

The humble slide-topper awning is the unsung hero of our RVing experiences. Just think of all the work they do: They keep the sun off the slideout roofs, which helps prevent UV damage, and in the winter months, they deflect rain and snow and prevent leaves, pine needles and other debris from landing on the slideout roof, which reduces your cleaning efforts and extends the life of seals and the slide mechanism. But as faithful a friend as they may be, they don't last forever — eventually the sun and environmental foes like acid rain and ozone take their toll on the awning material, causing it to fade, split and crack. At some point, a replacement will be necessary; the good news is, you don't have to install the entire assembly — just the material itself.



[1] The old fabric had been subjected to the elements for years, and was practically disintegrating.

Dometic offers replacement fabric that can be ordered in a wide selection of fabrics, sizes and colors to suit most motorhomes. The process isn't very difficult, but you must be able to accurately measure the size of the fabric to make sure the new material fits the slide-topper assembly properly. You'll also need some hand tools, some DIY know-how and some basic knowledge of how the assembly works. The fabric is under spring pressure, so it is imperative that the assembly be handled with extreme care to prevent injury. Also, bear



[2] Rather than slide the old fabric out of the rail, the easiest way is to just cut it with a knife. The slideout was deployed a few inches to create tension in the fabric, after which it was very easy to cut.

in mind that the material can be quite cumbersome to handle on your own, so it's probably a good idea to ask an adventurous friend for some help with this one.

We recently installed new slideout-topper fabric on a 2005 Itasca motorhome that has spent its life in Southern California and was stored outdoors. The fabric had deteriorated to the point that it was no longer functional, which naturally put a damper on any camping trips last summer. We ordered three rolls of material for the varying sizes on the coach, which were installed in about two



[3] Next, loosen the screws that secure the fabric to the roof rail.

hours per awning.

If an installation such as this one is beyond the scope of your abilities, have no fear — a qualified RV repair center or Camping World can do the work for you. And the good news is, you won't have to wait for a special-order size to arrive; Dometic recently began offering bulk SlideTopper fabric to its dealers, which comes in a dispenser box and can be rolled out and cut to the desired width. The material comes with pre-installed poly cords and is available in black and white. So unless you need a special color, make sure to contact your dealer first before ordering custom fabric if you plan to have the replacement material installed for you. Figure around \$400 for the fabric and labor for each slide-out topper.

Then [4] slide the remaining piece of fragment out.



[5] The roller tube arms are secured to the mounting bracket by a 3/16-by-1/2-inch aluminum rivet, which must be drilled out.



[6] With help from a friend, the tube assembly can now be removed. Even with the rivets drilled out, it might take some wiggling to get the tube free. Hold the tube arm tightly and carefully unwind it, counting the number of revolutions until there is no more tension in the spring. Make sure you mark the direction before unwinding. You'll have to wind the new material on with roughly the same number of revolutions.



[7] With the assembly safely on the ground, the old material can be removed from the slot in the tube.



[8] Lay the tube on top of the old material to keep it clean, then feed the material into the slot in the tube.



[9] Wind the arm the same number of revolutions as when it came off (in this case, about eight revolutions) then reinstall it on the octagonal bracket. It might be useful to add one or two more winds because the springs get weaker over a period of time.



[10] Once properly centered on the rod, the pop rivets are reinstalled.



[11] The new slide toppers look great, and are ready to provide protection for many years to come.



- See more at: http://www.motorhome.com/rv-how-to/rv-tech-tips/top-this/?utm_source=exacttarget&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MHN14124_02172015#sthash.RpXl1zO1.dpuf