Chassis

- **Front Suspension Clunk!** We have located the front suspension clunking noise that was in our 2003 and now our 2004. Several others have described similar problems. Freightliner uses a shock with a steel bushing with clearance for the shock bolt going through the bushing. Unless the shock bolt is tight enough to compress the bushing the parts move creating a clunking noise. My shock bolts did not seem loose but once tightened properly the noise abated. This noise telegraphed down the frame and at times sounded like it was several feet behind the cockpit. Other times it the noise seemed under the driver. On the 03 it was a minor nuisance, on the 04 it sounded like the front axle was falling off. This would explain why some coaches develop it right from the factory (my 2004) and others after putting miles on the coach. The Alfa is smooth, quiet and a joy to drive now. (Rik RV Consulting Group) (#2, 09/03)

- **Inverter/Converter:** I did more voltage checking and decide to change out the batteries. Installed 4 new deep cycle 6-volt golf cart batteries. Put them in and waited. The problem was still there. I wondered what if I disconnected the little phone type cable on the inverter that said BAT TEMP. Eureka !!! The voltage immediately jumped from 12.5 volts to 15 volts then settled to 14.5 volts (the normal charging voltage) everything was working. I am still trying to find out if the battery temperature sensor is a needed item (the manual calls it optional). Very frustrating ordeal. (Tony Monson) (#6, 09/04) [EDITOR'S NOTE: This is only an excerpt from the long description of a battery problem Tony had. For the complete description of what he experienced/did, see the September 2004 newsletter.]

- **Pacbrake Exhaust Brake Maintenance Tips** Pacbrake exhaust brakes are relatively maintenance free when used at every opportunity, however to get the maximum amount of trouble free service a few areas require periodic lubrication. Go to www.pacbrake.com and put "CAT 3126" in search block to get to the main reference page. There you can review the maintenance tips with an illustration of where and what to lubricate. (Bruce Monte) (#6, 09/04)

- **Motor Home Equipped with Generac Diesel Generators** - *our special thanks to Jack Exum for permission to use his article from the Alfa Sunchasers newsletter).*

  At the 2005 Alfa National at Gillette, WY, Jon Vyn from Generac was one of the speakers. His address was aimed at motor home owners whose rigs come equipped with Generac Diesel Generators. The motors are Japanese three cylinder models known for reliability and economy. Generac makes the alternators from the ground up.

  The speaker noted that some repair facilities refuse to work on diesel generators, preferring to stick with LP and Gas Engines. The alternators and controls are identical for all three models, so if you need service on the generator and the engine is working, any shop should be able to make the repairs on the alternator portion (but check your extended warranty).

To avoid repairs, a number of worthwhile suggestions were presented. First, generators are made to run (not sit idle for extended periods) -- even stationary units are programmed to start and run for a few minutes every week. The windings have a coating that attracts water and the engine oil drains to a sump. Neither is good for the unit. Periodic running the generator prevents problems. (Note: I use a portable hand start generator and have found it works much better and starts much easier if I run it for 5 minutes at least once a quarter (I store it inside).

The units were designed for normal weather conditions. They are located in a space open to the elements for ventilation and temperature control. Some problems have been traced to washing the RV with pressure washers, which can cause water to enter the generator compartment and soak the alternator windings. It was recommended owners pressure washing their rigs be mindful of the potential problems. The engine requires periodic maintenance -- filters, oil changes and coolant changes. Since the radiators are located above the level of the engine, when coolant is changed the water passages in the engine can trap air pockets. The final step of coolant changes should be to run the engine for 5 minutes to "burp" the engine and flush out the passages and then the radiator should be topped off and the cap installed.

Starting and stopping the generators is a simple process, to avoid problems, a simple procedure should be employed. The rig has a number of appliances battery chargers, etc. that are always on. The load to a starting generator can be surprisingly large. So first flip your circuit breakers OFF, then start the generator. Give the engine four or five minutes to come up to speed and stabilize before turning the circuit breakers ON and introducing a load (this is especially important when air conditioners are to be used). Shutting down the generator is the reverse of start up. When a generator is shut down with a load still on line, the appliances can suck the residual energy out of the generator coils the speaker said, creating problems for the next startup. So remove the electrical load from the generator and run the engine without load to stabilize temperature prior to engine shut down.

Only 5 things can cause the generator engine to shut down unexpectedly.

1) The fuel has run out.
2) The oil level sensor has shut down the engine for low oil.
3) The engine temperature sensor has shut down the engine for dangerous temperatures.
4) The generator load sensor has sensed excessive loads.
5) The generator speed sensor has detected unsafe engine speed.

Otherwise, Generac thinks you should have reliable uninterrupted service from your unit. (#10, 09/05)