

Canopy Tips for RV Builders

Terry Elgood, Chapter 85

The slider canopy skirt on Van's RV's can be difficult to get to fit tight especially the lower rear corners. I have shown this method to several builders, the results are terrific.

Follow the manual except for a few refinements along the way that improve the fit:

1/ Be sure you do not have the bubble too far forward on the frame, the bubble curves up at the rear making the skirt follow, it will not lay flat on the rear deck.

2/ I made the skirt out of one piece on each side. Make a pattern out of mylar or heavy tracing paper. The pattern may be slightly different on each side depending on how the frame fits.

3/ Drill the mounting holes through the bubble into the rear arch frame using a # 40 drill sharpened to cut plastic. DRILL RIGHT THROUGH THE FRAME. Be sure you are drilling square to the surface, cleco as you go starting at the center tube, working both ways.

4/ Cut out the skirt metal leaving a half inch extra front and back (wider) on the piece that lays over the rear of the bubble, the sides are cut to final shape.

5/ Place the skirt in position only drill and cleco the sides

6/ Lay the rear skirt panels down on the bubble, tape in place, mark the center line on both, cut to fit edge to edge with a 1/8 " overlap.

7/ Now the magic trick, cut a hose clamp so that it is left with a tab on the drive part and a tab on the moving part, it should be about two inches long, reasonably flat.

8/ Drill the hose clamp tabs so that a pop rivet can be used to mount it to each half of the skirt

9/ Mark the skirt where the little slider cap goes. On the skirt, mark a line side to side on each half, halfway front to back, place the hose clamp in position on the side to side line and mark where to drill the two pop rivet holes they should be covered later by the slider cap. The pop rivet holes should be about an inch ahead of the rear deck skin and behind the plastic bubble.

10/ This is what tightens up the lower rear corners, pop rivet the hose clamp in place, tighten it so that one side skirt pulls gently against the other just snug don't over do it. Now push the hose clamp with the skirt forward about half an inch or so, it will suck in the lower rear corners. Pat the skirt with your hand flat to make it go into a rest position, tighten the clamp if you need to.

11/ Tape the rear skirt in position so it doesn't creep back, go inside through the front windshield hole and back drill #40 through the frame through the skirt, get your helper to install the 3/32" clecos as you go.

12/ On the outside now, drill #30 (plastic cutting drill) through the skirt, bubble and frame (just the rear side of the tube) cleco as you go starting at the center and working both ways at the same time towards the bottom.

13/ Carry on with the manual for trimming, riveting etc.

14/ One final note, you will need a good solid handle on the center tube to heave the canopy open. A 1/4" bent rod drawer handle with AN3 bolts through the rear end of the center tube works well.

The results of doing it this way are worth the extra effort. I hope I didn't leave anything out, I built my RV9 a few years ago.