

Installing a separate washer and dryer in an older coach

By Kerry Pinkerton

Our previous '03 Discovery had the basic Splendide Washer/Dryer Combo that was standard up until at least 2010 I believe. They work...kinda...until they don't. They are small, take a long time, and don't dry well. Plus, on spin cycle, it shakes the whole coach...a lot actually. Carolyn and I didn't love it but I was able to keep it working. The new '06 had the Splendide removed before we got it. We talked and she was pretty adamant that she wasn't really that interested in another combo unit...or "spinnie washer" as Carolyn referred to it. She'd rather throw quarters at the Laundromat. So I started thinking about how I could do a separate washer and dryer.

The washer is easy. It will go in the normal place where the Splendide was. The water supplies, power, and drain is all still there and a standard 24" washer will fit like a glove once I remove the storage cabinet that was built where the original Splendide was. The problem is the dryer. On our 39L, there just isn't room to stack the dryer above it because it would intrude on the toilet room and make that space really, REALLY tight. I thought about it a good bit and one day had an 'ah HA!' moment. On our 39L, and I expect many others, Fleetwood blessed us with an old style bedroom CRT TV that weights about 70 pounds and is 18" deep. On ours, we had already removed the old beast and just used the resulting hole for storage. It's about 30" deep and not QUITE tall enough to fit a dryer. What I decided is that if I sacrifice the upper drawer, a dryer will fit just about perfectly. It is about 8' from the washer but Carolyn said that was acceptable. The power for the TV is already there and it MIGHT be enough to run the dryer. If not, I'll have to run a new power line from the breaker box under the bed. Obviously, I'll have to cut the cabinet a bit and do a little framing. In addition, I'll have to cut a hole for a new dryer vent either on the side or back.

Ok, so I had a plan. Now to find the units. I got the model numbers from the Westinghouse units in the new coaches. Yes, they are available. Yes they are EXPENSIVE and I wanted to lay eyes on them. I looked and looked on the internet. I mean for weeks I looked. We went by Best Buy and they were useless. You can order from them on the net but the store was less than useless. They deserve for Amazon to kick their butt...

I looked at several different manufactures from India and wasn't impressed.

I called the surplus/salvage places but wasn't impressed and the idea of buying used didn't sit well with Carolyn. Scratch and Dent was appealing but none of the ones I found had any 24" models.

We'd been up and the kids in Maryland and I looked a good bit while up there. When we got home I had kind of a decompression day and I happened to run across something at a Sears Outlet. Ding Ding Ding. We have a winner. Not only did they have 24" units scratch and dent but they had them in stock. I found the ones with scratches and dents where we wouldn't see them. They were in stock in Chattanooga and I called to make sure they were actually there before I drove the 100 miles. Also verified that both units were 120V. By dark I was back with the units. It was a little over a grand for both units. If you go to Sears and search for Kenmore 24" compact washer it will show up. Currently on sale for \$900 and the dryer is on sale for \$550.

So it's on. The money is spent and the only thing left is to make it work. I'm not really concerned but it's going to be some work. Before I got carried away inside the coach, I plugged in both units sitting in the floor of my shop and washed and dried a load of clothes. Both units worked perfectly and were quiet and smooth. They are also considerably larger capacity than the Splendide.

I've started an album and will update it as I go: <https://groups.io/g/discoveryowners/album?id=42108>

Here are a couple photos of the units. The washer is pretty nice...even has steam but the dryer is basic.



I would have preferred a dryer with the controls on the bottom but we're tall and it won't be a problem. The BIGGEST issue is that the drawer we're losing is MY underwear and sock drawer. Oh well, perhaps Carolyn will give me one of hers. LOL!

So now it is time to get to work. First order of business is to remove the cabinet doors and frame around the washer. Just a few screws. I have a small SnapOn lithium ion screw driver that is worth it's weight in gold. Light enough that I can hold it out with one hand and put it in a screw without shaking. Enough torque to do most anything I've ever asked it to do. It's lying inside the empty cabinet in the photo. This took 15 minutes. The hookups are in the rear and once I removed the contents of the cabinet and lifted out the bottom, it was easy to reach everything. That is, power, drain, water hookups are all right there.



Now for the hard part...the dryer. While a stackable configuration would have been preferable, it just would not work in our floor plan. However, our coach came with a big honking CRT TV in the bedroom. It had been removed and the resulting space was 32" deep and 25 1/4" wide. Unfortunately it was not tall enough for the dryer so we're going to have to lose a drawer. Since I knew this was going to be messy, I removed EVERYTHING from the bedroom...clothes, mattress, drawers...everything. In the photo below, you can see where the opening will be outlined by blue tape.



Once the fascia was cut out, what was left was the drawer structure that will need to be modified. I did not worry about the framing on the sides. The dryer will sit on the 2x4 framing which is securely screwed into the framing and the paneling. The old floor of the TV 'box' is a drop in perfect fit.



I had hoped that the existing TV outlet would work for the dryer but I discovered it was on the inverter. That would work but only if we didn't want to run the microwave, toaster, hair dryer, etc, while the dryer was drying. So I decided to run a new 120V line for the dryer.

I'm not a licensed electrician but I wired my own home and shop and am comfortable wiring. CAUTION! 120V will KILL YOU DEAD RIGHT THERE! If you don't know what you are doing, DON'T DO IT! I'm not going to show the details of the wiring. If you don't understand what I had to do, you need to hire someone to do this for you. Basically, I purchased a "Duplex" breaker at Lowes and replaced one of the existing breakers with it. The new breaker allowed me to run a 20 amp outlet back to the dryer.



The dryer outlet is NOT on the power shed system so we'll have to pay attention when we are on 30 amps.

I was ready to bring the units in the coach. My cousin Jim Pinkerton came down to help and good friend Beau came over. We brought the units in the door although we had to remove the inside grab bar, the foldable step cover, and the lighted grab bar. We also unbolted the passenger seat and set it out of the way. The washer was heavy, I'm guessing 200-250 lbs. Trying to walk this up the steps and not hitting the plastic part of the dash or tearing up the door weather stripping was just too big of a risk. Instead, I removed the door restraining brace and swung the door open fully, protecting it with some foam and tying it to the mirror. Although we could have built a platform, we used my forklift to lift a pallet holding the washer to the coach FLOOR level and then put some 2x10's across from the pallet to the floor and screwed them to the pallet. We then just slid the washer through the door on the 2x10s and maneuvered it through the various obstacles. The dryer only weighs about 75 lbs. and was easy by comparison. A neighbor loaned me his furniture dolly which made getting things to where they needed to be was easy. The height of the dolly wasn't quite enough but we simply leaned the washer back and pushed it up into the opening. We then just lifted and pushed it in the hole. This was a three man job. Jim was working the back end making sure all the hoses and electrical didn't get damaged or trapped while Beau and I wiggled it into place. It fit perfectly except it is about an inch too deep for the cabinet. I'll have to make a spacer to bring the doors and surround out.



Pressed the power button and the lights came on. Good sign. Time for the dryer. I wanted to be sure the dryer is secure so there are braces at the top and bottom to keep it from going backward. A similar pair will keep it from going forward. I cut a hole in the closet that will provide access to the 9" area behind the dryer. It will have a hinged cover for access to the vent and power and a small hidden lockable storage area.



Jim and I easily picked the dryer up and put in place. I needed to perfectly locate where the hole for the dryer vent needs to be. I'll admit to being a bit nervous about drilling a 4" hole in my beautiful coach!!!!

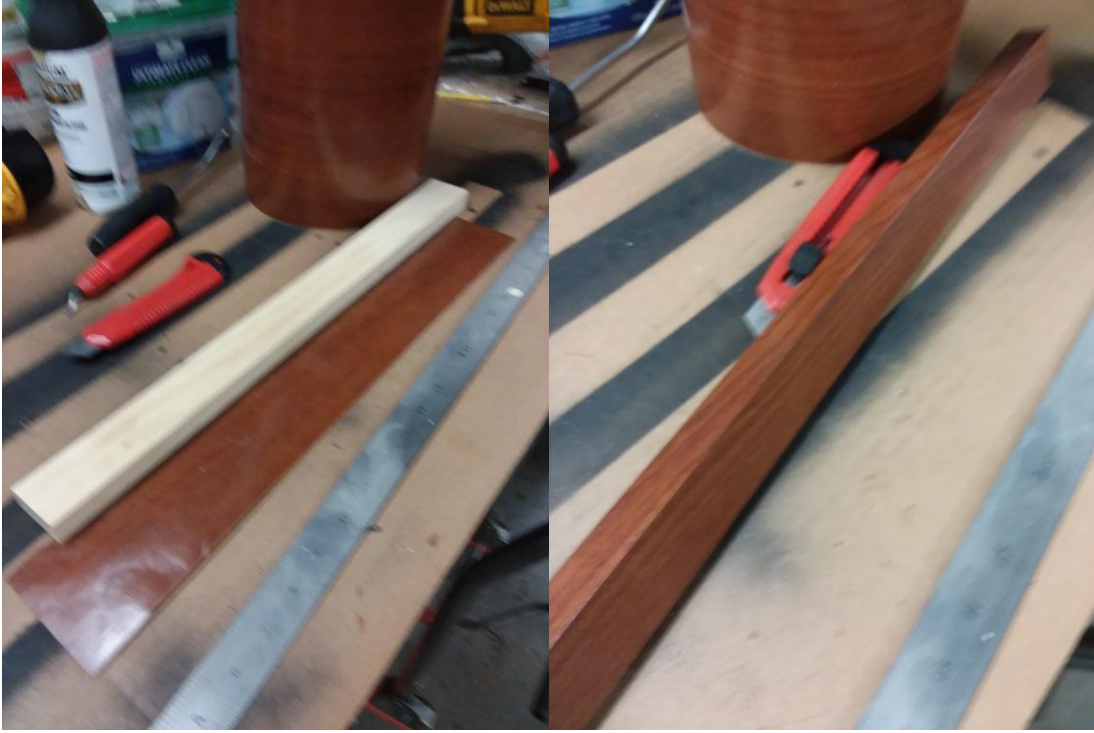


I did not think there were any aluminum studs where I was going to put the vent but drilled from the inside out so if I hit something, I'd be able to move over without damage to the exterior Fiberglas or paint. A 4" hole saw was nearly perfect. I drilled through the 1/4" interior paneling and the Styrofoam until the pilot drill came through the outside. Then I went outside and cut through the paint and Fiberglas using the pilot hole. Then it was just a matter of putting in the chrome dryer vent from the outside and putting a short piece of flexible dryer duct between it and the plastic elbow.



I purchased some of the correct vinyl film from Fleetwood and used it to cover some of the framing. Works great and is a perfect match for the original interior. It's peel and stick so you just carefully place it on the wood and smooth it out. Slick!

I made a frame from some 1x3 fir and covered it with a upholstery fabric that matches the décor. It allows the dryer to breathe and hides it,



Once I finished up the spacers and reinstalled the washer doors it was time for a test.



Really works well. The Kenmore washer is very quiet and does not shake the coach at all during the spin cycle. The dryer works well also. I washed 3 days of work clothes and could have easily done 5 days...5 pants, 5 shirts, 5 pairs of socks. A normal wash cycle takes 47 minutes and the dryer is about the same. As expected, the Intellitec power shed system shed the hot water heater and the rear AC because I am on a 30 amp circuit at home. Not a problem, I just ran the water heater on propane. The washer only used about 5 gallons of water for a normal cycle.

We're probably about where the original factory weight was. The new washer is a little lighter than the original Splendide but the dryer weights about what the TV weighted so no big difference.

All in all, this was not that difficult and we're more than pleased with the outcome. We're getting ready for a week at the beach with our Son and his Fiancée so it will get a workout.

This could probably be done on most coaches prior to 2010 when Fleetwood went to the stackables. The hard part is finding where you can put the dryer. On coaches with the big CRT based TV's you already have a good place to start. As light as the dryer is, you could probably put it on a small slide but the bigger problem would be getting power to it. That is something to consider. EVENTUALLY, I'll put a DVD/TV in the dryer compartment door. They are pretty thin and will fit without interference with the slide out as it comes in. We don't watch TV in the bedroom so it's not a priority. The original coax cables and the power receptacle is still in place so it will be an easy thing to do.