

Chill Out! Lessons Learned From the Norcold Three Way Fridge



Do you ever feel like people just don't understand you? I am quite sure the Norcold three-way fridges must feel that way quite often. I used my fridge on propane while boondocking last summer and I marveled at how well it worked. I didn't always feel that way, though. On my first big trip my food spoiled when I arrived with a dead battery at my campsite and the fridge would not light. So, a year later, I went back and read my manual (again) about operating the 3 way fridge, and also perused the Yahoo T@b group. I thought I might try to save some of you the pain I experienced and pass along some tips.

Light My Fire

Most of the issues revolve around igniting the propane to power the fridge. I really had issues with this when I first started out. I think this is in large part due to a couple of misunderstandings. As always, the Norcold manual always supersedes my advice. My advice is what has worked for me.

Here is my routine:

1. Check to make sure that the battery is sufficiently charged. The Norcold will not light if your battery is dead. It needs ample charge to light and to run the fan if the ambient temperatures are warm enough.
2. Open the propane tank valve.
3. Light a stove burner to get the propane flowing.
4. Turn the power setting on the Norcold to the propane (flame icon) setting.
5. Turn the temperature gauge to the "Start" position. I have no idea why, but some dealers, including mine, have told customers this is not necessary.
6. Press in the ignition button and wait for the green light to illuminate. Sometimes this happens right away, sometimes it takes 30-45 seconds.
7. While holding the ignition button, turn the temperature dial to the desired temperature setting.
8. Continue to depress the ignition button for approximately another 30 seconds. If the light goes out, repeat the process

Tips

- If it is hot or humid, the manual recommends running it on AC or DC for 5 minutes before trying to ignite it on propane.
- Make sure your T@b is relatively level. If it is not level, you may have difficulty lighting the fridge. Being level from side to side seems to be more important than front to back.
- Make sure you pre-cool your fridge before you leave, on AC for optimal performance.
- If you start your fridge on propane, and place warm items in the fridge, it will not properly refrigerate your food.
- Your fridge is not designed to run on battery, alone, while you camp. The three way fridge uses significantly more energy- it uses almost 12ah. If camping, you need to plan to use AC or propane.
- LG T@bs have a high altitude kit, but you may still have some difficulties at higher elevation. Mine functioned without difficulty at around 9000'.

- The thermocoupler has been known to jiggle loose in transport. (HT: [@ChanW](#) 📧 ;))
- Per a user in the Yahoo group, the 3163 (our model) is known to have ignition problems. Evidently, the igniter and burner are sometimes just far enough apart, that the arc does not quite connect. That user recommended slightly bending the igniter towards the burner (down or counter clockwise.) I am not recommending that you do or not do this – do at your own risk.
- On propane, the fridge is extremely quiet.
- The fridge does require a little battery to run. If your battery dies, you will be unable to light your fridge and it will not stay lit.
- It helps to light your stove for 30 seconds, or so, to make sure the gas is flowing properly before trying to light the fridge.
- Your tow vehicle might not produce enough power to keep your battery charged while the fridge is on battery. The fridge has a great seal. If your vehicle does not keep the battery charged sufficiently, try to alternate between using the fridge and turning it off every couple of hours if driving for several hours.
- The Norcold uses a separate fuse. It is located under the cooktop on an S model.
- Clamshell models (CS) cannot use a three way fridge.
- There is a vent in the storage space below the fridge.
- A fan has been included in models that customers started receiving part of the way through calendar year 2015. If you have this fan, there will be an on/off switch located on the front of the Norcold that you can turn on to help remove excess heat. If you do not have the fan, you can call Pleasant Valley to request one.
- Your fridge may blow out during high wind situations. This happened to me a total of one during two significant wind storms. I was able to immediately re-light the fridge.

Fuses

The Norcold uses three fuses. These fuses can be picked at RV parts stores or through [Norcold repair centers](#).

1. AC Circuit – 3 Amp Type 3AG – Norcold Part #61654622
2. DC Circuit – 20 Amp Type 3AG – Norcold Part #61440522
3. Gas Circuit – 1 Amp Type 3AG – Norcold Part #618079

Manual

The Norcold 3163 user manual can be found on [this website](#).

Chill Out

I regularly used my fridge on propane during long stops and boondocking at Walmart this fall during a 17 day trip to Colorado. It really worked without a hitch, every time and the Nalgene bottle I put into the freezer part of the fridge remained frozen during my entire, recent trip! Learn a little about your fridge and you will have a better relationship!