



# BNMR N DIVISION INFO BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 17, 2021

## ON OPERATIONS

We've covered the essential basics of module construction and rolling stock. Time to consider formal operations. In future bulletins I will share some of the information I have found and present my ideas and suggestions about how we might approach formal operations in pursuit of the Chief Dispatcher certificate. There will be much to discuss once we have a team of 4 - 6 regular, dedicated operators assembled and the layout developed enough to support the effort.

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It is important to state now and keep in mind, for the next several months, that this effort is to achieve one goal: a certificate. Thus we need to focus on what must be done to get us there. After that goal is achieved we can approach operations in any manner, using any methods, we choose. Or we may be so tired of it that we just run trains! Time will tell...

First I want to share some basic ideas and concepts from what I have read.

Frank Ellison<sup>(1)</sup> was a pioneer model railroader (of the 1940s & 1950s) and very enthusiastic about it:

"... model railroading is definitely a play. It is the presentation of the drama of railroading in which the tracks are the stage, the buildings and scenery are the setting, the trains are the actors, and the operating schedule is the plot."

"Model railroading is more than simply running trains around a track. It is an art founded on all the accumulated principles governing real railroad operation, but with a separate and very definite set of rules of its own. To be sure, it has to do with mainline and auxiliary tracks, with the variety and character of trains, the speeds at which they run

and the work they have to do, with the handling of shipments to consignees, service to passengers, with systems of car routing and train make-up, and with schedules of operation."

From Bruce Chubb<sup>(2)</sup>: "A real railroad has one purpose: to move commodities (and people) from one place to another... To achieve a realistic model railroad, we must give that railroad itself a sense of purpose... We give purpose to our model railroads by building industries that depend on shipments from one another, by establishing interchange connections between different carriers, and by creating population centers that require passenger-train services. Purpose is the foundation upon which we build realistic operations."

The statements above have given me guidance to propose the layout design and schemes I have presented to you already. There is still much to consider and make decisions about in the coming weeks so that we can begin formal operations.

Consider these from Chubb: "...avoid having one person run everything from a central panel while others stand around waiting their turn. Instead, operating responsibility should be delegated

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among members... For example, a yardmaster and a couple of brakemen should be able to assemble or disassemble trains without worrying about what's happening beyond the yard limits."

"Continuous activity is one of the secrets of good operation, because long lapses between trains or switching movements can be fatal to enthusiasm for operation. Each operator should have enough duties to keep him or her busy through an operating session."

"It is the time consumed rather than the actual distance that is important to model train operation..."

I take that to mean slow down your train's speed.

"The way freight becomes the godsend to the model railroader - the key ingredient in establishing realistic operations. Not only does it offer the opportunity to perform a variety of switching, but its presence on main lines, branches, and sidings provides a potential obstacle to the schedules that passenger trains and freight trains must maintain."

I take obstacle to mean a challenge or situation to deal with.

From Fred Bock <sup>(3)</sup>: "...operation for our purposes is defined as *simulation* in miniature of prototype-like railroad operations on a model railroad layout. As is true with *any* simulation, the most significant details of the prototype are adopted for inclusion in the simulation, while minor details and details that are not "fun" are left out or ignored."

From Tony Koester<sup>(4)</sup> : "Realistic operation ...means the movement of scale models ... in a systematic, realistic manner by performing several of the jobs performed by professional railroaders." "Operation implies purposefully moving trains and individual cars ..."

Once we have the team together, have discussed a method of controlling trains, and enough of a railroad to operate on, I foresee something like several hours of "walk-thrus" so that each of us understands what and how we expect to operate the railroad.

Because of the certificate requirements, each of us will work at least 10 hours in most, if not all, jobs required to run the railroad. We can expect, from time to time, to forget what to do or how to do something; equipment problems; and misunderstanding. But with enough planning and equipment inspection/maintenance, and patience, we should be able to reach our goal.

To prepare for operations, in addition to having trains to run and customers to serve, we need a basic car forwarding scheme established; a list of trains to run; a list of customers to serve along with the type of cars to receive and ship; labels on the layout for the names of towns and customers; and some idea of how to operate the new yard, i.e. how to classify cars into trains, process arriving and departing trains, and service locos between runs. It is likely there is more I have yet to realize!

I am preparing car cards for a car forwarding system but the waybills can't be made until we have a list of customers along with their car type needs. I have written a list of possible industry types we might have along with the type of cars each would use. This can be expanded upon, then used to decide what customers to have on the layout.

We will need some form of communication between all operators. FRS radios would be the simplest since I already have three of them. A simple telephone system can be used to link the dispatcher with the two yards.

There are paperwork forms we need to identify and produce in a format that suits our needs.

While there is much to be done, we have plenty of people to accomplish the tasks. I feel our first task, at this point, is to form a core team of dedicated persons. Then begin our work:

- Determine a regular meeting schedule and begin meetings to work on our tasks.
- Outline all of the tasks to completed.
- Review and decide what methods/forms to use.

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- Identify and assemble any hardware that may be needed such as radios, computer and related equipment, etc.
- Bring rolling stock up to a standard for use during formal sessions.
- Continue building the layout along with grooming the existing modules to achieve reliable running.

In future bulletins I will share what I feel are informative and important concepts and ideas from various sources.

We can discuss these concepts and ideas, then select those we want to use.

**W**e have, in our video library, Dream-Plan-Build videos you may want to watch to get some ideas or perhaps answer questions you may have. The PDFs are included on the DVDs and can be downloaded from the club's computer.

#### Volume 3:

- video: Operating on a small layout
- PDF: GuidetoOperations.pdf

#### Volume 5:

- video: How to use operating paperwork
- PDF: Timetables.pdf

#### Volume 16:

- video: Creating a time table for your model railroad
- PDFs: Timetables.pdf & BeginninganOperatingGroup.pdf

#### Special Project Edition:

- video: Realistic Layout Operations video
- PDFs: ClearanceForm.pdf; Glossary-OfTerms.pdf; SampleTimetable.pdf; Switch-List.pdf; TrainOrderBook.pdf; TrainOrder-Form.pdf; TrainRegister.pdf; TrainSheet.pdf.

I have downloaded all of the PDFs mentioned above and they are available for you to read.

Bruce purchased a video from the Model Railroad Academy on operations.

In the next bulletin you will find a partial index to 'The Operators' column that appeared in Model Railroader between 2007 and 2015. I have indicated specific columns I think would be useful to us. I hope you will take the time to read some of those one-page articles to learn more.

**D**on't become overwhelmed with the amount of information that is out there nor with the vast array of concepts you may read about. Just remember that we will work together to develop an operation scheme that meets the certificate requirements. It only needs to be as complex as we desire to make it.

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#### References:

- (1) The Art of Model Railroading, 1944, Model Railroader, Frank Ellison. Available to download at trains.com & in my collection.
- (2) How to operate your model railroad, 1977, Bruce Chubb, ISBN 0-89024-528-2 This book is in our library,
- (3) Chief Dispatcher article in Scale Rails, 2008, Fred Bock. Available to download at NMRA.org & in my collection.
- (4) Realistic Model Railroad Operation, 2003, Tony Koester, ISBN 0-89024-418-9, in my collection.