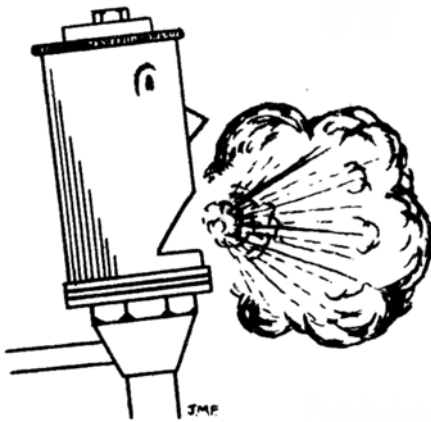


# **OPERATING SESSION GUIDELINES**

**AS RECOMMENDED BY:**

**THE WINNEBAGOLAND DIVISION OF THE  
NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION**

**RULES AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR USE BY  
CLUBS OR INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED WITH THE ANNUAL  
OPERATING SESSION PRESENTED BY THE WLD/NMRA**



## **INTRODUCTION:**

This web-based manual is the result of the work undertaken by the Operating Session Committee appointed by the WLD Superintendent on April 9th, 2005. Many of the ideas and rules were developed by the past experience of committee members and recommendations of other NMRA divisions who hold similar "Operating Sessions".

As a web document, please keep in mind that as ideas are developed further or additional pages needed, the document may be expanded upon. Also, although most "rules" contained within are expected to be followed by the host party, feel free to contact the Operating Committee Chairman with any ideas or problems your group may have to make hosting the WLD Operating Session as easy as possible.

## **MISSION OF THE WLD OPERATING SESSION:**

THE MISSION IS SIMPLE: TO EXPAND THE KNOWLEDGE OF PROTOTYPICAL OPERATION THROUGHOUT THE DIVISION THROUGH THE USE OF HANDS ON OPERATING OF LAYOUTS AND CLINICS PRESENTED BY PEOPLE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF OPERATION IN A PROTOTYPICAL MANNER.

It is the hope of the WLD that as you host our event that no problems arise before, during or after the OP Session. By following the guidelines presented, your group should be assured that the WLD will stand beside you if any problems would occur. By working together, the above mission will be realized.

## **ORGANIZING THE EVENT**

The WLD Operating Session is an easy event to organize if you or your group follow a few simple steps. The WLD Operating Session is held every year during the first weekend of November. The hours usually are 8:30am to 12pm (morning session) and 1pm to 4pm (afternoon session). A one hour lunch and travel break will separate the sessions. Traditionally, we meet after the last session for supper at a local restaurant to review the day's events. Of course the first step is to find someone from your group to serve as a liaison between your group and the WLD. This person should be responsible and organized. It is recommended that this person attend at least one WLD Board of Directors meeting to update the WLD as the process of organizing the event continues. The next issue to address is the amount of layouts and willing layout owners you have in your area. Remember that the layouts don't need to all be in the same town, but since driving between layouts is involved over the lunch hour, it is suggested that layouts be no more than 25 miles apart. The WLD would also like the host to be flexible (if enough interest is shown by operators), in regards to holding a Sunday OP Session. At the present time, interest has been limited to about 30 people from our division. It is hoped that as we promote the event further, more people, including folks from outside the WLD would join us. We realize that Sundays may not fit into everyone's plans so before taking on the event, find out from the layout owners what they are willing to provide for the WLD. Nothing is worse than being forced into other people's plans, so we must continue to remain flexible. **AS LIAISON, REMEMBER THAT THE LAYOUT OWNERS WISHES ARE MOST IMPORTANT AND THE WLD WILL WORK TO ACCOMMODATE THEM.** Also remember that there is no "minimum requirement" in regards to needed operators. Your area may only have enough willing and operational layouts for 16

people. That's fine as long as you advise the WLD and note that the slots are filled on a first come/ first served basis.

The lead man (liaison) from your group should be experienced in model operations. This person should know what each OP Session layout is capable of supporting, be familiar with each type of train control (i.e. DCC, DC, etc.) that each layout employs, and what type of car routing or scheme each layout employs.

The rest of the organizing involves the WLD via a sign up sheet posted on our website. The sign up sheet should be downloaded and printed and then mailed directly from the interested operator to the liaison from your group and as stated should be organized from first received to last received to make up the first come / first served scenario. The WLD is solely responsible for the sign up sheet. In fact, no money from the host group is required for any part of the WLD OP Session. Just a willingness to host and organize in your area. To pass in review, here's what is need to organize the OP Session:

1. Approach the WLD with your offer to host the event.
2. Choose the liaison (lead man) from your group.
3. Appraise the layouts offered for operating in regards to the amount of operators needed, and advise the WLD.
4. Advise the WLD of your liaison's address for the routing of the sign up sheets.

That is the basic organization of the event. Also note that more details of organizing are included under "WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE HOST GROUP". A master handbook is available for review from the Superintendent and /or Operating Session Chairman.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND THE WLD OP SESSION:**

The WLD Operating Session is open to all interested modelers over the age of 12 years old. Minors must be accompanied by an adult. The event will be advertised outside of the WLD, so the following procedure has been developed to assure folks from our area have the first chance at operating:

The host group will organize the sign-up sheets from the earliest postmarks to the latest ones.

The host group will then note any sign-up sheets from outside the WLD. The host group's liaison should have an idea of the boundaries of the WLD, but feel free to contact the Superintendent or OP Session Chairman if not sure.

If any slots remain unfilled after all WLD area registrants are designated, the host group will fill the remaining spaces with the registrants from outside of the WLD.

As noted before, the WLD is responsible for the sign-up sheets. The host group needs only to organize them as noted above. Remember that no money is sent with the sign up sheets so no refunds are necessary.

The WLD will expect operators to act in a professional manner. If at any time a layout owner is concerned over improper use of equipment, violent / careless behavior, or possible

theft, the offending operator will be warned. If the behavior continues or a theft has occurred, the operator will be confronted and asked to leave the premises immediately by a member of the WLD assigned to that layout. WE HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED ANY MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE PAST, BUT BE ASSURED THE WLD WILL NOT TOLERATE THIS TYPE OF BEHAVIOR AND WILL STAND BEHIND YOU AND YOUR GROUP.

In addition, a person under 18 who is asked to leave will also revoke the operating privileges of the adult who has accompanied him or her to the event. A lifetime ban to any WLD OP session will result from the expulsion. The WLD understands the risk an individual layout owner faces when opening up to outsiders.

The WLD will adjust age and eligibility as it sees fit. Also, the layout owner's policy on minors will supercede the WLD policy. Your liaison should advise the WLD and make sure that minor operators are sent to layouts where they are welcomed when assigning operators to layouts.

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE HOST OR HOST GROUP:**

The Winnebagoland Division is ultimately responsible for the Op Session. However, the WLD expects that the host cooperates with us to make the event a success. The WLD has therefore set-up rules and recommended practices. The WLD insists that the following be followed:

A registration fee (currently \$5.00) is charged to all participants (excluding the layout owner).

All participants will pay the fee at the first layout they operate on. The layout host or a designated person from the host group will collect the money and turn it over to the assigned member from the WLD/NMRA at the end of the day.

The hours of the OP Session will be from 8:30am to 12pm for the morning session and 1pm to 4pm for the afternoon session.

The host group will arrange with a local restaurant for a supper/meeting after the afternoon session. This meal will be paid for by the individual participant in the OP session. The host group is only responsible for finding a place to hold it. We recommend a casual restaurant (i.e. pizza or sandwiches), with a separate area (banquet room) to afford our group a level of privacy. The choice is up to the host group, but the WLD would like to review the final decision.

The host group will assign a liaison to coordinate the event with the WLD and that person must attend at least one WLD Board Meeting to advise the WLD with the plan for the day. The meeting should take place during the "fall" BOD., usually held in September. The host should also e-mail the WLD Superintendent or Operating Committee Chairman with updates as the event draws near.

The host group will be given bright "WLD Whistle" signs to be placed in front of the homes of the open layouts (thus designating the layout owners' home).

No alcohol will be served to any operators during the OP session.

The host group will strive for “reasonably safe and easy access” to all layouts. The liaison will work with the layout owners to attain this requirement. The WLD does not require itself or the host to meet handicapped (ADA) requirements on personal property such as a private home.

Your group liaison will assign operators to layouts. It will be your group’s responsibility to send out a postcard, e-mail, or letter telling the registrant where to report for both the morning and afternoon sessions. In addition, a layout spec sheet/registration form should be mailed along with the letter if available. It is also a good idea for the liaison to inform the folks who are eliminated noting that all spaces and positions have been filled. Postage for your mailings will be reimbursed by the WLD. Keep a record of your postage costs.

The liaison should note those modelers who request to operate with a group or another modeler due to carpooling, etc. and try to keep that group together. See sample sign up sheet for that information.

## **INSURANCE COVERAGE:**

The NMRA insurance policy against various lawsuits is automatic if you are a member of the group. In addition, for a \$25.00 fee, coverage can be extended to you if you don’t belong to the NMRA. Of course, your home owners policy should also cover you against any injuries that occur on your property.

Throughout the years most of us have opened our homes for various model railroad events. Only recently have some people decided that an act of their own clumsiness warrants a lawsuit. As a liaison, clearly explain the risks one takes on when hosting an event like this. Things such as falls, although rare, can happen and injuries can result. The WLD will continue to look for ways to minimize the risk for our layout owners and clubs. One idea is a “release form” from all injury, etc. to be signed by the registrant. Recently, these forms have not held up in court and at this point the WLD can not recommend them. No one on the WLD Operating Committee is a lawyer or well versed in the court system.

As of this writing (May 2009), the NMRA is offering a trial “Railpass” membership for non-members. For \$9.95, this 6 month membership offers all the benefits of a normal membership, including insurance coverage. This option is recommended by the WLD.

## **NMRA AP PROGRAM & CHIEF DISPATCHER CERTIFICATE:**

A natural companion to the WLD Operating Session is the NMRA AP Program and the Chief Dispatcher Certificate. It is the wish of the Operating Committee and the WLD that the layout host or hosting group provides interested operators with the forms to get started in earning this award from the NMRA. This paperwork is included on our website. Feel free to print and make copies for your group. The most important issue for an operator is the record keeping aspect of this award. Although much more than just operating trains is required to earn this award, by using the verification and record of activities form an operator will be on his way in the NMRA program. Please read and make extra copies of the forms as you see fit. Preferably, each layout open for operating should have a few copies of the record of

activities form available. Additionally, the NMRA website has the entire collection of AP forms. Also, feel free to contact the WLD AP Chairman with any questions about the program. His address is found here on the WLD website

### **ADVERTISING THE EVENT:**

The WLD handles all of the advertising via our website, and perhaps in the future, throughout other divisions that border the WLD. Since the event is open to all people, not just NMRA members, we would encourage you or your group to promote the event locally as well.

Additionally, it is the desire of the Operating Committee that the event is promoted during the WLD Fall Meet, usually held during September or October each year. This will consist of several different advertising components including;

- Registration sheets for the event available to attendees of the Fall Meet
- An easel with pictures (digital- 8.5" x 11") and information of the layouts to be operated on.
- An operations clinic held during the Fall Meet
- Everyone who pre-registers for the WLD Fall Meet will receive information about the OP Session in their meet packages.

The WLD will begin to implement this advertising, but will need the assistance of the group liaison for pictures and information. This is an example of why it is required of the liaison to attend at least one WLD BOD meeting before the event.

All advertising should be ready to go well before the date of the Fall Meet.

### **LAYOUT REGISTRATION FORM:**

For the WLD Operating Session, it is desirable for layout owners to provide a Layout Registration Form or "spec sheet" to the person in charge of assigning operators to layouts. Copies should be considered to be mailed along with operator assignment information. This would give the assigned operator some information about the layout they are visiting for the operating session. This sheet would include the operating system (DCC, DC, etc), car forwarding method, and any other rules the layout owner follows. If you need help in developing a Layout Registration Form, please contact the OP Session Chairman or WLD Superintendent.