

Placing A Piece of Rolling Stock on the HO Layout

by Peter Ezzard

The HO Department has adopted various standards for rolling stock to be placed into service on the HO layout. These standards have been developed over the years to ensure that rolling stock performs consistently and meet operational requirements. A complete copy of rolling stock standards is available from Ed Van Savage, HO Department Master Mechanic. Rather than reproduce them in their entirety here, I will highlight the various key requirements to get a piece of rolling stock to pass inspection and be placed into service.

Couplers – All pieces of rolling stock will have Kadee or Kadee compatible automatic couplers. A screw should be used to affix the coupler housing to the body of car. McHenry or Intermountain couplers may be used in lieu of Kadee couplers. However, if coupler failure should occur, they must be replaced with Kadee couplers before the car will be allowed back in service. Coupler height should conform to the Kadee coupler height gauge, although the Car department keeps the actual “standard” gauge.

Wheels - All pieces of rolling stock will have a minimum of a 10k and a maximum of 20K resistor on the outermost wheel sets. This is for the detection circuits on the various railroads. Jaybee is making wheel sets with resistors already placed on them. Some members make their own. Neil Petillo would be a good person to talk to you about making your own resistored wheel sets rather than using ready-made commercial ones. Metal wheel sets are required for any remaining wheel sets. Wheel gauge should conform with a standard NMRA gauge. Again, the Car Department keeps the actual “standard” gauge.

Car body - A magnet must be placed in the center of the roof of any closed car so that waybills may be affixed to the car. This is necessary so that the car may be routed to its destination during operating sessions. Open cars such as hoppers, flats and gondolas are usually able to allow a waybill to remain in place. Any load that is placed in the car must allow for a magnet to be placed on the center of the load. Magnets to be placed into the car in order to affix waybills are available from the Car Department.

Car weight – All non-powered freight equipment shall weigh one ounce per 10 foot car length. Tolerance shall be +/- 0.5 ounces. All open cars will be weighted as if they are running empty. The only time the load will be considered part of the weight of the car is if it is impossible to otherwise achieve the desired weight (an example of this is the Stewart Hobbies 70 ton hopper). Passenger equipment exceeding 60 feet in length shall weigh no more than 6.5 +/- 0.5 ounces. Exceptional equipment will be considered by the Car Department on an individual basis.

Dimensions – All rolling equipment shall measure not more than 1 21/32 inches in width (12 scale feet) and not more than 2 3/4 inches in height (20 scale feet).

Getting a car into service on the layout is not particularly expensive or hard. The standards are not too difficult to comply with and help ensure that our operation is as trouble free as possible. Have fun!