

The Operators

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Running as Extra 1954 East, a Louisville & Nashville coal train known as the Loyall Turn blasts through Grays, Ky., in 1954. The M-1 2-8-4 carries white flags to identify the train as an extra. Philip R. Hastings photo

Running extra trains

An **extra train** is defined in railroad rule books as a train without a timetable schedule. Railroads use extra trains in a variety of ways, and we can do the same in our model railroad operations.

On railroads that scheduled most or many of their trains in the timetable, an extra might be exactly what its name seemed to imply: an additional train needed for traffic that can't be accommodated on the scheduled trains. Other railroads ran most or all of their freight trains as extras.

Even when all freights run extra, at least some of the extra trains might be regular services with schedules published to attract shippers. Others could be trains operated regularly with set duties known to dispatchers, yardmasters, and train crews – the train shown in the photo is one of these. Still other extras operated as needed for temporary increases in business or other occasional purposes, including special passenger trains.

Whatever the reason for operating extra trains, since they aren't scheduled in the timetable, they must operate under other authority.

Kinds of authority. Under classic timetable-and-train-order rules, extras are authorized by Form G train orders in the format "Engine (number) run extra (initial station)

to (terminal station)." That gives the train headed by that locomotive authority to occupy the main track for the purpose of running from the first-named station to the second.

The extra's formal identity comes from its engine number and direction. It may be known as the "Green Fruit Express" or the "Loyall Turn," but in train orders and other records it's "Extra (engine number) (timetable direction)," such as "Extra 145 East."

Where signal indications conferred movement authority, such as two or more main tracks with a current of traffic and automatic block signals, or under Centralized Traffic Control (CTC), timetable instructions could allow extra trains to be authorized by a numbered and okayed clearance card instead of a Form G train order.

Today the term "extra" is no longer used, but neither are timetable schedules. In effect all trains operate as extras, authorized by track warrant and governed by additional warrants or by automatic or CTC signals. The engine number is used as the train's formal identification, and track warrants are addressed to the engine rather than to a train symbol or name.

Over the road. In terms of superiority of trains, extras are inferior to all regular trains (all trains with

timetable schedules). The conductor and engineer of an extra are responsible for clearing the schedules of opposing superior trains, and of first class trains in the same direction. "Clearing the schedule" means getting off the main line into a passing siding or other track at least five minutes before the scheduled time of the superior train.

The dispatcher may modify the extra train's superiority by train order, and often will issue orders to help an extra progress against a late-running superior train. On single track, the dispatcher is also responsible for issuing orders to protect opposing extras from each other, since the crew of an extra train can't know where an opposing extra might be.

Forms of train-order protection against opposing extras include:

- Form S-A meet orders, specifying where opposing extras will meet.
- Form S-C right orders, giving one extra superiority, "right," over another to a particular station.
- Form E time orders, giving one extra a schedule opposing extras can run against as if it were a timetable schedule.

(These forms of orders were also used to help extra trains against opposing regular trains, or to modify the schedules of regular trains.)

When extra trains meet, the train in the inferior timetable direction takes the siding unless otherwise directed by train order. Note, however, that this doesn't mean extras in the superior direction have any superiority not given in a train order.

Extra trains can offer interesting variety in train movements, and for certain prototypes can be the majority of all trains. By understanding how and why they run, you can make them an important and realistic element of your railroad's operations too. **MR**

More on our Web site

Learn how to identify extra trains with classification signals at www.ModelRailroader.com.