



Several sizes of containers make the transfer of loose coal loads more efficient on Lionel Strang's HO Allegheny & Lackawanna Southern.

Restaging loose coal loads

Modelers with operating layouts always seem to wind up comparing notes about techniques to make restaging more efficient. This was the case not long ago when senior editor Jim Hediger asked how I handled the restaging of the loose coal loads on my HO scale Allegheny & Lackawanna Southern RR.

My operators normally have 40 to 50 loaded hoppers to move from the mines to various destinations. In the process, a similar number of empties are returned and spotted at the mines. I've tried using one-piece cast loads, and swapping the same loaded hoppers over and over, but neither system was as satisfying as live loads. There's something about handling the live loads which gives my operators a greater sense of accomplishment as they work.

In particular, Jim was interested in any tricks I had developed to speed up the rather involved job of transferring loose coal loads. In practice it's a matter of picking up the loaded hoppers, pouring the coal into a big plastic jug, and then setting the car back on the rails.

Originally, I'd dump three or four coal loads into a medium-size container, and then load a similar number of empties until all the loads were transferred.

Some time later, longtime A&LS operator Brian Searles started to help with the restaging of the railroad. We decided the entire process



Loaded cars are dumped into the large pitcher. Then Lionel uses the blue bucket and small cup to load loose coal into empty cars without spilling it on either side of the track.

would go much faster if he unloaded hoppers into a bigger container while I was busy filling empties with the smaller bucket.

Now I pour some of the coal into a smaller container that's easier to handle as I transfer the coal with a small measuring cup "borrowed" from one of my wife's detergent boxes. This small cup was easier to control as I reached into each mine scene to load the empty cars.

As I explained this system, Jim suggested marking the standard 50 or 70-ton loads on the small cup. His suggestion made the reloading even easier, since I have both sizes of cars on the A&LS.

So now you know that even something as simple as transferring loose loads was developed over several years of trial and error and with the help of my friends. — *Lionel Strang, contributing editor*