

New Member Guide

Also known as: **Things you need to know, or we expect you to know, but might not tell you.**

Welcome to the Rochester Model Railroad Club. We look forward to having a long, mutually beneficial engagement with you. New members join for a variety of reasons and with an equal variety of experience and skill level. Being in a new and unfamiliar environment may seem overwhelming at first. Introduce yourself to others and ask questions. Our members are willing to share their knowledge and expertise and hope that you might be able to teach us something new as well. There's a lot of information you're going to gather at a rapid pace that may seem confusing at first. Hopefully this guide will make it easier to understand.

Meeting nights:

We generally meet each Monday evening starting around 6PM until 9PM. However, senior members with keys may arrive earlier. The only time we won't, is if a major holiday (i.e. New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day or Christmas) falls on a Monday. Once enough members arrive, the door lock should be "pinned" to allow the door to be opened without a key. If it's locked when you arrive, ring the doorbell for access. At the end of the evening when leaving and only a few members remain, pull the pin out to secure the door for safety for those who remain.

We maintain a schedule of events on the club website www.RocMRRC.com which also appears on the back page of our bi-monthly newsletter *The Callboard*. The website will have the correct information in case there are changes. With some exceptions, there is some regularity to the week-to-week schedule each month. The first Monday of each month is set aside for education. We call these Project & Training Nights. Starting around 7PM, there will be an educational opportunity on some aspect of the hobby. Sometimes these are demonstration/discussion and other times they are hands-on. The subjects vary greatly, so if there's something in particular you'd like to learn about, see the Chief Engineer to see if he can add it to the schedule as there are probably other members interested in learning it too. P&T sessions run about an hour or so.

The last Monday of each month is set aside as Open Run Night. You are welcome to bring stuff to run on the layout as long as it is DCC equipped. We would prefer that it meets the published club standards and recommended practices, but as long as it isn't left on the layout, there is some leniency.

The other Mondays of the month are considered work nights, so train running may not an option. The club is not just for running trains, we strongly encourage you to become involved in projects to maintain or improve the layout or club in general. The Chief Engineer maintains a list of projects, so see if he has one that might fit your interest or talents and he can point you toward the proper person working on that type of project.

Exceptions to the general schedule above: There are quarterly business meetings in March, June, September, and December. March's business meeting is two weeks after the open house. June's takes the place of P&T Night and also serves as the annual business meeting with elections for officers since our fiscal year begins in July. September's

meeting is the second Monday due to Labor Day, and December's takes the place of P&T night. February is dedicated to open house preparation and practice, so only open house trains can be operated.

Other Club Events:

During the year, the club will have events that occur on days other than Mondays or at locations other than at the club. Participation is highly encouraged to support the club. Our annual open house is the most important of these. Held on the first weekend of March, it is the only time the general public gets to see what keeps us busy throughout the year and is a substantial source of revenue for us, which in turn helps keep the dues costs down. The club's monthly fixed expenses are around \$1,000, and dues only cover about half of that. It takes many hands to pull off a successful open house, so unless there is some extremely extenuating circumstance, your participation is expected. Some other examples of these types of events are local train shows (Batavia, RIT, Hemlock), Lakeshores Division NMRA meets, and the like. While you will be able to look around and shop at the train shows, in consideration for agreeing to staff the club display or sales tables, you won't have to pay for admission.

The Layout:

Our layout models the Lehigh Valley Railroad in the mid-1950s. It was specifically built to fit the space when we moved in 1989. Built in two stages, through staging to Caledonia & Rochester Jct. and then later extended the rest of the way to Jersey City. The Lehigh Valley was chosen as the membership at the time wanted to model a local, two-track railroad. From past experiences, the main lines were built flat, without grades, with the belief that if you could make it out of staging, you could make it around the layout, as locomotive motors at the time were not as good as the ones today. Initially it was built for continuous running and public display. However, over the years it has been adapted to support prototypical operation with some limitations. Op sessions will be scheduled from time to time to run the railroad with a purpose.

Generally, you are looking north anytime you are facing the layout. East is to your right, west to your left. Trains moving from left to right are eastbound, and likewise those moving right to left are westbound. There is one exception, and those are the two rearmost tracks along the backdrop in East Buffalo between the portals to staging and Jersey City.

There are only two grades on the railroad. One is the branch line to Hazelton, the other is the ramp to the hidden track under Buffalo Yard to the car float.

Layout Operation:

To operate the railroad, first turn on the layout power. This is controlled by a toggle switch underneath the staging yard, just inside the door. This controls all the 110v outlets underneath the railroad and the power for the local control panels. Next, turn on the DCC power with the flat paddle switch on the right side of the cabinet to power up the command station and boosters as well as supply track power. When shutting down for the night, reverse the process. It is very important the DCC power be turned off before killing all power.

We use an NCE Power Pro system with wireless capability. The club has a number of throttles you can use that are located in the small wall cabinet at the end of stub staging. If you use one of them, make sure to return it to the cabinet when you are finished using it to its designated location. The club has nine hammerhead-style Pro Cabs; five tethered and four wireless. The wireless cabs (14-17) are identified with white tape striping around the case. Please do not remove the cords from the tethered cabs (18-22) to prevent damage to the RJ11 socket pins. There are also a number of smaller tethered cabs available that do not have all the capabilities of the Pro Cabs. You are welcome to use your own NCE throttle provided you register into the club system and assigned its own unique cab address. If you need a cord for it to work with our DIN ports, you can purchase one from club stock.

Until you are familiar with the railroad and locations, it is strongly recommended that you stick to running on the main lines and not attempt to use any of the control panels. Use your time to learn where places and things are.

The layout contains over 200 turnouts. All but a handful (one in Rochester Jct. and five near the Buffalo passenger station and car shop) are controlled by accessory decoders, meaning they can be operated with a Pro Cab throttle by using the turnout's DCC address. Most of the turnouts are also controllable from at least one stationary panel located around the layout. **All turnouts must be aligned for the main line before leaving a scene.**

At locations with local panels, routes can be selected using the panel controls. Buttons or toggles will throw either one or a number of turnouts to select a particular track or route. Green or yellow LEDs on the panel are wired through the contacts on the turnout motors and will provide routing indication to confirm that the switch motor(s) moved. On panels where track power can be turned off, a toggle switch will be next to a blue LED which will glow if track power is applied. Some panels have additional LEDs indicating certain conditions such as electrical shorts or active controls.

The local panels in Caledonia and Jersey City have kill switches that can disable the panel controls for public displays, but can still be controlled through a Pro Cab throttle and the LEDs will still work. The controls on the right side of the stub staging panel are only functional if authorization is granted by the through staging panel.

Always follow your train if there are multiple trains running on the layout to prevent collisions. Radio usage is recommended.

There is only one provision to turn a train of any significant length on the railroad and it requires coordination if multiple trains are running as it uses the wye in the staging room, both through and stub staging yards, and both main lines on the other side of the wall which also happens to be the worst spot to have a derailment too. It is strongly recommended you not try to attempt to turn a train without assistance.

Optional, but recommended, purchases:

During the open house and at operating sessions, we use radios to communicate. While they use common frequencies, they are specifically programmed for our club and are not compatible with "blister pack" radios you can buy off the rack. The club has 13 radios available for you to use. However if you would like to purchase your own, they are available and inexpensive.

It is highly recommended, required really, that you have a headset to use with the radios. For reasons of hygiene, each member needs to have their own. There are different styles available and, like the radios, trying to find one off the rack that is compatible, is difficult to find. If we don't already have any in stock, we will order one for you. Price is dependent on which style you choose, but they aren't expensive. Unless you want an expensive one, then we'd be happy to order one for you.

As part of your application fee, a name tag was acquired for you. However during public displays such as our open house, train shows, and NMRA events, having an embroidered club shirt to identify you as a member is nice to wear and presents a uniform appearance. Two styles are available; a denim blue button down or a red polo. Details are on the bulletin board in the hallway between the layout room and the workshop. Prices vary per style and you can have your name embroidered on it if you wish.

If you lose your name tag and need a replacement, it'll cost you another \$10 to get you a new one.

If you have any questions about anything you don't see covered here, don't hesitate to ask.