

January 2026

Next NMRA AZ Div. Meet:

**Spring Meet will be on
March 28, 2026 9am-4pm**

Tucson, AZ

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September 9 - 13, 2026

**DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
San Diego-Mission Valley**



July 27 – August 2, 2026

Chris Thompson: Director's Report



I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday season!

This past November we had our second Cactus Crawl Layout Tour. We had about the same number of layouts participating as we did the year before. I want to sincerely thank the participants who generously volunteered their time to open their layouts for visitation, and thanks to those who took the time to visit them. We certainly have some great model railroads in Arizona, so consider visiting them when an opportunity arises. Some of the layouts had good attendance, but others got very few people showing up. I encourage all our members to support the folks that go to the effort to open their layouts for visits, be it during an event like the Cactus Crawl or as part of the membership meetings.

The Arizona Division will be hosting the 2027 PSR convention. We have secured the Sheraton near the Chicago Cubs spring training facility in Mesa for the venue. I am starting to assemble a convention team to plan the event. I invite all our members to join this team so we can provide a great convention for the Pacific Southwest Region. Generally, this is a commitment of a few hours a month until the convention takes place in September of next year. If you are pursuing points for the AP Volunteer certificate, you can earn Regional level points for participating on the convention team. There are a wide range of tasks that need attention, so we can use everyone's talents and skills on the team.

We also could use the help of volunteers to participate in the operation of the Division. We are actively looking for a person to take over coordination of the High-Country Division meets which usually take place once a year in Prescott during the summer months. Terry Fearn has done a great job in the last several years organizing these meets and will be stepping away after the 2026 meeting. We also have an opening for an assistant webmaster. Marshall Wales is the webmaster for both the Division and the Region and can use some help. Please reach out to me or Superintendent Paul Burhke if you are willing to lend a hand with either the convention or Division activities. You can contact us via the Division web site under Leadership.

Our next in-person Division Meet will be in Tucson, and it is scheduled for March 28. Save the date and join us in Tucson!

See you down the tracks!
Chris Thompson
Arizona Division Director

Paul Buhrke: Superintendent's Report



Well; that is one more year past and gone, 2025 that is. Also, I am starting my second year as Superintendent of the Division. Guess it's time to reflect and reconnoiter on what has and still must be done for the Arizona Division. So far this is what has happened in the Arizona Division to date. It has been a good year with lots of things happening. Some were great, some were good, and some were so-so.

- 1) The web site has and is being updated slowly.
- 2) Communication is slowly being ironed out email wise.
- 3) Cactus Crawl was sponsored.
- 4) Planning for the Regional Meet (Arizona Limited) in 2027 is under way.
- 5) Individual get-togethers are going on at a local level.
- 6) Division has been re-organized creating local control of the Sub-Divisions.

So now it's time to get some serious discussions going as to how the Division can make more of the Hobby of Railroading. How can we as a group expand our footprints amongst each other, the Communities and State as a whole? Are we reaching out individually to non-rails by inviting them over to see the layout?

Cactus Crawl introduced me to a wonderful 12-year-old who must get over here to run on the layout. For a 12-year-old, he already has his ducks in a row as to DCC and sound and is starting the process to build a layout. When he arrives, I give him his instructions and then turn him loose. Very little coaching is needed AND he cleans track as well if needed! Fortunately, his parents are very receptive to his addition to trains and homework completion is a great carrot for train time.

For next year I want to ask what can be done for you to make the Division and NMRA more meaningful? We still need several Chairpersons for the Division and Sub-Division level. Please seriously consider stepping up and filling in on these vacancies. As always things work two ways here, what one puts in reacts with what one receives.

How can we get us all out and off the couch per se and share our insight and experience with others? I am assisting another NMRA member several days a month getting his layout up and running. We get together at his house and have a work and gab session while his wife makes lunch and feeds us! Now that is top notch!!

Lastly I do want to thank all the Members of the Arizona Division for their support and participation for the last year. My hope and desire is to keep moving ahead and not take siding with our hobby.

Paul Buhrke
AZ Division Superintendent

AZ Division NMRA calendar				
Date	Time	Event	Location	Registration
1/19/26	7 PM – 8 PM	AZ Division Executive Advisory	OnLine	None
2/16/26	7 PM – 8 PM	AZ Division Executive Advisory	OnLine	None
2/14/26	9 AM – 12 PM	AZ Sun City Swap Meet	Sun City	None
2/21/26	9 AM – 12 PM	AZ Cactus Winter Swap Meet	Phoenix	None
3/16/26	7 PM – 8 PM	AZ Division Executive Advisory	OnLine	None
3/28/26	9 AM - 4 PM	AZ Division Spring Meet	Tucson	At Meet
7/27/26- 8/2/26	All Day	NMRA National Convention	Chattanooga, TN	nmra2026.com
9/9/26 – 9/13/26	All Day	PSR Convention	San Diego	

For more information on events see AZ Div website
<https://www.azdiv-nmra.org/index.php/calendar>

Fun with Layout Operations

By Bob Ginger

This is the second installment of the Fun with Layout Operations series. In the last installment I introduced you to five Phoenix layout owners and their layouts. For reference here again is the contact information for those layout owners.

Jim Spice, Mesa, AZ
email: coptercptn@gmail.com
Denver and Cat Canyon Western

David Doiron, Tempe, AZ
email: ddoiron@cox.net
Southern Pacific / Lost Dutchman

Bill Sommerfield, Phoenix, AZ
email: sommerfield@cox.net
Gasconade, Meramec & Southern

Bob Ginger, Phoenix, AZ
email: bginger@gmail.com
Pepper Valley Division

Rick Watson, Tempe, AZ
email: spladivision@gmail.com
Southern Pacific Exeter Branch

Additional information on these layouts is also available on the DesertOps-Arizona web site at <https://azdesertops.com/layouts/>

In the first installment of this series of articles I introduced five model railroad owners in the Phoenix area and overviews of each layout. In this article we will explore how each layout is controlled and begin diving into the operations plan for each. The first of two goals is to begin familiarizing readers with the variety of train controls used on model railroad layouts. Second is to learn what an operations scheme is for a layout and how it is created.

Layout Control

Trains on all five of the layouts in this article series are DCC controlled. Given the prevalence of DCC in the hobby we will not go into the details of DCC technology itself. Instead, we will focus on the operation of different systems. The two most common DCC system manufacturers are NCE and Digitrax. Jim Spice, Bill Sommerfield, and Rick Watson use the NCE DCC system with CAB06 wireless handheld throttles. Bob Ginger uses Digitrax UT6D wireless handheld throttles. David Doiron utilizes the CVP EasyDCC Wireless DCC throttles.

All these throttles have pretty simple operation and are designed to control train speed & direction, DCC functions (such as lights, bell, whistle, etc.), and turnout positions. These are functions primarily used in an operating session. If you are new to the throttles, the layout owners are happy to provide a quick tutorial to get you going.

Each layout has its own control features and nuances. We'll quickly cover those below.



Jim Spice: Denver and Cat Canyon Western:

Uses an NCE DCC system with wireless throttles. There are 18 power districts on Jim's layout. Therefore, any electrical short will only affect a small section of the layout. All locomotives are sound equipped, and so are a few of the structures (sheep baying, saw cutting boards, rushing water, etc.).

Bill Sommerfield: Gasconade, Meramec & Southern:

Uses an NCE DCC System with wireless throttles. Some turnouts are manually controlled from push/pull knobs mounted in the layout fascia. The majority of the turnouts are manually controlled at the turnout. A couple of difficult to reach turnouts are controlled electrically with a toggle switch. All locomotives are sound equipped.

Rick Watson: Southern Pacific Exeter Branch:

Uses an NCE DCC System with wireless throttles. All turnouts are easily reachable and manually controlled at the turnout. All locomotives are sound equipped.

David Doiron: Southern Pacific / Lost Dutchman:

Uses a CVP EasyDCC System with wireless throttles. Turnouts are easily reachable and manually controlled at the turnout. Most locomotives are sound equipped.

Bob Ginger: Pepper Valley Division:

Uses a Digitrax DCC System using UT6D and DT602D Wireless Throttles. There are eight power districts on Bob's layout. The layout is also set up so people can use their Apple iOS tablets or phones as well as Android devices. All turnouts are remotely controlled by pressing buttons on the wireless throttles, tablets, or phones. Most locomotives are sound equipped.

Operations Plans

The challenge to any operating layout is the initial operations plan development. The fun is operating the layout based on the well-developed plan. This next section describes the operations plan for each of the five layouts.

Jim Spice: Denver and Cat Canyon Western

Jim's Denver & Cat Canyon Western railroad operates as a point-to-point railroad between the major towns of Deadwood and Durango. Additionally, a separate branch line runs between Deadwood and Cimarron. The morning trains depart from their respective towns of Deadwood and Durango. The trains perform switching tasks during their trips using switch lists. Trains will coordinate a "meet" at the Cook Lumber siding before continuing on their way.



Early in the morning on the branch line a train leaves Deadwood to go to Cimarron. The branch line serves the Cimarron Mine, packing plant, and various small industries. Local trains also operate out of Cimarron.

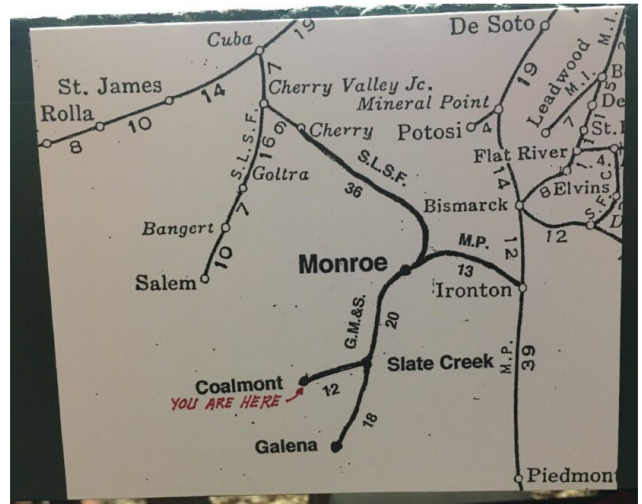
The operating scheme also includes several local jobs out of the larger towns. The most challenging job is the Durango Turn, which services Rico, Placerville, and Lizard Head. This job is a bit of a switching puzzle intended to challenge operators' thought process before making moves. Two other trains in the mix are the Lumber Extra and the passenger train. One or both trains can be inserted into an



operations session at any time to create a little more interest. Denver & Cat Canyon Western operations sessions normally encompass 3 to 3-1/2 hours of model railroad fun.

Bill Sommerfield: Gasconade, Meramec & Southern

Operationally this is a switching railroad with minimal running length between centers of switching activity. The Monroe Switch job works the GM&S arrival/departure yard at Monroe and the freight transfer facilities in South Monroe. Mixed trains 48 (northward) and 47 (southward) work from Galena to Monroe and back, serving Slate Creek and Coalmont. Bill runs the passenger rains and ore extras as desired on the layout. Train movements follow a sequence, without a clock. Car forwarding is via switch lists integrated with the job instructions. GM&S trains run 7 to 9 cars behind a single steam engine.



The Frisco's Cuba/Monroe Turn crew boards the freshly arrived train in North Monroe. The crew will work North Monroe, Monroe, and South Monroe. The crew end their shift with the Cuba-bound train assembled on the North Monroe siding. Car forwarding for the Frisco job is done using a switch list. Frisco trains run 12 to 15 cars pulled by a single diesel unit.



The Frisco's Cherry Valley branch extends southward from the main line at Cuba, MO to Monroe, MO in Reynolds County. Three days per week, the Frisco's Monroe-Turn with one of the Frisco's spanking new GP7's on the headend delivers a string of mixed freight to Monroe. After receiving any special customer local movement requests and the waybills for cars ready to be picked up from Frisco's Monroe Agent at the joint-use depot, the crew spots the incoming cars, gathers up the outgoing cars and completes any local moves. When they have the northward return train ready to depart for Cuba, they usually are nearly "dead on the clock" and will await arrival of the replacement crew.

The GM&S traffic leans heavily towards the distribution of inbound materials and supplies over its service area and the return of empty cars to Monroe for reloading. Reynolds County produces a limited number of outbound loads except for the lead/zinc concentrate destined for the smelter at Herculaneum on the Mississippi River south of St. Louis. While the GM&S Footboard Yard Master at Monroe makes up Train 47, the southward leg of the Galena-Monroe Turn, Train 48, the northward leg, has departed Galena staging for Slate Creek where it will have some work before proceeding to Monroe. After the yard crew makes up Train 47, the Train 48 crew will take Train 47 south to Slate Creek, then down the dead-end Coalmont Branch and back to Slate Creek. Work finishes in the Galena staging where the session began. There is passenger service between Monroe and Galena in the morning and afternoon. In the afternoon an Ore Extra runs from Galena to Monroe and back.



Rick Watson: Southern Pacific Exeter Branch

Freight train traffic flow on the Exeter Branch originates and terminates in Fresno. Fresno is the staging yard for layout operations on the Exeter Branch. Trains depart from Fresno to travel to the towns along the layout. Trains arriving in town switch the local industries, and then the train returns to Fresno staging.

There are five jobs on the Exeter Branch. The jobs are typically staffed by one person crews but there is space for two person crews. The five jobs are Sanger Switch, Reedley Runner – PM Turn, Exeter Local, and the Richgrove Turn.



Each job starts with pulling a train out of Fresno. Trains typically consist of 17 cars leaving Fresno and 17 cars going back to Fresno. Most of the traffic consists of iced reefers which have priority, followed by mechanical reefers, and miscellaneous freight cars to round out a 17 car train. The operational challenge is organizing the train into the proper mix of iced reefers, mechanical reefer, and other freight cars all blocked in order.



David Doiron: Southern Pacific / Lost Dutchman

Locations modeled on the Lost Dutchman layout include Tovrea, Tempe, Normal, Mesa, and Chandler, with staging representing Phoenix and Tucson. Tempe actually had 3 branches: the Kyrene, Terrace, and Creamery branches. In the modeled alternate history, the SP spun off the branches as well as the Tempe engine facility to the Lost Dutchman RR.

Thirteen jobs are available on the Lost Dutchman. Each job can be done as either single or two person crews. Two of the jobs are in the Tempe and Mesa yards. Some jobs involve local switching of cars while main line traffic passes through town. Other jobs involve bringing in a train from one of the staging yards and setting out and picking up cars in a local town. There is also a road job that moves trains between the Tempe and Mesa yards.



The Kyrene job extends south from Tempe, serving the industrial park at Peterson, Oncroy Ridge, Tyrell industries at Helena, Marathon Steel at Kyrene, and then the new industrial park at Aptakistic. The Dutchman has redeveloped the area south of Kyrene by subletting it to the Chicago Shortline Association, and they named Aptakistic after an area near Chicago.

The Lost Dutchman interchanges with the Southern Pacific in Tempe, then runs to the north. Locations include Hayden Mills, Creamery, Galveston, Uvalde, Gringo Junction, Ephrata, Eden Perdu, Clannad, and Two Guns (all in Arizona). There will also be an inland car ferry operation (a la Slocan) on Saguaro Lake from Butcher Jones Landing to Port Evangeline and Tortilla Flat. Eden Perdu is a division point and will have a yard, and Baker Paper Mill No. 6. Two Guns is the site of additional staging and the Santa Fe interchange, just west of Winslow and south of Canyon Diablo.



Train traffic is managed by conventional car cards and waybills. Jobs currently include Tempe Yard, Mesa Yard, the Engine Terminal, and Locals on the Kyrene, the Lost Dutchman line to the north, and the SP. Future plans include adding a dispatcher position to manage traffic on the layout.

Bob Ginger: Pepper Valley Division

Four jobs are available on the Pepper Valley Division. The Roseville Yard and Pepper Valley jobs can be staffed by either single or two person crews. Silver Lake and Bellows Falls jobs are typically staffed with one person crews. Bellows Falls, Silver Lake, and Pepper Valley trains operate over the road in both eastbound and westbound directions. Train length is generally limited to nine cars.

Each train starts as an east or west bound train traversing the Pepper Valley Division through the towns of Pepper Valley, Bellows Falls, Roseville, Coyote Springs, and Silver Lake. There may or may not be switching work to set out and pick up cars in towns along the way. However, every train stops at the Roseville Yard to set out and pick up cuts of cars assembled by the yardmaster.



Trains then continue on the loop back to their originating town. Once the switching work is completed in the originating town, the engine is turned and the train is prepped to run in the opposite direction with a job consisting of a new set of car cards and waybills.

The division's engine service facilities, fueling and RIP track are located in Pepper Valley. The two leads into Pepper Valley Industries are accessed in opposite directions so there is always the challenge of working through facing and trailing turnouts.

Roseville is home to a freight yard, car shops, reefer icing facility, and several local industries. Space is limited in the Roseville Yard, so the yardmaster must plan track usage when building trains and setting out cars while switching local industries. There is no timetable operation, so it is important for the train crews to keep the yardmaster informed of train ETA's into Roseville. That way the yardmaster can prioritize car movements to have car cuts ready for the incoming trains.

Many PVD locals live in Coyote Springs which also hosts the area's largest passenger station. Mooney's Plumbing Supply located near one of the Roseville yard leads is the single industry served in Coyote Springs. Switching cars in and out of Coyote Springs is generally handled by the Roseville yardmaster. This requires coordination with incoming or outgoing trains that pass through Coyote Springs.



Bellows Falls, situated in the higher mountain elevations, is home to the Crown King Mine, Shaw's Grist Mill, Whispering Oaks Ranch, Herb's General Store, and a small passenger station. Raw agricultural and mining commodities originate from Bellows Falls. The commodities are shipped to industrial and processing industries in Pepper Valley and Roseville. The town of Silver Lake also receives products from Bellows Falls, Roseville and Pepper Valley.

The very compact town of Silver Lake includes mechanical and agricultural rail industries. A couple team tracks sandwiched into the busy industry tracks create a challenge for the Silver Lake operator. Silver Lake is also the access path into the staging yard. Cars to and from the staging yard are often attached to the Silver Lake train and processed through the Roseville Yard.

This wraps up the second installment of this Layout Operations series. Next time we will go through the paperwork and processes that make operations possible for each layout.

Station Postings

Next AZ Division Meet

Spring Meet will be on March 28, 2026, in Tucson

9:00am to 4:00pm

Doors open at 8:30am

Arizona Division Leadership Roster

Contact leadership team through this link:

<https://azdiv-nmra.org/index.php/leadership>

Director	Chris Thompson
Superintendent	Paul Buhrke
Chief Clerk & Paymaster	John Mick
Achievement Program	Bruce Petrarca
Contest Chair	Dan Zintz
Membership Chair	Paul Buhrke
Election Chair	Chris Thompson
Operations Chair	Rick Watson
Legacy Committee Chair	Jim Dennis
Spur Line Editor	Bob Ginger
Webmaster	Marshall Wales

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RESPONSIBILITY: Except for official reports, all opinions are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the Arizona Division or its parent organizations.

SUBMISSIONS: Contributions of articles on any railroad or model railroading topic of interest to the membership are welcome. There is no compensation, but published articles can be credited to the NMRA Author Achievement Certificate. If you are interested in submitting articles, event information, or other information of interest to the members of the Division, please follow these guidelines:

1. Preferred method is by email to the Spur Line editor with the submission attached as a word text document.
2. Keep in mind that submissions may be edited for length or formatting, or not used, at the discretion of the editor.