

After you have a group of units that run well together in a consist, it is time to decide about what couplers to use between units. For me, the two main choices are operating couplers or non-operating (dummy) couplers. Some have used permanent drawbars for locomotives that will always be run together. I find this harder to manage because if you ever decide to separate them for service or to use elsewhere, more work is required than to just uncouple them. The drawback to working couplers is that if uncoupling devices are under or between the tracks, you could have accidental uncoupling. However, if the units are speed matched well, the likelihood of this is less. If you decide to not have uncoupling devices on the main, you improve your odds that units will remain coupled. Lastly, non-working couplers offer the advantages of the drawbar yet can be hand uncoupled if needed. The drawback is if units are removed from the consist, they have non-working couplers and will not be able to couple to and uncouple from cars on the end that has a non-working coupler. I have working Kadee couplers on everything on the railroad. If your units are running well together and you have few magnetic uncouplers on the railroad, you should have nearly zero accidental uncouplings. Like many of the guys I operate with, I have started to use picks, skewers, or other devices to uncouple cars. Some modelers go as far as cutting off the magnetic trip wire from their Kadees.

I hope that this discussion has been helpful to you and has made things clearer in how to set up a consist. It can be a complicated subject until you break it down and begin to understand it. I hope that you are inspired to try one of the consisting methods described. If you have previously tried one of them, perhaps you'll try a different method or to make adjustments in controlling the function outputs to get the desired results. I have found that with dissimilar decoders, management of function keys is important. I learned that turning on or off certain lighting functions for one unit in the consist triggered a totally different sound function in another unit within the consist. There will be some experimentation to find what works best for you.

Previously, Don Fiehn and Mark Gurries have written extensively on this subject. Some of the information contained herein comes from their work as well as from the JMRI website. For additional information, complete a web search of their work.

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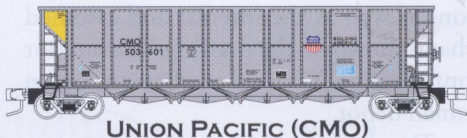
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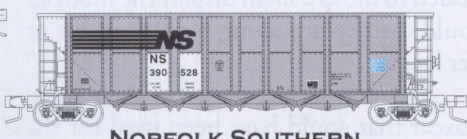
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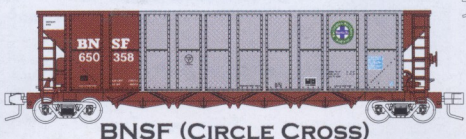
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