

Fantasy Suburban Rescue Services

Real railroads keep wrecker trains on call for emergencies. Cars in these trains consist of work cars, such as cranes and flatcars. In time of war armies operate troop transports, which include cars that transport injured soldiers. On the other hand, Lionel and others made several fantasy O-scale cars that never really existed in real life. These include hospital cars and fire fighting cars, both of which come in handy when your toy train railroad has an emergency (such as when your "burning switch tower" ignites).

"Emergency.scarm" is a place for your emergency cars to layover between emergencies. The main focus of the module is a suburban mainline with passing track, for normal railroad activities. In the center of the passing siding, towards the rear side of the track, is a passenger station platform, such as the Lionel Illuminated Station Platform #157.

On the left side of the module there is space to build a road which crosses the main line at a 30 degree angle. This will allow the use of fun crossing accessories. Note that the road is assumed to be a part of a street grid with regular right-angle intersections, so it is actually the main line track which is angled in reference to the roads. Only a portion of the road will be modeled (or you can assume a narrow one-way road), so you only need to install one crossbuck on the module front side, such as the Lionel Banjo Signal #140.

Two spurs branch out from the passing siding. The spur extending to the module left passes to the right of a small hospital building, such as the Plasticville Hospital #1902. The building is angled 30 degrees to match the street grid, with the main entrance facing the module rear. We imagine that this hospital was originally built exclusively for servicemen, but later became a small suburban clinic/hospital for civilians to use. The "hospital spur" was originally used for parking wounded troop transport and mobile hospital cars. With these cars now being uncommon, and with the spur already in place, the hospital spur has been repurposed for parking odd-ball cars, such as mobile Aquarium cars, that visit the suburbs for public entertainment.

Railroads earn freight revenue by charging fees based on tonnage moved. The railroads weigh loaded freight cars to determine how much freight weight has been added, and to ensure that the cars have not become unsafe due to overloading. The hospital spur was already in place and didn't have much usage, so we imagine that the railroad turned this to an advantage and installed a car weighing track-scale at the head of the hospital spur. Unfortunately there are no commercial sectional track-scale tracks, so we are using a terminal track to simulate the scale (darker colored in the scarm drawing). The scalehouse to the left of the track, where the actual measuring equipment is located, can be simulated with a small shanty, such as the Lionel Whistle Station #125.

For scenic ambiance, on the right hand side of the hospital building you could park an ambulance. Further to the right of the hospital is a parking area, also angled at 30 degrees. This is used by patrons of both the hospital and the station platform. To provide night illumination the parking area should contain several (3) lights to create a median that divides the parking area in half, such as the Lionel Boulevard Lamps #76. Parking slots in the "one way" driveway parking area are at an angle, aligned for cars entering the parking area from the module rear on hospital building side, U-turning at the end of the median in front of the station platform, then exiting back out to the module rear. City buses will also enter this driveway, as the rear of the station platform serves as a bus stop (for ambiance, you should place a waiting bus alongside the platform rear).

The spur extending to the module right of the passing siding is the "firehouse spur". This spur enters a firecar shed, such as the Lionel Maintenance Shed #6-12906. This is where your fire fighting cars, such as the Lionel Fire Ladder Company Flat Car #3512 (or even Fire Fighting Car #52) are parked. Because most fire fighting cars have people figures attached, the shed hides the unrealistic fact of the car being always occupied. If you don't have any firefighting equipment, you can repurpose this shed to hide other cars with people figures, such as an Operating TV Monitor Car. Note that firefighting equipment will normally be moved to the emergency coupled in front of the engine.

On the module rear side of the firecar shed is a firehouse, such as the Plasticville Fire House #45610 (a firehouse is essentially just a garage with a dormitory attached). This building is a support building for the firecar shed, but can be considered an ambiance building if the shed is repurposed to hold non-firefighting equipment. The garage doors face the parking area, and the building is offset to the same alignment as the station platform. This offset gives more room for fire trucks to back into the garage without fouling the parking area driveway. For scenic ambiance, have a firetruck partially extending out of the most module rearward garage doorway.

In the old days most hospital traffic came from the station platform, but nowadays with the hospital used more like a clinic, most of the patrons come in motor vehicles, with the station platform filling the role of a regular commuter station. To throw light on the hospital spur and firehouse spur switches as well as the track-scale, two gooseneck lights, such as the Lionel Goose Neck Lamps #75, should be attractively lined-up on each side of the station platform, so that they face towards the module front.

Both spurs have operating uncoupling magnets. The one on the firehouse spur is somewhat mandatory, due to the difficulty in uncoupling a car that is within the shed. The one on the hospital spur is optional, and can be eliminated. O-54 curves connect the passing siding with the main line. O-36 curves are used on the hospital spur. To eliminate problems with doorway clearance, the firecar shed is reached by O-45 curves.