

Refueling

Often modelers overlook the action that priority (first class / passenger) trains can impart. "Switcher.scarm" suggests a manner that switching locomotive fueling can be incorporated into a layout, while still using only traditional toy-train accessories.

Passenger equipment is typically shunted by a switching locomotive permanently assigned to a coach yard. Additionally in steam days when a terminal was located in a pollution sensitive area, the road engine was uncoupled some distance from the terminal, and a powerful low-polluting switcher hauled the train the final distance. Switchers often will spend days on assignment without visiting a maintenance shop.

Like any work vehicle, switching locomotives require constant refueling. Diesel switchers require diesel. Steam switchers require water and coal. All types of switchers, including electric, will also use sand, but this only needs replacement irregularly.

Model Scenario

This model provides a switcher pocket to allow a switching locomotive to get out of the way of moving trains. The pocket is also used for refueling the local switchers. Only fueling services are provided, as locomotive maintenance (and full sand refilling) will be performed at a larger engine servicing facility located elsewhere.

A stub track, capable of holding a typical length switcher, will branch from the main line. 20 inches of straight track should be sufficient, but if you have longer switchers (such as a cow & calf lashup), you can easily extend this length. Although typically only one switcher will park here, occasionally other types of rolling stock, such as a diesel tanker or coal hopper or diesel tanker, will use the spur for resupplying fuel.

At the end of the straight track near the turnout will be a small diesel fueling station. The K-Line #122 or Marx #1450 Automatic R.R. Diesel Fueling Station is ideal for the purpose. The front will face the spur, because this is where diesel switchers will typically be refueled (and besides, the automatic fueling action looks better viewed from the back side). Note though that switchers, or even through locomotives, can also be fueled on the main line from the rear of the Fueling Station when necessary. Like at most automobile gas stations, the fuel storage tank is underground and not visible.

In the "V" formed by the spur and main line will be located a Yard Light, such as a Lionel #70, which will shine down the spur at night.

If you still operate legacy steam powered switchers, you will also need a supply of water and coal. Note that steam locomotives will use up water faster than they will coal. Between the Yard Light and the Diesel Fueling Station you can install a legacy Water Column, such as the MTH #30-11007. The spout is stowed parallel to the main line (the vertical riser pipe will be adjacent to the diesel fueling station, with the horizontal spout pointing towards the turnout), but it is swung out over the main line when filling a tender. If necessary, the spout can also be swung over the spur track.

Beside the diesel fueling station on the side farthest from the turnout, you can install a legacy Coaling Station, such as the Plasticville Coaling Station. The station will straddle the spur, with the coal chute facing the main line to fill a tender. Coaling can only take place on the main line due to chute location restrictions. Under the spur under the tower is where coal is dropped for conveying up into the coal storage bin in tower.

Avoid including the legacy water column and coaling station if you do not operate steam locomotives. Even then, if one of these structures would functionally duplicate another already nearby on your layout, such as for example a water tower near a commissary building, then the functionally duplicating structure should not be included here.

Note that there is no sand tower. This is because sand can wait to be filled until the switcher returns to the main locomotive maintenance area. If the switcher needs a little extra sand before then, the engineer can pour some into the engines sand dome from a bucket. If you still want a sand tower however, feel free to add one (there is no reason why you couldn't have one here). You don't even need to use an O-scale model, as an S-, or even HO-, scale model may be proportionally more correct for this small facility. Be aware though that sand must be dried before it can be pumped up into a sand tower.