

# Remote Train Operation at Train Mountain

By Jeff Mills, TMRR Board President

With the increased use of battery powered locomotives, we have seen an upsurge of remote-controlled engines. By this, we are referring to radio controlled or smartphone-controlled use. This type of control of a locomotive allows the operator to move a train while not being *physically* on or even near it. Concern has been raised regarding a runaway train resulting from the loss of an interfacing signal from the operator. Another issue has been discussed about the likelihood of an operator being a significant distance from his/her train and loss of control in that instance. The potential for a serious accident is considerable given the grades and length of trackage at Train Mountain.

The Train Mountain Railroad Board has discussed these concerns at length and have contacted several members with experience in remote controlled equipment for their input. Our investigation of "Shut-down at Loss of Signal" has proven there is not a uniform shut-down system which can be implemented in a consistent manner at this time. Additionally, most radio-controlled units are not designed for use in trains. The board's decision is to limit the use of remote-controlled engines rather than to try to legislate technology. The TMRR Board has approved the following rule be implemented.

## Remote Controlled Trains Rule:

**Remote operation of trains is to be limited to the following train procedures:**

- **Entering and leaving a siding.**
- **Coupling and uncoupling cars to make up a train.**
- **Parking a train to be tied up and taken out of service.**
- **Running a train in a yard to couple or uncouple cars to be dropped in a parking place or added to a consist.**
- **Prepping to load or unload a train at Appendix or Crisp Yard and/or to turn a train around at the Ellingson turn table.**

**These remote-control operations are not to be performed in excess of 140' from the train, and only when both ends of the consist are in view of the Operator. All main line running must be done with the Operator riding in an engineer position on the train with the ability to stop the train in case of a remote-control failure. All Train Operators are responsible for the safe operation of their trains in order to prevent a run-away train.**

The 140-foot distance was adopted because Quentin Breen is remembered as using this for remote train operation. He did not arrive at this arbitrarily. 140' is the maximum train length, 140' is the minimum siding length and 140' is the length of the Backshop at Train Mountain. This is a dimension we are familiar with so this new rule will be added to the "Train Mountain Policies and Procedures."

The TMRR Board agrees this is the fair way to proceed, at this time. As Technology advances, we will consider making changes to this rule. The Board does not intend to stifle innovation. We encourage growth within the hobby for the safety and enjoyment of its members and guests.