

# Achievement Program - Conformity

by Bill Jacobs



In the last issue we touched, a little, on this issues topic, Conformity, box 3 on the Judges Score Sheet. Conformity is worth a maximum of 25 points or 20% of the total points possible. So let's take a look at our old friend, the Judging Guidelines, page 5 this time, to see what this conformity is all about.

First, a quote: "Conformity deals with achieving prototypical appearance or following prototype practice in construction and application of parts." And another: "The key to conformity is whether or not the model is logical." So, what does this mean? Let's think up an example-how about a locomotive. Consider the time period that this locomotive was in operation and what parts (like air compressors, head lights, and generators) were commonly used in that time period. These items, and many others, were updated with new technology over the years. So, you had better not mix new parts, say common in the 40s or 50s with a locomotive that is supposed to represent the 20s. Now there is, as usual, an exception to this, because many railroads overhauled and/or rebuilt locomotives a number of times over the years and applied new equipment, which brings us to our next really big thing in conformity-backup documentation.

Documentation is considered such a big deal in the Judging Guidelines that it is suggested that a model, no matter how great it is, should receive no more than 15 points if there is no back up documentation. And now, to get the point across, a really long quote "Prototypical models lettered for fictitious railroads should be supported with references to the corresponding prototype. Freelanced models of imaginary prototypes, including structures, should be supported with evidence of conformity to prototype practices (such as photos or drawings of prototypes with similar features) to be awarded more than a few points. If the model has a load it should have an accompanying plans or photographs." If you have built a model using magazine plans, attach a copy of those plans. If you have deviated from the plan in any way tell what and why-I've been burned on that. Remember, don't let the judge guess at what you did. Back to our locomotive-let's (because I'm a narrow-gauger) pick D&RGW 463. It is over 100 years old and is still running, after a recent total rebuild to the specs when it last ran on the railroad. I have a batch of pictures, mostly in books, of 463 and the other 14 locomotives of the same class. The changes over the years are stunning. The valve gear, cylinders, air compressor, even the tender are different. So, if you model the '50s, as I do, find a picture with a caption that includes the date, Xerox it and include it with your description. You can also find plans from that era that were drawn from the actual locomotive measurements of that time.

A few other tidbits: couplers, wheels, and axles as well as track work dimensions are exempt from consideration under conformity because NMRA Standards direct deviations from prototype practice for better model operation. Structures should follow prototypical architectural practices with regard to wall thickness and window and door type and construction.

I'm going to give you a bad conformity example or two that I have actually seen as a judge years ago. An entrant had built a structure model that included a flag pole. The model was HO and the flag pole was a quarter inch dowel. That's a little over 2 feet in diameter. When asked (curiosity is a really bad habit) he explained that it looked okay to him and besides he didn't have anything smaller that was round. In another case the entrant had built a dwelling that was a pretty nice model. Unfortunately, it had a wall around it which was constructed with a 1x2. This was also in HO. So his wall was somewhere in the neighborhood of 8 feet thick and 16 feet tall, which I guess would be okay for a castle.