

DCC Basics for MRR layouts

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Part 5 DCC Turnout Control

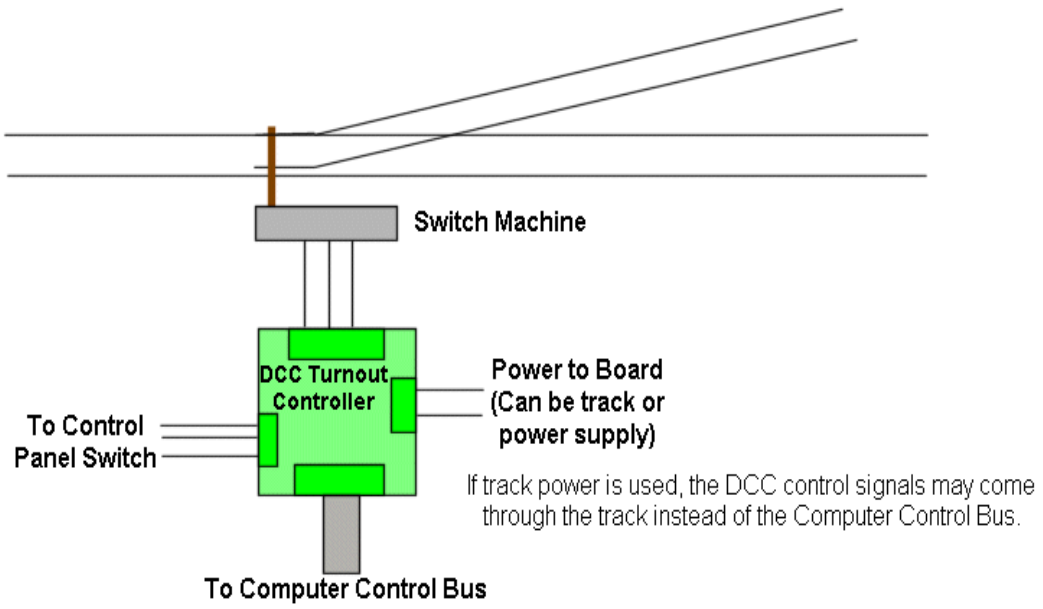
One of the advantages of using DCC is that ability to control the turnouts on a layout through your DCC system using the hand-held controller. The same controller that is used to control the locomotives. Thus you do not HAVE to build control panels. However, in a lot of cases, modelers have found that the control panel is almost indispensable except on the smallest of layouts.

To operate a turnout through DCC, you must address it just like a locomotive, then select which way to move it. Different systems use different names or terms for doing this, so you will need to consult your user manual. NCE uses Normal and Reverse while Digitrax uses Thrown and Closed.

The electronic device or package used for control of a turnout is usually called a Stationary Decoder but can also be more specifically called a DCC Turnout Controller. The term Stationary Decoder name usually refers to a group of DCC devices that are stationary on a layout that are used to control various auxiliary devices, as opposed to the Mobile Decoders that are used in locomotives. Each manufacturer of DCC systems will usually have their own unit. However, some units are more universal than others and may be used with other systems besides their own. Also, some DCC Turnout Controllers only connect to the track for power or control, or both, and some DCC Turnout Controllers connect to a control bus, such as the LocoNet bus used by Digitrax.

The DCC Turnout Controller actually provides the power or control to a standard or normal switch machine that actually moves the points of a turnout. Since there are several different types of switch machines in use, the user must select a DCC Turnout Controller that is able to control the machine that will be used. Some DCC Turnout Controllers allow different types of machines to be used by programming them, similar to the way a locomotive decoder is programmed. Some DCC Turnout Controllers can be programmed by simply changing a jumper setting.

When installing and wiring the turnout, the control wires from the switch machine go to the DCC Turnout Controller. The DCC Turnout Controller is then connected to the track bus or control bus. Some DCC Turnout Controllers also allow you to connect external switches or push buttons to them and can be installed on a control panel so you can have local control of the turnout as well as DCC control of it.



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