

EMD Diesel Numberboard Font

EMD diesels use illuminated numberboards to identify the locomotive. An EMD blueprint ((819058) for the individual numerals is in the collection of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Historical Society. This blueprint (dated 1952) has been scanned to create this EMD diesel font. It contains the digits 0-9 and the letters A, B, and C, plus some space characters. The blueprint defines a number of individual panels, each containing a digit or letter. Apparently they were to be made of clear plastic or glass, with the number applied or imbedded.

This font can be used to make custom numbers for F units and other first generation EMD diesels. Typically, you use Word97 or later to create the number, specifying black shading (Format =>Borders and Shading). This results in white characters on a black background. Then print the number, either on clear or white decal paper. Use clear paper if your model has illuminated number boards. If your model does not have illuminated numberboards, you can also use clear decal paper simply by painting the numberboards white before applying the decal.

Simply using the font results in numbers with very little space between the digits. I suspect that the prototype diesels had some framework in the numberboards, creating some spacing between the panels. The font includes some space characters, allowing the digits to be spaced as appropriate. These use the "<" and ">" characters, providing _ " and 1" of additional spacing,, respectively.

Since the font only has a few characters, the characters are repeated in upper and lower case. For example, it doesn't matter whether you type 123a or !@#A, you get 123A. For HO scale, use 8 point type. This gives letters that are exactly 9" high, matching the blueprint. For O scale (1:48), use 14.5 point type, which results in letters that are 8.99" high. For S scale (1:64), use 9.5 point type, giving letters which are 9.09" high. For N scale the point size is 4.5, resulting in characters which are 9.3" high. (In Word, these odd type sizes are available, you just have to type them into the font size field.)

Looking at the letters, there is very little difference between the "8" and the "B". I don't know any cases where the B&O used the "B", so it doesn't matter. For other railroads, I guess that the location of the letter made the difference. For example, if the railroad used a 2 digit number followed by a letter, it wouldn't also have some with 3 digit numbers.

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