

Spring Mills Depot HO scale DOD flatcars



Spring Mills Depot has released its highly detailed modern era HO scale heavy-duty military flatcars. The cars come in multiple configurations and paint schemes to allow modelers to re-create train loads of war materiel.

These heavy-duty, steel-deck flatcars are designed to carry two M1 Abrams main battle tanks. These pieces of armor are too heavy to be carried by the Army's older flatcars, which were designed to carry M48 and M60 tanks.

Known as the 40000 series due to their DODX number series, these cars are 68 feet long on their decks and ride on six-wheel Buckeye trucks equipped with roller bearings.

The 40000s were built in multiple groups, with the first arriving in 1981, built in the shops of Fruit Growers Express. Cars built by Thrall entered the fleet in 1983, and were followed by two orders from Ortner, received in 1985. The final order came from General Railway Equipment in 1987. Similar buffer cars for use in trains hauling nuclear flasks were built by GRE in 1992. They're numbered in the 39000 series and have flat steel decks.

Spring Mills Depot's models carry a ridiculous amount of detail, including metal grab irons and brake pipes, and separately applied brake rigging. There are also multiple variations of each car, which isn't a surprise when you consider Spring Mills Depot is a veteran-owned business that knows the subject matter.

Our two samples were an Ortner transport car and an GRE buffer car. The transport car was painted in the urethane green scheme. It's a sort of light olive drab that first appeared in 1996. This model has raised deck numbers simulating the welded-on deck position numbers added by the DoD when the painted-on numbers wore off.

Other specific details include the three sets of four tie-down channels (FGE cars have six channels at each end and four running through the center of the car); the straight sides of the Thrall, Ortner, and GRE cars; and trucks "pointed" away from the B end of the car.

All painting was smooth and opaque, and the lettering was clear, sharp, and legible. The transport cars include a set of container cleats with instructions for installing them. Spring Mills Depot also offers Conex, Tricon, and Quadcon containers in a three pack for \$49.95, and a set of 20 tie-down chains for \$39.95.

Both of our samples, the transport car and a GRE buffer car, weighed 4.7 ounces, about .5 ounces less than the National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice (RP) 20.1 of 5.25 ounces. The Kadee metal knuckle couplers were mounted at the correct height, although the trip pin on one coupler was slightly low. The turned metal 36" wheelsets are factory-painted with a weathered metal finish on both wheel faces and the plastic axles. On each car, one of the center sets of wheels was slightly tight in gauge. It should be a simple matter to twist them open.

Facts & features

Price: \$64.95

Manufacturer

Spring Mills Depot
P.O. Box 1616
Spring Mills, MD 21158
www.springmillsdepot.com

Era: 1981 to present, depending on paint scheme

Road names: DODX Buffer Car (olive green), DODX Buffer Car (urethane green), DODX Navy Material Car (silver), and DODX Transport Flat Car (olive green, urethane green, or cascade green). All available in multiple road numbers. Transport cars available unnumbered with decals for side numbers, sill numbers, various build dates, and COTS.

Features

- Factory-weathered, turned metal wheelsets, in gauge except one axle
- Kadee metal knuckle couplers, at correct height
- Modeler-applied container cleats on transport cars
- Multiple prototype-specific details
- Two frame styles
- Weight: 4.7 ounces, about .5 ounces less than NMRA RP 20.1

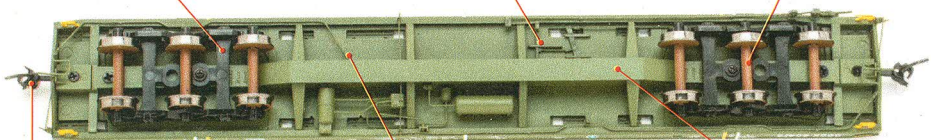
The cars are free-rolling, but prefer wider radius curves. I took the cars to the recently completed Jones Island section of the Milwaukee, Racine & Troy staff layout, where the cars were able to traverse the 27" radius curved viaduct that leads onto the island. A no. 7 curved turnout created a bit of bind through the diverging route. The cars had no trouble with the no. 6 ladders in the yard.

Solid trains of military equipment can appear anywhere in the country. If you want to model this traffic on your layout set any time after the M1 Abrams tank was adopted, you need these cars. – *Eric White, editor*

Six-wheel Buckeye trucks

Brake rigging

Painted wheelsets



Kadee couplers

Train brake line

Die-cast center sill

The Spring Mills Depot DODX 40000 heavy-duty flatcar has a die-cast metal center sill. Complete brake piping and rigging is installed on the underbody.