

Detailing a load of utility poles in HO scale



After completing this scratch built HO scale 89' LTTX flatcar, it was time to create a prototypically accurate load of utility poles for the car to carry.

To assist in this effort, we turned to Roger from Coastman's scenic products, who produces a line of HO scale utility poles. These poles are real wood, and are available in two scale lengths; 65' and 85'. They are correctly tapered from base to tip to represent the real thing. This is what sets them apart from just ordinary dowels.

These poles can be used to model actual poles on your layout by adding crosstrees and wires, or as a load of freshly processed poles from the treatment plant, as we have made here.

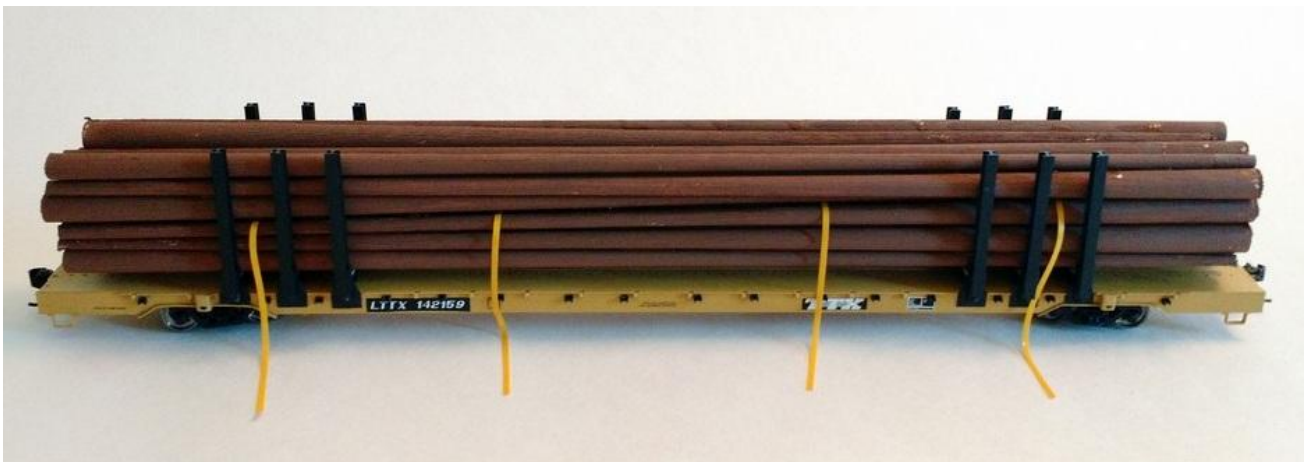
The required items for this project were 35 pieces of 85' long utility poles, superglue, fine pointed scissors, and 1/16" wide RC model airplane stripping tape to represent the hold down strapping.



To begin, the poles were lightly sanded, then each was hand painted using a dark earth brown acrylic paint to represent the typical wood preservative. The poles were then set aside to dry in the sun.

Once the paint had fully dried, we began to build a load in the car, layering the poles and alternating the tapered direction. The poles were secured with slow setting super glue, which allowed us to build the complete load and clamp into place before it had cured.

After about ½ of the load was in place, four sections of hold down straps were added. For this first row, the striping tape was removed from it's backing, and simply laid across the top of the pole bundles. These first four straps were left loose until all the straps were secured at the end, when all the poles were in place.



The remaining stack was completed, again layering the poles and alternating the directions of the tapered ends. The entire stack was then clamped lightly by wrapping rubber bands around it and set aside to dry.

Once the stack was dried, the remaining strapping was added around the entire stack. The strapping is wrapped from a Tichy train products strap winch, across the log bundle to the opposite side of the car and across a second strap winch. It is held secure with superglue on each winch.

The trick to making nice tight strapping is to use the sticky part of the tape to hold the tape tightly in place until the superglue dries.

The striping tape were first cut into 8" long pieces, and placed onto the car one at a time. With the backing removed, the first end of the tape was stuck to the bottom of the car as shown. The loose end was then routed across the strap winch, then held firmly as the car was rolled over to the opposite side where the tape was routed across the second glued strap winch.

The loose end was then stuck to the bottom of the car to hold tension on the strap until the glue had cured.

This process was repeated until all 16 straps were glued in place. The car was then set aside to dry.



When the super glue had dried, the loose ends were trimmed away, leaving a tight tie down strap from winch to winch.

Dunstan Fandel; Firecatdesigns.com

