

New throttle, faster upgrade chips for EasyDCC

Once you've run a layout with wireless throttles, it's hard to imagine running trains any other way. One of the earliest manufacturers of wireless Digital Command Control (DCC) systems, CVP Products, has recently made some notable improvements to its already solid EasyDCC wireless throttles. Through the use of upgrade chips, which can be added to older equipment, and an all new wireless T9000E cab, EasyDCC's radio system now offers more versatility and faster response times, making it ideal for layouts of most any size.

Put to the test. The most exciting of CVP's new EasyDCC products is the T9000E wireless handheld cab, which runs on four AAA batteries and features a liquid-crystal display screen, 16-button key pad, 13 DCC functions (F0 through F12), and a large speed-control knob. The new cab continues CVP's tradition of producing DCC equipment that can easily be upgraded and boasts one of the best radio ranges available for wireless DCC operation.

I tested a sample of the T9000E on Kalmbach's HO scale club layout, the Milwaukee, Racine & Troy, which is equipped with an EasyDCC system. Part of what makes the T9000E work so well is some new operating software for CVP's wireless EasyDCC system.

▶▶ CVP wireless components

Price: T9000E \$219; RX904G1 receiver \$99; WR600G1 receiver upgrade chip set \$20; W6-01 RF1300 upgrade chip \$15; DCC620M command station upgrade chip with user manual \$49

Manufacturer

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Description: Wireless Digital Command Control (DCC) throttle system



The new rugged T9000E wireless throttle for the EasyDCC system is a solid operator's cab.

Chips

This software has improved the response time of commands sent via the EasyDCC wireless cabs. The activation time of a function, such as a locomotive's horn, is now nearly instantaneous.

Also, the reworked EasyDCC system now uses an additional receiver for layouts requiring more than eight throttles. When operating in scan mode (the most reliable setting) the two receivers can support as many as to 16 cabs assigned to individual channels. The new configuration makes for more reliable and faster communication between all cabs and the command station. (A complete explanation for setting up a layout with EasyDCC components is given in the firm's *Installation, Operation, and Reference* manual.)

New features. Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the T9000E cab and older CVP wireless throttles, such as the RF1300, is the LCD screen. The screen displays useful information such as direction of travel, locomotive number, speed-step setting, and function status. It also can be set to display a locomotive's current speed step. In addition to normal operating features, the cab displays a small

To upgrade an existing EasyDCC system to use the new T9000E cabs, you need to replace the chips in the receiver (shown above) and command station.

icon to identify when it's processing information.

Another difference is that the cab has an encoder knob that can be spun continuously in either direction. Admittedly, after using previous generations of CVP cabs for years with potentiometers for speed control (having a definite start and stop position), it took me a bit to get used to the encoder knob. Using the encoder in conjunction with the speed-step display definitely helped. To change direction of a locomotive, you simply press the knob down until it makes an audible click.

The new cab also has a memory feature that can store up to 15 locomotive addresses. Scrolling through the memory to recall a locomotive is as easy as pressing the SHOW button, the 1 key, and then using the encoder knob to preview the choices. This could be a very useful feature when hosting engines in a terminal.

To test the T9000E's range, I placed a sound-equipped locomotive on the track and activated the bell and horn as I walked around the train room – then down the hall to the workshop – then deeper into the Kalmbach office building. When I was too far away to hear the locomotive any longer, I sat in my office on the other side of the building and conducted my test while talking on the phone with associate editor Cody Grivno, who was in the layout room. From my office I could still operate the horn, bell, and speed control with reliable results – more than 150 feet from the receiver and through seven steel-stud walls!

Upgrading existing systems. If you are just starting out and building an EasyDCC system from the ground up, the components you purchase come with the new software already installed. However, if you're already an EasyDCC user, you can upgrade your command station, wireless receiver, and existing RF1300 cabs by installing new chips. The chips come clearly marked and include easy instructions for how to make the switch. I upgraded all of Kalmbach's club layout's DCC components, including three RF1300 cabs, in about 20 minutes.

Because of a supply problem, CVP can no longer provide upgrade chips for the older TX904 wireless cabs. However, you can still use the older TX904 cabs alongside the newer RF1300 and T9000E cabs if you use a second RX904 receiver with a WR904 chip installed.

Solid and reliable. Since the CVP's EasyDCC system uses the base station for programming, the firm designed its wireless system to provide only the features needed to run trains – the primary use of most throttles anyway.

The EasyDCC system has been around for years, and CVP has a tradition of building rugged and reliable components that can be upgraded again and again as the firm develops new features for the system. The T9000E and the latest software upgrades are fine examples of that heritage. – David Popp, managing editor