

LINEUP

Motorcar Operators West Official Magazine

Western Railway Museum

MOW & PRO Northwest Excursions

Nevada Northern Railway Excursion

Eastern Idaho Railroads Magic Valley Rail Tour



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Branch near Hazelton (MP 33),

2019 MOW Membership Renewals and new membership applications are now being accepted.

All memberships expire on December 31. Please download the printable form on the MOW website
(www.mowonline.org) and fill-out all requested information. Mail the form along with a \$24.00 check to:

Motorcar Operators West, c/o Harry Fischer, Membership Coordinator, 28819 Shadow Valley Lane, Santa Clarita, CA 91390

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President's Message

Jim Culbertson

Re-establishing our Relationship

In the Twenty-Seven years of the existence of Motorcar Operators West, the organization has enjoyed many relationships with railroads near and far. Over the course of time, these relationships have taken a natural course of continuation or discontinuation depending on the circumstances of each railroad involved. Economics, good and bad for the railroads, play a key role in the viability of our hobby's rail access. Our hobby has weathered removal of lines to railroad success where in each case we have lost precious miles of rails to run. I could write volumes about the cause and effect that has led to the current status of our railroad line access.



The Sierra Railroad during happier motorcar times.

Today I would like to focus on one relationship in particular, that of the Sierra Northern RR which includes the California Western RR and the Yolo Shortline. These combined railroads all have a good history of motorcar runs from the early days of the hobby. As always, things go well until they don't and in the fall of 2011 an incident occurred on the Sierra Railroad that would prove to alter our relationship and access to the rails of the Sierra Northern. Liability is one of the most destructive words to the success of our hobby and it had reared its ugly head. In the summer of 2012, we saw the last motorcar excursion on the California Western and another chapter of motorcar runs became history.

As we move forward with the passage of time, everyone in the hobby speculated whether our good days on these lines was over for good. The subject came front and center in the spring of 2017 at our MOW Board meeting held at the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum. Two key participants in this meeting were Bill Schertle, past President of MOW and NARCOA, and Rob Himoto, President of the Santa Maria Valley RR.

Glen Ford outlines work to be done at the California Western RR summit buildings with GM Robert Pinoli.



Bill contributed that following his work on the litigation of the incident, he had developed a relationship with lawyers for both sides. In subsequent conversations, it became apparent that from the lawyers' stand point, the issue of motorcar runs was not a fully closed door. Rob Himoto was encouraging to the group that the Sierra Northern RR had just hired a new President, Ken Beard and perhaps some new dialogue could begin.



Robert, Glen and Dave survey the clean up work at Crowley

Armed with this enthusiasm, your President started down that road of making a cold call to Sierra Northern RR President, Ken Beard. Round one through three involved leaving a message indicating that MOW would like to meet and discuss any possible future relationship. Well you all know how that type of message might be received and it's safe to say that the phone did not ring. With patience and frustration, I reached out to Rob Himoto to update him on our lack of progress. Rob suggested he have a conversation with Ken Beard on our behalf and see if he could help facilitate a meeting. Low and behold

Rob was successful and in March of 2018, MOW Board member Dave Balestreri and I put together a meeting with Ken Beard at the Sierra Northern RR office in Woodland, CA.

We had an excellent meeting, outlining a desire in any capacity to once again establish a motorcar relationship with the railroad. Thanks to Mike Mitchell and Glen Ford, we had a gift of a framed Sierra Railroad Stock Certificate to offer up for their office, which was well received. Amongst our discussion, we floated the idea of establishing a "Friends of the California Western RR." Following lunch and three hours of discussion we parted company with Ken suggesting that he would contact Robert Pinoli, General Manager, of the CWRR to explore options, and that we should talk in a month. In late April the emails lit up and we were involved with setting up a meeting with Robert Pinoli for lunch and a discussion of what options we had. In early May, Dave Balestreri and I traveled to Willits and had a very productive discussion of what Robert described as a win-win situation for both parties. It was decided that we would return at a later date with a motorcar and do a track inspection and discussion of the endless project possibilities out on the Skunk Line.

Robert also indicated that we should invite Glen Ford, an employee of the CWRR, to join us for this outing.

On July 27, 2018, the day that the Mendocino Complex fire broke out, our inspection run took place with the four of us riding in Dave's big red A-4E. Robert and Glen outlined some of the recent work that both the railroad and volunteers had undertaken. Our general focus was on projects to help preserve historic buildings and clean up the appearance of the right of way, which would involve removal of used railroad ties. Our goal was to travel the line to the currently closed tunnel, but mother nature had other ideas with fallen trees on the portion of the line that is currently unused. We closed out the day with the return run to Willits amongst the thickening haze from the early hours of the Mendocino Complex fire.



Jim, Glen, Dave and Robert pose for a selfie at Northspur before the return trip to Willits

As of this writing, we are involved with scheduling a week-end work party to begin the task of lending a hand and re-establishing our relationship with the California Western RR. I have to say that our inspection run brought back a lot of good memories and it felt good to be back amongst the majestic redwoods, the river, and the rails. We will walk before we run on this project as we develop a group of volunteers to carry out the support for the railroad. We look forward to the support from our Motorcar Operators West membership.

Membership Message

Harry Fischer



To keep our members more informed about what's going on membership wise and to recruit potential members into the Club, included is a tear out of a membership application form. My goal was to eventually have something similar to the MOW membership Tri-fold, and that is now available. All you have to do is hand it to a potential new member, the membership application is included. Potential members are always welcome to contact me at 661-733-3084 or at homecraftHarry@gmail.com.

Here is the most current membership report as of July 31, 2018:

On the current 2018 membership front, we have 133 members. I'm pleased to say that of the 133 members, 9 new members have joined our club since January 1, 2018.

MOW would like to welcome the following new members:

John Gonder, Ruffs Dale, PA.

John and Patricia Harding, Sterling, OH

Steve Hart, Concord, CA

Mike and Kathy Hodges, Sonora, CA

Dave and Cheryl Jeffery, Santa Paula, CA

Gerry and Cheryl Kerns, Orange, CA

Bill and Carol Kneer, Odessa, WA

Lee and Holli Richardson, Whitehall, MT

Jerry and Karen Wagner, Eagle, ID

The one thing I find interesting this year as compared to years past is that our membership reach is expanding beyond our western region! This can prove to very beneficial to the club. MOW has always been a leader in the motorcar hobby, and it appears as though our efforts in promoting MOW are beginning to bear fruit. Thank you to all members who actively promote and recruit new members into the hobby. Remember, you do not have to own a speeder to become a member.

Motorcar Operators West Membership Application Form



Here is my \$24 dues check made payable to Motorcar Operators West. Please mail to:

Harry Fischer, MOW Membership, 28819 Shadow Valley Lane, Santa Clarita, CA 91390-1265

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Email _____

Western Railway Museum

April 15 , 2018

Dave Balestreri, Excursion Coordinator

Written by Harry Fischer

Photos Courtesy of Harry Fischer, Steve Hart, Jen Limon



On a beautiful, crisp, clear but breezy Sunday morning, Motorcar Operators West held a speeder run on one of their favorite railways, the Western Railway Museum located in Rio Vista Junction, California. The WRM is located in a beautiful area Northeast of San Francisco Bay. One of the reasons this railway is special is because it is centrally located on California highway 12, between Interstate 80 to the north and Interstate 5 to the south, and in the springtime this estuary is home to many beautiful wildflowers and birds of many kinds.



Excursion Coordinator Dave Balestreri leads the safety meeting and welcomes new members before the run.



It was a nice sunny but windy day as we departed towards Bird's Landing.

It's also a fabulous rail line for hosting new members. MOW hosted 2 newly mentored members that were mentored the day before on the Niles Canyon Railroad, Fremont, Calif., which was hosted by Pacific Railcars Operators. The newly minted members are Mike Hodge (accompanied by his wife Cathy) and Steve Hart. They eagerly waited their turn at set-on. They could not have been more appreciative of the help we provided—and excited to “Start your engine.” By the time we ready to head south out of the yard, they were definitely ready to ‘high-ball.’

After set on and a safety meeting, we headed south for about a mile. At the south end of the yard's tail track we had to do a reverse move to get on the main line. We then traveled south to just beyond Birds Landing to see the east bay. After spending some time viewing the bay, we turned our cars and headed north, back to the Museum yard for lunch.



End of the line at Bird's Landing.



The clouds were building as we turned at Cannon.

We had lunch, toured the museum, and took a trolley ride on one of their beautifully restored streetcars, before returning to our speeders and heading north to Cannon, end of track. As the early afternoon turned into late afternoon, it was obvious to all of us that our beautiful sunny day was quickly coming to an end. Rain clouds, assisted by winds from the bay, were heading our way. After turning around at Cannon, and heading back to Rio Vista Junction we all considered our bets— who would get there first: Speeders or Rain?

Guess who won? RAIN!

We were about 2-3 miles short of the yard when the mist of showers was on our windshields and on operators who had totally open cars! We arrived at the yard just when the hard rain did. Oh! What fun that was. For us seasoned operators—we get it. For the 2 new operators it was a day they will probably never forget because it doesn't happen often in California that it rains on our runs.

The rain started before we got back to the museum yard.



MOW and PRO Northwest Excursions

May 5-9, 2018

Dave Balestreri and Guy Howard, Excursion Coordinators

Written by Carol Balestreri

Photos Courtesy of: John Gubler, Linda Gunn

Once again Motorcar Operators West and Pacific Railcar Operators collaborated, planning an excursion on some infrequently travelled railroads. Those who took advantage of all that was offered got the chance to operate a total of 318 miles on five different railroads, all in the space of a week. Twenty-eight cars participated over the course of the event, and had the pleasure of running through a delightful variety of Oregon, Washington and California scenery.

Friday, May 4th saw us in Lakeview Oregon to run the Gooselake Railway as guests of the owner Toby Van Altvorst, a longtime friend of Motorcar Operators West. You may have been on this Railroad when it was called the Lakeview Railroad. We had a very enthusiastic welcome from the Lake County Chamber of Commerce. Jessica Bogardus, Executive Director, came out with a basket of local goodies for us. Everyone was able to choose a little souvenir to take with them. Set-on went smoothly as we could use the two different tracks, and we tucked the speeders away for the night beside the office building.

Saturday, May 5th twenty cars headed south out of Lakeview for Alturas California. The area around Lakeview is known for its natural geothermal springs. The hot springs were discovered in 1832 by trappers from the Hudson's Bay Company, who noted in their journal that the water was "unbearably hot". We could see evidence of that by the steam rising from the waters beside the rails. The hot springs wetlands are a paradise for bird watchers. We saw Sandhill cranes, eagles, Canadian geese, quail and ibis.



We noticed many metal ties, and Toby told us how they move around more than wood ties. Our first rest stop was a nice little park on the Oregon/California Border. It was fun to pass by the California Inspection Station, and not have to stop.

We crossed the Pit River, which is one of only two rivers that cross the Rockies.

In Alturas we passed right by the old Nevada-California-Oregon Railway Co. Depot, commonly known as the N.C.O. Depot, or The Whistle Stop. It is an historic site, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1908 to serve as the passenger station for Alturas, and was constructed from stone blocks from a local quarry. It was initially



located at the intersection of Twelfth and Oak Streets, near the rail yard, but was disassembled and moved, stone by stone, in 1915 to be close to the central business district! In 1926 the Southern Pacific Transportation Company purchased the N.C.O. and converted the line to standard gauge. Passenger service was discontinued on January 1, 1938, and the depot was converted for use as railroad crew housing. The Alturas Garden Club acquired the depot in 1962.

We made a short stop at Chimney Rock, which is a California Historical Landmark. You can still see the groove in the rock that was the hearth and chimney of the cabin built by Thomas Denson in 1871. Wasn't he clever to use a natural formation for his chimney? On the other side of the tracks were smaller conical volcanic formations, left when the softer outer material eroded over time, leaving the hard inner core of lava that formed these vents, similar to what this one must have looked like at one time.

Sunday May 6th, in cooperation with Pacific Railcar Operators, we continued our tour with twenty-three cars setting-on in Prineville, Oregon. After coordinating the excursion, EC Guy Howard was unable to actually operate, so Glen Ford ably took the reins and led the day. Prineville is located on the Crooked River at the mouth of the Ochoco Creek. During the Miocene and Oligocene eras great basaltic flows swept through the area creating the buttes. The ride out past Barnes Butte and its fellows is quite dramatic.



Tuesday, May 8, after a day off the rails for travel, twenty-one cars set out from the BYCX, the Battleground Yacolt and Chelatchie Prairie Railroad station in Yacolt, Washington. We traveled through lovely forests and rocky cuts, and then stopped at Moulton Station for a delicious catered BBQ lunch, which was brought out to us by Melinda and Frank's Barbecue, a local fireman and his wife. A short hike down the path to view Yacolt Creek Falls rounded out the lunch break. An afternoon break at the Heisson Store for a little local color, then back on the rails, to run through more lush greenery, alongside the river and through the tunnel, what more could you ask for? After a weather-perfect day, we got our spot of rain at 5:00 o'clock, as predicted, just at the tail end of set-off.

In 1917 the citizens of the City of Prineville voted 355 to 1 to build their own railroad when they were bypassed by the railroad coming from The Dalles. The timber harvests from the Ochoco National Forest made them prosperous for many years. The Les Schwab Tire Centers were associated with Prineville beginning with their founding in 1952. In 2010 Facebook selected Prineville for its new data center, and in 2012 Apple announced it would open a "Green Data Center", thus bringing jobs and breathing new life into the town. There is still the feeling of a small town and we were charmed by the families who arranged the lunch offered by the local 4H Club when we returned to the shops to turn around. We had a show of Oregon weather in the afternoon with a bit of rain and a show of lightning and thunder, but nothing too serious.



This optical illusion is on the Chilatchie Prairie RR at the tunnel. The image of the trailing car reflecting on the windshield makes it look like the trailing car is coming in the opposite direction with one set of wheels on the track.



Wednesday, May 9, the final day of our tour, twenty-four cars set on for a trip on the beautiful forest railroad of the Mount Rainier Scenic Railroad out of Mineral, Washington. We set-on in the museum's yard and ran to Elbe for a rest stop and a visit to the little shops. Elbe is where the Mount Rainier Scenic Railroad begins its excursion trains, which run during the season to Mineral Lake 3 miles south. At Eatonville, we passed on to the Tacoma Rail line out to Frederickson and the end of the line for us. EC Dave Balestreri and Rick Smith got their exercise setting the shunts, and picking them up, for all of the gated crossings. Brian Wise, Director of Preservation and Operations for the Mt. Rainier RR helped with flagging.

We are happy to announce that over the course of the excursion two new operators were successfully mentored. Welcome Howard Goff and John Leer. We met some new folks, renewed some old friendships and enjoyed another successful joint venture with Motorcar Operators West and Pacific Railcar Operators.



Kind of makes you wonder who is in there...

Nevada Northern Railway Excursion

May 23, 2018

Dan Berg, Excursion Coordinator

Written by Bill Schertle, Photos Courtesy of: Dan Berg

The Motorcar Operators West excursion on the Eastern Idaho Railroad was all set to go. As in the past, it would take place over Memorial Day weekend and would leave out of southern Idaho in Burley, Idaho. For those of us who live in the Southwest, the trip to Burley would take us through central Nevada, specifically, Ely, the home of the Nevada Northern Railway. Excursion Coordinator Dan Berg was contacted and he was able to get hold of Mark Bassett, Nevada Northern Railway Museum Director. Mark was more than willing to host a one-day event that offered motorcar operators and guests the opportunity to include the Nevada Northern Railway in the Eastern Idaho Railroad Memorial Day weekend excursion itinerary.

Bill Phoenix plays the “call to the safety meeting” and Memorial Day patriotic songs.



During the safety meeting, Bill Evans displayed his vintage sweat shirt he acquired during the 1994 Nevada Northern Railway Excursion. He gave operators and guests a brief talk on the event’s 120 mile run north to Shafter and the return trip to Ely.



Departing the load storage yard the group had a view of the East Ely Nevada Northern Railway depot and rail yard.

The Nevada Northern Railway is a Registered National Historic Landmark. It has been described this way - "It's as if the railroad workers went to lunch and never came back". It is a working museum using the original rolling stock and East Ely rail facilities that operated in the early 1900's. Much historical information can be found on the museum's website at [www. nnry.com](http://www.nnry.com).

Eighteen motorcars made an early Wednesday morning set on in the load rail yard. After the safety meeting, the group made the 8-mile morning run up Gleason Creek Canyon to the Ruth copper mines. Motorcars were turned on the Keystone wye for the return run down canyon to Ely for a late morning comfort break.

Jim Spicer stands beside Doug Gentles' hi-rail as the group turned their motorcars on the Keystone wye.



The tail car waits for the excursion highball. In the foreground is the Keystone east end wye switch, further aft is the massive Robinson open pit mine tailings.



Later that morning the motorcars traveled in the opposite direction for the 10 mile run up the Hi Line Branch towards McGill. As the motorcars climbed the western slope of the Schell Creek mountain range, the group was treated to views of spectacular high desert mountain panoramas and dramatic spring thunderstorms moving across the Steptoe Valley.



Upon arriving at Ely, a Nevada Northern Railway SD9 locomotive shifts freight cars in the East Ely rail yard.



Mike and Donna Springer complete turning their motorcar at Adverse as thunderstorms continue rolling across the Steptoe Valley behind the group.

The group prepares to leave Ely for the run up the Hi Line Branch to the end of the line at Adverse. Ahead a thunderstorm gathers on the Schell Creek Mountain west slope, threatening the excursion's progress.



The Group is ready for the return run back to Ely.

Eastern Idaho Railroads Magic Valley Rail Tour

May 25-28, 2018

Joe Schnyder, Excursion Coordinator

Written by Wayne Parsons, photos Courtesy of Nancy Parsons



Bill Pardee sets on his MT-14 at the Normal Ave. crossing. Note that Bill has two inspection windows, unusual for a MT-14. The grain elevators in the background are Union Seed, a division of the J.R. Simplot Co., one of the largest privately held agribusiness in the country.

Our escort Sean Corr, WATCO Track Foreman, talks with Dan Berg.



John and Greg Fowkes, in their 1955 Kalamazoo model 56, motor down the middle of the art gallery created by graffiti artists who use the all-white Union Pacific refrigerated cars as their canvas.





Excursion Coordinators Joe Schnyder and Dan Berg.



Bud and Sharon Bromiley pass one-time speeder sheds in Twin Falls.

Deer close by the track Sunday afternoon near Kimberly on the Twin Falls Branch.





Rest break at Eden on the North Side Branch, MP 28. Maintenance of way hadn't gotten to this crossing with a low rail, caused by winter snow melt. Two-by-fours are laid on the rail lifting our motorcars enough to provide clearance for the turntables.

Joe Schnyder reports that the railroad has approved two events for next year with final dates to be determined. Thank you Sean Corr for escorting on the holiday weekend, and thank you WATCO for hosting us!



Why We Are Always Waving That Red Flag

Observations by Carol Balestreri



After my close encounter in Oregon, I have been thinking about flagging A LOT. Since we joined the hobby fourteen years ago I have had the opportunity to do quite a bit of flagging on excursions. As usual, when we began I had no idea there was so much to learn.

My first real exposure to the importance of the flagger was when we were planning the events in Lone, California many years ago. The rail there has a number of high speed crossings of the main highway through the foothills. There had been no activity on that line for many years, as is so frequently the case with the rails we run in the hobby. Consequently the locals were not expecting any railroad traffic. We were planning on giving rides and crossing the road with motorcars several times during the weekends. This made for a potentially dangerous situation for all involved. We went to an agency that rents equipment for road repair crews to see what types of signs we should rent to protect ourselves and our speeder group—that was my first real eye-opener. The person there was very helpful and explained what I now think of as “the facts of life” as concerns flagging a highway. I clearly had no occasion to think through the facts of flagging and how truly critical the flagger is to the safety of all concerned. First of all, he explained that your best people need to be your flaggers. They need to be physically fit in case they need to get out of the way in a hurry, and smart enough to assess and make good decisions about situations that may come up. Yikes, it scares me still. I was planning on assigning those volunteers that had proven themselves useless helping with anything else. After all, they would just have to stand there, right?! Let me tell you, there is no worse feeling than taking that quick look back over your shoulder to check if everyone is through the intersection and seeing that the flagger on the other side has turned his/her back to the traffic, and is watching the speeders or butterflies or something and isn't paying attention while the road vehicles are starting to move before the speeders are all through!

The NARCOA Rule Book does cover Grade Crossing Flaggers (section 5.06), so every operator should be aware of the importance of flagging and should be versed in the basics. However, since operators seldom flag, as they are operating the railcar, there is a lack of organized education for flaggers, as it is generally passengers who are casually assigned this duty on-the-spot.

We have been experimenting with assigning a flagger “crew” ahead of time. We have a little pow-wow meeting before we flag so we can work as an organized unit. In this way everyone should know what to do. Even with the flaggers working as a team and following the plan, we have realized the **operators** all need to be on the same page as well. What sometimes occurs is that the lead railcar will get separated from the rest of the group, and even though you started out in the middle of the pack, you may find yourself in the lead position at a crossing.

In the situation where I was nearly run down we had stopped the traffic and some speeders had already gone through the crossing when a speeder further back in the lineup quit and needed to be put on the bar. The flaggers let the road traffic through while we waited for the tow to be set up, and then we stepped out to stop the traffic again. It was at this point the vehicle on the road did not stop, if I had not jumped out of the way they would have hit me. I cannot help wondering if he would have plowed into the vehicles stopped at the tracks if they had still been there. He was obviously not watching the road at all!

So, if you are the operator of the first motorcar in line it is imperative that you wait for the flaggers to be in position. And, even when the flaggers are in position, if there is traffic, wait for the first road vehicle to actually stop. Do not enter the roadway just because the flaggers are out there, it is possible that first vehicle may not stop, or there may be a vehicle around the curve that you cannot see.

Experiences within the hobby have proved that every passenger should understand the part they need to play in the success of the day. Having another set of eyes in the car is in your favor and may save you from being involved in an accident. Please do not allow your passenger to flag the roadway if they have no previous experience, are uncomfortable with the idea, or are not physically able. It would be far better to hook up two cars and have an operator flag.

If you have been asked to flag, the first thing you should understand is that it is okay to say “no” if you are not comfortable flagging. If you have doubts about your physical ability, you should pass. It is a large responsibility. My worst nightmare about the vehicle that almost ran me down was that the first speeder would already have moved into the roadway and would be hit. I hope the operator of that lead speeder took his wife out for a special dinner or something as her timely warning alerted him to the danger bearing down on them, stopping them from entering the intersection and into harm’s way. This certainly points out the importance of engaging your passengers to be alert at every crossing.

If you have agreed to flag, be sure you know where you should be standing, and watch for the lead flagger to signal it's time to step out. In the second close call we had that trip, it was my co-flagger that realized the speeders had begun to move before we were in place. Fortune once again smiled on us. She held out her stop paddle immediately and the traffic stopped. Many thanks to her for her quick thinking and to the semi-truck that was paying attention, saw us, and stopped even without adequate warning.

Some basic tips for a flagger:

Assess the crossing: Where do you stand? Is there a curve where vehicles on the road won't see you until it is too late to stop? You may have to hike out a way so you are visible.

Choose your escape route in case you need to jump out of the road to avoid a vehicle. Do not take any risks. The lead operator should not be moving out into the road with his/her speeder until you have the first road vehicle stopped. (Unless there is no traffic, of course.)

Obviously, wait for traffic to thin or for a gap before you step out. No need to stop any more vehicles than necessary. Check to see if the other flaggers are ready and move out at the same time.

FACE THE TRAFFIC, and try to make eye contact. Wave your flag, and hold up your STOP paddle, or your other hand to the traffic. Most traffic is conditioned to stop, and many of them want to stop to see the speeders going by. Smile. But be sure your body language is clear that you want them to stop and stay stopped. Do not turn your back on them.

Once you have the first road vehicle stopped, move a little to one side or the other so the oncoming traffic can still see you, or at least your flag or Stop paddle so they know why there are cars stopped and don't just try to go around them.

Once the last speeder is through the intersection, NARCOA instructions are to lower your flag and paddle and walk away. If your paddle says SLOW on the other side, you can turn it over as you walk away. I always say thank you to that first car that stopped for me. If you are on the wrong side of the road from the speeder group, walk with the last speeder across the road so you aren't stranded over there, and that makes it obvious the road traffic is clear to go. If you are on the right side of the road, be sure the other flaggers have crossed to your side before you let your vehicles go through. Probably the most critical advice is to pay attention all the time you are out there. Now, you are ready, go out there, be safe, and have FUN!



For membership information, please visit our website at www.mowonline.org