

The Rick Mills Memorial Photo Contest Instructions

For 15 weeks this summer (**June 1st – September 13th**) the South Dakota State Railroad Museum is hosting a railfanning photo contest across the state in honor of its late director, historian, and railroad photographer, Rick W. Mills. This contest is not just meant to honor Rick; it is also an opportunity to contribute to a photographic record of South Dakota's railroads during America's 250th birthday. Of course, we also expect that photographs are taken in a respectful and safe manner. Visit Operation Lifesaver's website, oli.org, for trackside safety information.

How do I submit?

From June 1st through September 13th, we will be accepting photo submissions through the following email address: contest2026@sdsrm.com. Film and slide photographs can be mailed along with a completed submission form to our museum's mailing address:

South Dakota State Railroad Museum, PO Box 1070, Hill City, South Dakota 57745

The submission form is required to be completed for every photo submitted because it not only lets us know where to send the prize if you win but it gives us the context behind the photograph which is important for its historic value.

What do I submit?

Any digital or film/slide photo can be submitted to this contest. Digital submissions should be a JPG, TIFF, or RAW filetype. Photos captured in 2026 of South Dakota railroads are allowed. A railroad employee in your photo is identifiable, it would be very helpful to have their name and position in the company included, though this is not required. **And remember, don't forget the submission form!**

What do I win?

We will have weekly winners who are given free admission to the South Dakota State Railroad Museum. In addition, you will be receiving an 8x10 inch print of your photograph at the end of the year. We also have gift cards from B&H Photo and Video for our top three photos. First place gets a \$500 gift card, second place gets a \$300 gift card, and third place gets a \$200 gift card.

How are winning photographs determined?

All submissions will be posted to the Museum's Facebook Page on Mondays. "Likes" will count as votes with the top three photographs for each week being selected as the winners on the following Sunday. At the end of the contest, these weekly winners will be presented to a panel of judges who will determine a first, second, and third place winner of the overall contest.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If I submit a physical photograph, will I get it back?

A. The idea behind this contest is to create a historic record, therefore submission also gives the South Dakota State Railroad Museum permission to keep and use your photo for the museum's operations. Please see the bottom of the submission form for details.

Q. Can I submit film and slides?

A. Yes you can! You can either scan your photo or mail it to us. Photos submitted by mail will be included in the week they are received.

Q. Can I submit historic photographs from my collection?

A. No. Although historic images are great, we are only accepting photos captured in 2026.

Q. How much processing/editing is allowed?

A. There is no hard and fast rule on photo editing or processing but keep it to a minimum.

Q. Why are AI generated photographs not allowed?

A. Not only do AI programs use existing, and often copyrighted, materials to create images, photographs generated with AI are not in the spirit of this contest. AI submissions will be removed from the contest.

Q. What happens if I trespass or break other laws to capture my photo?

A. Photos captured by breaking laws will be removed from the contest and future entries from the photographer will be left out of the contest. We want photographs to be captured safely and legally.

Q. Are professional photographers allowed to submit photographs for this contest

A. Yes. Professional photographers can submit. However, being a professional will not affect judging as the identities behind photos will be kept hidden from judges.

Q. How is judging done?

A. All photos will be presented on the museum's Facebook page weekly with the most "likes" establishing the top three for that week. Those winners will then be pooled together and presented to a panel of judges at the end of the contest to determine the final winners.

Q. What if I have any questions?

A. You are welcome to send an email to the following address: contest2026@sdsrm.com. This email is checked several times a week and we will be happy to answer any questions or direct you to someone with the right answer.

Photo Contest Submission Form

Instructions: Please fill this form out to the best of your ability. Every photograph will require its own form. Once complete, this form can either be emailed along with the photo to contest2026@sdsrm.com, or mailed to the museum if the photo is physical instead of digital.

Bolded indicates a required field.

Contact Information

Full Name of Photographer: _____

Phone number: _____ **Alt:** _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address:

Street or PO Box: _____

Apt. or Unit: _____

City: _____

State, ZIP: _____

___ Yes, I would like to be included on the museum's email list.

___ Yes, I would be interested in becoming a member of the SDSRM and would like more info.

Photo Information

Location: _____ **Date:** _____

Describe what is in your photograph. Include locomotive and railcar numbers if at all possible. If an employee is identifiable, please include their name and position if possible.

Note: By submitting a photograph to the 2026 Rick Mills Memorial Photo Contest, contestants are granting permission to the South Dakota State Railroad Museum to market, reproduce, distribute, sell, or otherwise utilize the photograph in accordance with the SDSRM's mission statement.