Power Cars – Stabled at Council Bluffs

American Car & Foundry built car Nos. 207 and 208 in 1949 as boiler/baggage/dormitory car Nos. 6004 and 6006. They later were rebuilt as steam generator dormitory car Nos. 303 and 304, and renumbered to Nos. 207 and 208 in 1987. Power car 2066 was built as postal storage car No. 5816.

Steam locomotives had supplied passenger cars with the steam needed for heat and hot water, but after diesel locomotives were phased in, steam generators were required. They were placed in baggage cars at the front of trains.

Locomotive auxiliary generators provided 32-volts of electrical power for the passenger cars that could be “stored” for short periods of time in batteries underneath each car.

As Union Pacific’s passenger equipment was modernized and the need for electric power grew, steam generator cars were rebuilt into diesel-electric generator cars that provide electricity to the entire train. Each passenger car is connected to the power car using a series of “jumper cables” between each car.

Some of Union Pacific’s passenger cars are equipped with their own electric generators, allowing them to operate without a power car.

Power cars also have living quarters for an electrician who monitors the system, and additional refrigerators and freezers for commissary services.