PRECO®

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PERFORMANCE

Preco expands Contract Manufacturing Services.

A new addition to Preco's Somerset, Wisconsin plant now offers customers an opportunity to process metal components with heat-treating and aluminum oxide blasting. The 2,160 square foot addition contains an 8-foot high, 5.5' x 10' BeaverMatic heat treat furnace that can heat treat material up to 1300 degrees Fahrenheit; a 14' x 14' aluminum oxide blast booth that can accommodate material as large as 10' x 10'; a 5-ton overhead bridge crane and a new lighting system that will ensure top quality visual and dimensional inspections.

The new 200 kW electric heat-treat furnace can stress relieve components by applying uniform heat throughout the parts. The furnace is a car-bottom furnace that allows for easy loading and offers a 10,000 pound oven load capacity. It has been certified to AMS-2750D for a 1200 +/- 25 degree Fahrenheit rating. The unit includes 46 work load thermocouples—16 of which can offer a guaranteed soak for oven control based on load temperature and in-chamber convection fans that help to maintain temperature uniformity. Honeywell's Trend Manager Software controls the furnace, which allows for 24/7 networking of the oven's performance and remote monitoring.

In addition, Preco's newly added aluminum oxide blasting operation can clean, remove discoloration, and create a more uniform surface appearance on a wide variety of stainless steel components. The process provides an aesthetic, finished natural look for components or sufficiently prepares the parts to accept additional coatings—whichever the customer prefers.

Welding, manufacturing, and process engineers all over the U.S. now have a new source for heat-treating and aluminum oxide blasting at Preco's plant in Somerset, Wisconsin.

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Sweden office originated in the early days of lasers.

The relationship between Preco and Tim Smith, the Managing Director of LMI AB, Preco's Swedish service and sales office, goes back to the mid-1980s when Smith first met Bill Lawson, the founder of Laser Machining, Inc. (LMI). At that time, Smith had technical responsibilities for servicing Sweden's first lasers. The two stayed in touch over the years, and in 1997 Smith began representing LMI as LMI AB. Preco purchased LMI in 2002, and the relationship with LMI AB continues to grow.

In the '80s, Smith's office sold and serviced mostly small laser engraving systems for Swedish engineering firms. Eventually, Smith was selling and servicing LMI's entire spectrum of laser processing equipment. Today, LMI AB is still managed by Smith and includes 10 employees who sell and service Preco's laser processing systems all over Europe and even in South Africa and Korea.

At its main office in Nås Dalarna, Sweden, LMI AB stocks many laser parts and offers maintenance service agreements to many customers who have purchased laser equipment. Preco's laser welding systems and converting

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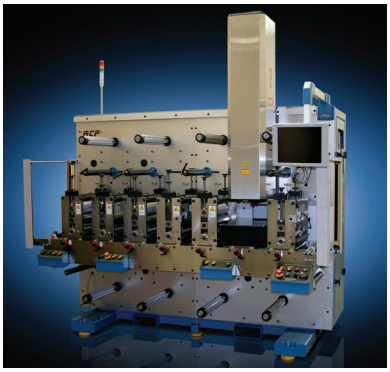
Medical products industry appreciates Preco's expertise, versatility and reliability.

When you consider how quickly the world of medicine is changing and expanding these days, it's not surprising that demand for Preco's processing equipment and contract manufacturing services among medical product manufacturers and converters is growing rapidly as well. Preco's relationship with the medical industry goes back nearly 30 years with our production of highly dependable, precision flatbed die cutting systems. In fact, those early systems are so reliable, many are still in use.

Advanced die cutting for extraordinary accuracy.
Today, Preco is meeting the versatile and growing needs of the medical products market in a variety of ways. Preco is still designing flatbed die cutting systems, but they are more precise and more customizable than ever. "Our traditional Preco die cutting systems are operating in more than 25 medical supply manufacturing facilities including the five largest in the world," says Ron Hofmann, Senior Vice President of Sales. "We have made huge advancements in accuracy and cutting depth and thanks to optical registration and special feed systems, we can now produce parts with a +/- tolerance of under .001 inches."Today's medical manufacturers appreciate our ability to achieve such precision, but they also value our ability to customize die cutting presses and complete processing systems for the unique applications they are developing."

One such die cutting system, designed to produce unique burn pads in a Class 100 clean environment, was built out of stainless steel and autoclaved with the hydraulics mounted outside the clean room. "Many competitors can't do that," Hofmann says.

Versatile Rotary Converting Platform offers superb R.O.I.
Preco is also making a significant impact in the medical products market with its **Rotary Converting Platform (RCP)** and its uniquely designed island placement system that serves the needs of converters and manufacturers who produce multilayer construction wound care products such as bandages and dressings. "Preco's island placement feature allows for proper spacing of materials as well as quick, easy placement of the module in the correct process station for individual components," says Chris Walker, Director of Imaging and Rotary Technologies. "It dramatically reduces waste, and with the high cost of medical materials used for web converting, many of our customers really appreciate the return on investment."


Preco Rotary Converting Platform

Preco's RCP is a continuous process-step-independent, servo-driven system where each rotary station is electronically geared to allow adjustments for optimizing tension as well as making registration corrections at every processing point. Preco's direct drive gearing into the RCP ensures greater cutting accuracy by reducing the potential for backlash or swathing in the gearing.

Laser processing for small, intricate and sterile parts.
As medical devices become smaller and more complex, many manufacturers are requiring a level of precision, versatility and cleanliness that only lasers can provide. One of Preco's most popular laser processing systems for metal-based medical components is the **MedPro system**. "It's a standard, space-saving laser processing system with a small range of motion, 12"x 12"x 12"," says Dave Krattley, Vice President of Sales for metal processing laser equipment.

Preco MedPro

The MedPro's flat sheet and rotary capability, integrated laser and small footprint make it ideal for cutting or welding intricate components in a clean room or other environment. "Preco's MedPro is a proven system that has been around for 10 years," says Krattley, "but we have just redesigned it with the latest fiber laser technology and beam delivery to better serve the intricate welding needs in the medical products market."

Preco's laser systems that process non-metal material are also in high demand among medical product manufacturers, according to Jason Thoen, Sales Manager of the laser converting division. "Lasers are ideal because there is no contact with the material and that helps customers meet the clean standards that are often required for medical products," Thoen says. "There have been a lot of breakthroughs with lasers in recent years, which gives us a lot more flexibility in meeting a customer's quality requirements."

Thoen says the most popular Preco system for processing non-metal medical material is the FlexPro®. The FlexPro can be ordered with a UV laser to create very clean, intricate parts and/or a fiber laser for producing blood test strips or electric circuitry where ablation is needed. The FlexPro combines the speed of galvanometer processing with the versatility of an XY motion system.

Other Preco laser systems that work well for rolled goods such as plastic or foam are the Lighting Bolt™ and Web Pro™. The Lightning Bolt Series is a single laser unit converting system designed specifically for handling a wide variety of web materials. The WebPro series digital laser system can be rapidly reconfigured for changing job requirements and is the ideal match for short run jobs or full production.

"These are fairly standard systems that meet most of the medical market's needs," explains Thoen. "However, everything is modular so we can change and modify any of these systems very cost-effectively to create a platform that meets a customer's unique requirements."

Wide variety of contract manufacturing capabilities attracts customers, too.

Preco's Contract Manufacturing Services (CMS) in Somerset, Wisconsin is also playing a bigger and bigger role in the medical products market. Bill Evans, Key Account Manager, says medical product manufacturers often use Preco's CMS for smaller volume, custom cutting and conversion of multiple layers of a wide variety of materials.

"We're getting medical customers from all over the U.S. right now," Evans said. "We can provide Just-In-Time delivery of components, and many customers are looking for that." CMS also converts diagnostic components for fluidic test devices, manufactures intricate metal components, offers a wide range of laser welding services, and processes instrumentation disposables for Original Equipment Manufacturers.

Capabilities in Preco's CMS area include a Class 100,000 Clean Room, Lighting Bolt laser system for web materials, flatbed die press, and two Rotary Converting Platforms, one with laser capabilities. A wide range of other laser equipment is also available such as CO_2, Nd:YAG and Fiber lasers on fixed beam or galvo systems. Evans encourages customers to contact Preco early on in their product development stages to take advantage of Preco's expertise. "We can help with the characterization process, prototypes, capability or validation studies and other aspects of a new product launch. The key is to get us involved early. It can save a lot of time and money."

Preco can help you

create a wide range of cost-effective, high quality medical products such as:

- Wound Care Products
- Diagnostic Test Strips
- Bandages
- Transdermal Patches
- Medical Packaging
- Blood Filters
- Catheters
- Guide Wire
- Gel Patches
- Implants
- Surgical Tools
- Hydrogel Products
- Dissolvable Films
- Dental Care Products
- Tubing
- And more.

Preco explores solar systems.

As new solar energy technology emerges, Preco is playing an integral role in thin-film web applications. Preco engineers are designing technology that will help solar energy product manufacturers cut, process and produce solar cells more efficiently and economically. Several different substrates and three different thin-film platforms are currently being worked on. In addition, Preco will also be able to provide a complete processing system that will help handle the back-end production processes such as screen printing, testing, cell singulation (edge deletion), cell array assembly and lamination. Watch for more information in the coming months.

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systems are extremely popular in Sweden due to the high volume of telecommunications and flexible packaging products that are manufactured there. Other markets served include industrial, aerospace, medical products, food processing and advertising.

"The key to our success," says Smith, "has been our ability to provide highly effective laser processing equipment and excellent service after the sale. We have the most laser processing experience in Sweden and have made service and support our foundation."

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