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Vol. 8, No. 3

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See Us In Pennsylvania

■ By Gary Reichert

The Post-Frame Builder Show in Manheim, Pennsylvania (June 25-26) will be the biggest show we have ever done.

Spooky Nook in Manheim is a different type of venue for us. We typically have had our shows in traditional convention centers. We looked for a venue in Central Pennsylvania for years and decided to try something different. (Thank you to our friends at AB Martin and Red Dot for the suggestion.)

As of today, 60 days prior to the show, it is looking fantastic. We have doubled the space in the exhibit hall, and

it appears registrations will follow suit. Good things can happen when you are willing to try new things and listen to the people involved.

Our exhibitors have free attendee passes. These have no limitations on the number given or who they are given to. We even have a contest with a prize for exhibitors based on giving out guest passes. A list of exhibitors and short profiles appears later in this issue. By contacting one of them for guest passes, you can attend our show for free and help your favorite vendor win a prize worth about \$3,000.

If you pay the \$50 entry fee for this event, like all our attendance fees, it will be donated to charity. We are still donating to organizations helping people recover from Hurricane Helene. Spouses and children under 16 are always free.

Our elevator pitch remains the same: We cater to the people who sign the front of the check not the back. If you are looking to spend quality time with the best vendors and people in the post-frame industry, come see us in beautiful Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, June 25-26. **RF**

Show Director's Message))

Ohio Show Getting Bigger

■ By Missy Beyer

The Construction Rollforming Show, returning this year to Ohio and slated for October 1st and 2nd at the Dayton Convention Center is, like its sister the Post-Frame Builder Show, already looking to be larger than ever before.

As the only show dedicated to roll forming and metal forming light gauge metal for the construction industry, the Construction Rollforming Show brings together the top companies for what has been called the "best business-to-business event for this market." Decision makers from all over the United States and even some from other countries attend this event to make connections and build their businesses.

As with all Shield Wall Media events, admission to the Construction Rollforming Show includes access to informational sessions both days of the show. Attendees can enjoy a continental breakfast in the morning while learning best practices from industry leaders. Also back this year is the Rollforming Industry Panel. This open panel discussion allows attendees to ask questions and gain knowledge from some of the top members of the construction industry. Panelists include business leaders from various roles within the metal forming and construction industry.

Also included with admission, and a favorite at Shield Wall Media events, is the complimentary Wednesday night

social. Attendees and exhibitors are treated to dinner and drinks while enjoying a local entertainer and networking with industry peers. Some have suggested that as much business gets done during the social hour as on the exhibit floor during the show.

The Construction Rollforming Show, like all Shield Wall Media shows, is a family friendly event and decision makers are encouraged to bring their well-behaved children, who are the construction business leaders of the future.

For more information on exhibiting or attending the Construction Rollforming Show or any Shield Wall Media event, contact Missy Beyer missy@shieldwallmedia.com. **RF**

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On The Cover:

Proper preventive maintenance includes keeping chains properly tensioned and oiled.

Photo courtesy of Metal Rollforming Systems

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Gary Reichert,
Publisher, Shield Wall Media

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Steel Market Update

■ Courtesy of Majestic Steel USA

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Each week, Majestic Steel USA [majesticsteel.com], a steel service center that distributes prime, flat-rolled galvanized steel sheets and coils to industries across the United States, compiles the Core Report. The Report is “an in-depth look at key indicators and trends driving the steel market. Market volatility demands your attention about what’s driving prices, when and why.”

Majestic Steel has granted *Rollforming Magazine* permission to publish information excerpted from the Report for its readers.

SCRAP PRICING

According to Prime Scrap Price, Market Conversations for the week ending April 11: After climbing \$95/gt through the first three months of the year, prime scrap pricing slipped in April. Prime scrap settled at \$455/gt, down \$20/gt from March, but up \$35/gt from April last year. .

Uncertainty around demand, easing scrap flows due to milder weather, and weaker export activity all played a role in impacting pricing. Despite the pull back in April, the increase in prices throughout Q1 will continue to pressure mill production costs well into Q2. Shredded scrap prices saw a much sharper decline, sliding \$40/gt to \$415/gt.

DOMESTIC STEEL PRODUCTION

According to the American Iron & Steel Institute, Weekly Domestic Steel Production report dated April 25, domestic raw steel production dipped slightly after climbing two out of the previous three weeks. U.S. mills produced an estimated 1,682k tons at a 74.9% utilization rate; this is down from 1,689k tons and a 75.2% rate previously.

This is down slightly after hitting the highest output since the last week of March. Production dropped in three of the five regions, with the largest decrease (in tons) coming from the Great Lakes region. Production from the Great Lakes region spiked from 549k tons to 523k tons.

Year-to-date production is still down 2.8% compared to the same timeframe from last year.

GLOBAL STEEL PRODUCTION

According to the WorldSteel, Global Steel Production report for March 2025, global steel production is now up for the third straight month.

Global steel production came in at a 5.359 million mt/day rate in March, up 3.6% from February. Production was up on a year-over-year basis as well, climbing 2.9% from the 5.210 million mt/day rate in March 2024.

Despite the jump in March, Q1 global production was still down 0.3% compared to Q1 2024.

While production increased around the world, the boost mainly came from China. Chinese production came in at a 2.995 million mt/day rate, up 6.3% from February and was at its highest daily rate since June.

Production in the North American region slipped slightly, sliding to a 298k mt/day rate. Production in the U.S. declined 2.0% from February to a 217k mt/day rate.

ZINC PRICE & INVENTORY

Based on the London Metal Exchange, Weekly Zinc Price and Inventory Report and the Shanghai Futures Exchange, Weekly Zinc Inventory Report, dated April 25:

Zinc pricing rebounded this week after dropping to an eight-month low the week prior. Zinc pricing ended the week at \$2,617/mt (\$1.187/lb), up from \$2,520/mt (\$1.143/lb) previously.

Zinc was supported by a weaker U.S. dollar along with better-than-expected first quarter economic growth in China, driven by strong consumption and industrial output.

Global zinc inventory decreased again this week, now down four out of the last five weeks. LME warehouse inventory dropped slightly after a 70% increase the previous week, sliding from 190,550 metric tons to 182,300 metric tons. Shanghai warehouse inventory slipped as well this week, dropping from 58,585 metric tons to 51,378 metric tons.

*The Majestic Steel USA Core Report library can be accessed at <https://www.majesticsteel.com/majestic-insights/core-report/>. **RF***

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JUNE 25-26, 2025

Spooky Nook Sports Lancaster, Manheim, PA

postframebuildersshow.com

FROM THE
PUBLISHER OF
ROLLFORMING
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**2025
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OCTOBER 1-2, 2025

Dayton Convention Center, Dayton, OH

constructionrollformingshow.com

FROM THE
PUBLISHER
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RURAL
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**2026
Rural Builder
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FEBRUARY 4-5, 2026

Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg, TN

ruralbuildersshow.com

For Exhibitor Information Contact Missy Beyer:

missy@shieldwallmedia.com ■ PH 920-216-3007 ■ FAX 1-715-227-8680

Folder Features

Model: ASCO USA V2.5-6

Supplier: ASCO USA, Inc. • Folder Manufacturer: ASCO Machines

Folder Model: V2.5-6 Fully Electric Double Folder

Features: Fully electric (no hydraulics), energy efficient
Bending clearance of 300 degrees
Loading tables
Fully automated slitter adjustment
Dynamic pressure regulation system
*Total control for open hems and interlocks
Crowning system with fully electric controls
Advanced gripper system
V2.5 smart safety features
LED lights with operation signaling
Anchorless heavy-duty frame
Remote control operator
V-Series API

Footprint (dimensions)/space requirements: 29' L x 12.86' W

Weight: 41,500 lbs.

Power Source: 480V 3 phase



Controls: 24" touch screen with 3D software (9.8" screen option).
V-Series Office Software

Maximum fold length: 21' 4" for this model

Maximum thickness that can be folded: 12 ga. mild steel

Maximum bending angle: 150 degrees

Additional details: Integration with Bendex and Sema (Paradigm and QBMS coming soon)

Website: www.asco-machines.com

Model: Roper Whitney AB1214K

Supplier: Roper Whitney • Folder Manufacturer: Roper Whitney

Folder Model: AB1214K

Features: 12' 14 ga. with straight and box and pan tooling due to the rotating kombi head offering two sets of tooling, great for channels, chimney caps and more

Footprint (dimensions)/space requirements: 184" x 90" x 84"

Weight: 10,850 lbs

Power Source: (requirements) 230V 3 phase 25 amps

Controls: Synergy

Maximum fold length: 12' / 146" / 3708 mm

Maximum thickness that can be folded: 14 ga or 2.0 mm mild steel

Maximum bending angle: 145 degrees

Additional details: USA manufactured and serviced

Website: www.roperswhitney.com



Model: SWI 32' Duplex Double Folder

Supplier: SWI Machinery • Folder Manufacturer: SWI Machinery

Folder Model: 32' Duplex Double Folder

Footprint (dimensions)/space requirements: 10.5' x 32' 9"

Weight: 18,208 kg

Power Source: 415V/3PH/50-60HZ

Controls: 32" touch screen

Maximum fold length: Up to 32'

Maximum thickness that can be folded: 16 ga. mild steel/18 ga. high tensile

Maximum bending angle: 150 degrees

Website: www.swimachinery.com



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New Metal Shop Opens

Dutch Brother Metals Celebrates Grand Opening in Greenwood, Wisconsin

■ By Karen Knapstein

On March 22, Dutch Brother Metals opened its doors to the community and customers with a grand opening celebration featuring equipment demonstrations, door prizes, and a hog roast with all the trimmings. At the time of the event, the Greenwood, Wisconsin company had been roll-forming metal for just three weeks, marking it as a truly new venture.

The company is led by brothers Allen Brenneman and Perry Brenneman, along with their brother-in-law, William Bontrager. They launched Dutch Brother Metals to specialize in custom trims, siding, and accessories, outfitting their shop with state-of-the-art equipment renowned for its reliable performance and longevity.

More than 200 people attended the special event. Attendees witnessed equipment demonstrations in the all-



More than 200 people attended the Dutch Brother Metals Grand Opening celebration on March 22.
PHOTOS BY SHIELD WALL MEDIA

new, mechanically powered metal shop. There was so much interest and so many requests, that equipment demonstrations were done in the afternoon as well as in the morning.

The facility features an Acu-Form F

and J trim machine and a Schechtl long folder. Most of the equipment was purchased from Metal Rollforming Systems (MRS), including a Titan dual deck machine capable of producing 9" ag panels and 6" low rib panels up to 40' long.



The company can roll panels up to 40 feet long.



Dutch Brother Metals opted for a Titan dual-deck roll former from Metal Rollforming Systems.



The MRS trim machine makes four different components: J channel, ridge cap, big corners, and little corners.

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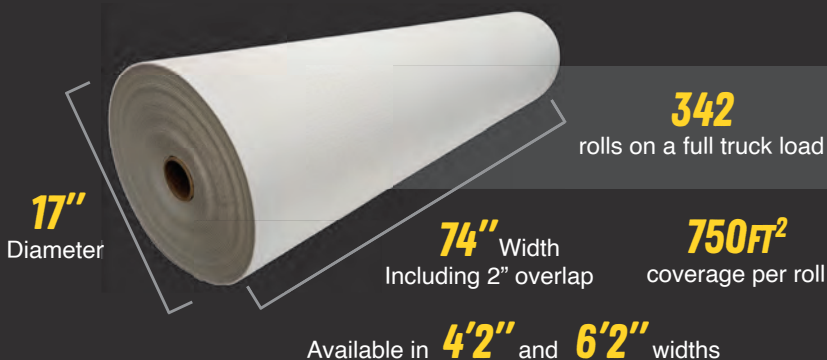
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The Way We Roll))

Other MRS equipment includes a trim machine that makes J channel, ridge cap, big corners, and little corners. The guys at the shop are pleased with the service



A Schechtl manual long folder was also added to the equipment setup.

they received from MRS; “They came out, set everything up, made sure everything was level, and got everything up and running. We’re really happy with them,”

William said.

In addition, the company has a portable siding machine from East Side Machine, which produces board and bat-



Equipment that is not manual is mechanically powered.

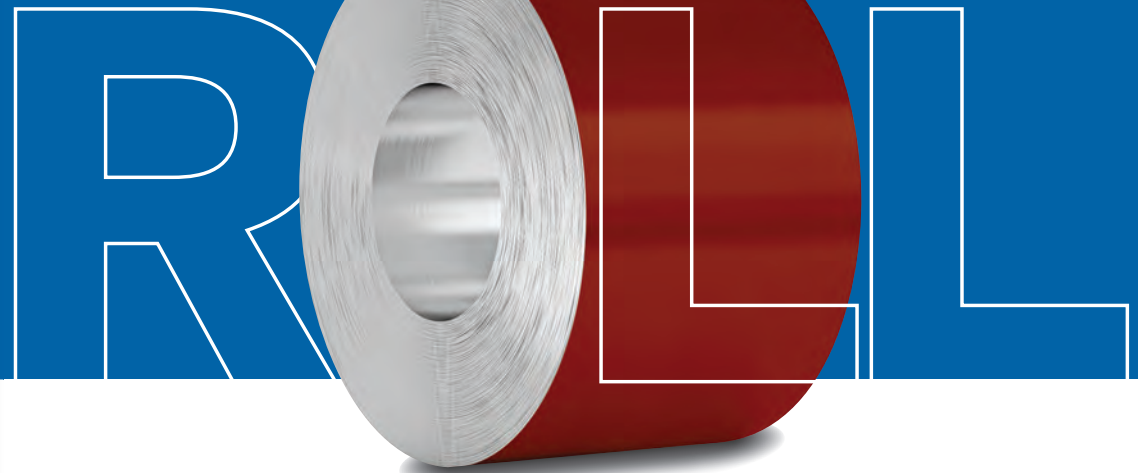


The business offers walk doors made locally in Granton, Wisconsin, by Panther Creek Doors



The shop is set up to make metal forming as efficient as possible.

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This barn was re-roofed with metal roof components made by Dutch Brother Metals, formed from Progressive Metals Charcoal Gray coil. It was installed by North Mound Construction. PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH MOUND CONSTRUCTION.

ten, double lap, and double-Dutch lap siding.

Recognizing that strong, reliable supplies are key to a business's success, Dutch Brother Metals sources its coil from Progressive Metals and offers more than 30 colors of panels and trims.

Beyond metal components manufactured on-site, Dutch Brother Metals

also supplies various building materials and accessories from Levi's Building Components; walk doors made locally in Granton, Wisconsin, by Panther Creek Doors; windows from Cannonball; and hardware, cupolas, and barn accessories from Harvard Products.

It's always exciting to see a new metal forming shop open its doors. Watch for

more news from Dutch Brother Metals in future editions. Remember: If you have news you'd like to share, call Karen at 715-952-1654, ext. 105. **RF**



Another view of the Titan dual-deck roll former from Metal Rollforming Systems.

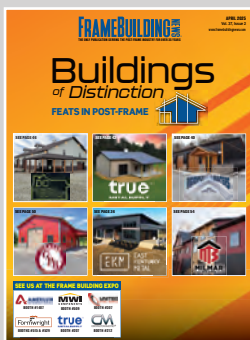


Supplied by Progressive Metals, Dutch Brother Metals offers trims and panels in more than 30 colors.



Attendees could get an up-close look at the new roll forming shop equipment while enjoying a hog roast with all the trimmings. Shown here: An Acu-Form mechanically powered roll former for making F and J trim.

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From Design To Production

The Role of CAD in Advancing Roll-Forming Technology

■ By Jeremy Godenzi, Account Executive, Microsol Resources

Roll forming is a vital process in the metal fabrication industry. It is a key manufacturing process for shaping metal into profiles for roofing panels, structural components, and siding. This has been important as manufacturers search for ways to improve efficiency, eliminate waste, and improve precision through Computer-Aided Design (CAD) tools.

A critical role CAD plays in advancing roll-forming technology is ensuring the accuracy of design and simplifying production workflow. In this article, we will examine how CAD affects the design and production phases and the future of CAD in the roll-form industry.

ENHANCING DESIGN PRECISION WITH CAD TOOLS

Materials that require exact measurements and precise shapes must be roll-formed. Many people do not know that a single design flaw can cause defective products, material waste, and delays. Fortunately, CAD tools have entirely changed the workings of the roll-forming industry. They have transformed precision into previously unachievable flexibility.

Let's examine in detail how CAD tools improve design precision.

1. Accurate Design and Visualization

Roll-formed profiles can be represented in 3D using CAD software. These models are transparent, precise, design visualization prior to production start, reducing the risk of errors. Therefore, CAD tools also enable the designers to change dimensions, modify angles or concepts before physically creating prototypes, which can consume time and money.

2. Material Behavior Simulation

With the help of CAD software that provides the powerful simulation tools and the benefit of accurate design, designers can test the behavior of materials during the roll forming process. This simulates material stress, strain and deformation in each stage of the rollers.

Testing the design with different variables in a digital environment helps to avoid costly errors that result in a production error and avoid design that is as good as possible with respect to the material performance.

For example, some CAD tools will tell you how different metals will react to roll forming pressures so that you can consider how different metals can work for any given application. It permits the simulation of material behavior, such as strength and durability, which allows for saving time and guarantees proper function of the product produced

STREAMLINING PRODUCTION PROCESSES THROUGH CAD

CAD improves the design phase and the production process in terms of process efficiency. Using CAD with other software, such as computer-aided manufacturing (CAM), can help manufacturers streamline their workflows and shorten production time.

This is how CAD tools streamline roll-forming production processes.

1. Seamless Integration with CAM Systems

CAD models are used in CAM systems that control automated machinery such as the CNC machine, the laser cutter and the roll forming equipment. By creating this integration between the design and

the machine it needs no manual input no human error and it does precisely what it was designed to do.

When combined CAD and CAM together, roll-forming manufacturers can achieve tighter tolerances, faster production speeds and better overall product quality.

Automating much of the production process is one way CAD helps reduce labor costs and material waste. Since the design is already perfect (before production starts) there is no trial and error, which means fewer defective products and less material waste.

2. Faster Turnaround Times

Time is of the essence in the roll-forming industry. Often, manufacturing processes require quick completion to meet tight deadlines and customer demands. CAD tools help manufacturers reduce product development and production timelines and thereby reduce workflows.

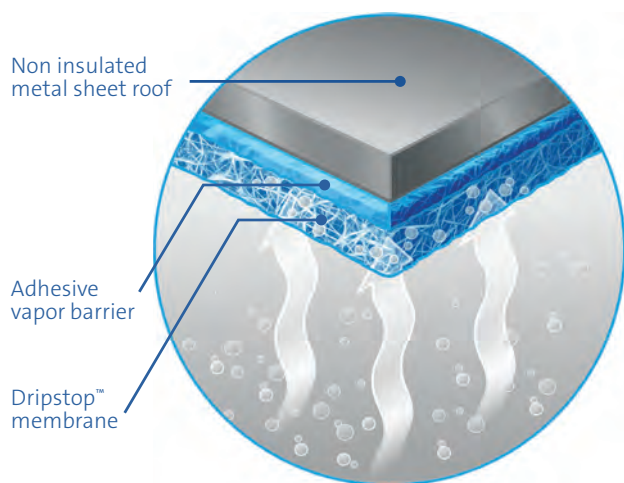
Through CAD coupled with fully automated manufacturing systems, manufacturers can reduce the time and effort needed to go from design to production. Direct feed of the CAD design into machines eliminates the need for manual input and reduces errors. The automation at this level allows for the time it takes to produce products to be reduced significantly while delivering each product batch with consistency.

In the construction industry, where deadlines are frequently tight, and cost management is critical, the capability to speed up the design and production phases is a competitive advantage. CAD shortens lead times and, therefore, allows manufacturers to respond to customer needs faster, which results in better customer satisfac-



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tion and faster project delivery times.

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS: USING CAD TO INCREASE ROLL FORMING FLEXIBILITY.

But custom made solutions are the biggest advantage CAD offers in the roll-forming sphere. Today, customers expect products suitable to their needs in the market. This means the manufacturer can easily produce custom profiles in CAD. This allows for quick response to customer product requests for unique shapes, sizes, or even design.

In roll forming, custom profiles are often required to comply with architectural or structural requirements. This process becomes much easier when CAD creates a flexible platform for designers to create new profiles or modify existing ones quickly.

Designers can simulate the entire roll-forming process in a virtual environment. This way, they ensure that custom profiles meet functional and aesthetic requirements before production commences.

Lack of design constraints also means faster prototyping and faster delivery of custom solutions to customers. CAD will allow manufacturers to meet tight deadlines without compromising quality, allowing complex, non-standard profiles to be produced accurately.

FUTURE OUTLOOK: CAD IN ADVANCING ROLL FORMING TECHNOLOGY

CAD will continue to drive technological advances in the roll-forming industry. With the growing market for CAD tools, manufacturers will see more innovative features, such as design and production efficiency.

THE MARKET IS EXPANDING WITH TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

The value of the CAD market is expanding and the new technologies entering the market will expand the market even further. Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and cloud based collaboration tools are just some of the new advancements that make CAD more powerful. This allows manufacturers to design in real time and collaborate with their teams worldwide.

For instance, AI-driven CAD tools can automate parts of the design process by suggesting design improvements, predicting material costs, or predicting a design flaw before it causes a major loss. In fact, these tools can get more efficient with experience.

Also as 3D printing and additive manufacturing become more commonly used, CAD will be essential in making the two technologies compatible with traditional roll forming methods. Further expansion of the roll-forming boundaries will be driven by advanced design tools and new manufacturing techniques.

SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

Another area where CAD can make a big impact on manufacturing is in sustainability. To achieve sustainability, roll forming

manufacturers use CAD tools to optimize product designs for material efficiency and waste free production. The design of light-weight but strong profiles is another benefit of CAD which can support the development of more energy efficient buildings and infrastructure.

FINAL THOUGHT

CAD is, indeed, transforming the roll-forming industry by boosting precision, streamlining production, and enabling custom solutions. These advancements help manufacturers deliver high-quality, cost-effective products faster. As the CAD market grows, we'll see even more innovation, making roll-forming more efficient and competitive. With projections placing the global CAD market at USD 15.8 billion by 2032, the future is clear—roll-forming and other industries are becoming more digital, efficient, and precise than ever. **RF**

Jeremy Godenzi is an Account Executive at Microsol Resources [https://microsolresources.com] and brings with him a history of building relationships with the architect, contractor, and engineer base. In his free time, he enjoys running, social sports leagues, and comedy shows.

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Keep Your Machines Running Smoothly

Expert Daily-to-Annual Maintenance Tips

■ By Karen Knapstein

Rich Boegli of Metal Rollforming Systems gave a presentation at the 2024 Construction Rollforming Show about roll-former maintenance, sharing a wealth of useful information. Below are some of the highlights.

Before diving into the details, a word about safety: whenever guards are removed, follow a proper lockout/tagout procedure. Ensure the electrical source is locked out and the air supply to the machines is cut off before performing any service work.

DAILY MAINTENANCE

A daily routine should include:

Tooling inspection. Use a mirror and a piece of paper to verify that the dies or tooling are not touching. “If the tooling is touching, it doesn’t take more than a couple of revolutions before that tooling is marred, and you’ll have to replace dies—which gets costly,” explains Rich.

Lubrication. Roll-former tooling should be lubricated every day, per the manufacturer’s recommendation. Most recommend ZEP45, but Vanishing Oil or WD-40 will also work to minimize wear. “That also helps clean and maintain the dies by removing dust, dirt, and debris—especially when you’re running materials like Galvalume,” Rich notes. Galvalume can leave dark lines on tooling; one workaround is to lubricate the dies and then run cardboard through them to clean off residue. “Not every machine can run cardboard because of clearance issues,” he cautions, “but this helps most panel lines avoid dark lines throughout the tooling.”

Hydraulic and pneumatic leak checks.



Clean the area around hoses and fittings until you can clearly see where a leak originates. “We get many calls where people say, ‘Hey, we have a hydraulic leak, but we can’t find it,’” Rich says. “Cleaning up the area usually pinpoints the source.” For pneumatic leaks, simply listen for the hissing sound. “That helps any manufacturer you call to pinpoint where the leak is so we can get the correct parts out to you as fast as possible.”

Pan-system cleanup. “On most of our systems, we have a pan system, and I’ve seen pans completely full of hydraulic fluid,” Rich reveals. “Clean it up daily to help locate future leaks.”

Air-system drainage. Drain water from traps and reservoirs—including all valving for the clutch, shears, and other components. “If there’s water in the system, it mixes with lubricator oils and makes valves sticky, leading to length issues or non-cutting problems.”

Oil-reservoir checks. Verify that oil reservoirs are full. Many machines have a sight line for the oil level. “If your valves aren’t getting lubricated—or if



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METAL ROLLFORMING SYSTEMS

water enters the system—it dries out seals, causing them to crack or fold over and preventing the system from operating correctly,” Rich warns.

Shaft-nut torque. Ensure shaft nuts are properly tightened. “If they’re not, the shaft can move side-to-side, resulting in die damage—and you’ll spend thousands on replacement dies.”

FRL bank settings. Before startup, confirm the correct settings on your filter-regulator-lubricator (FRL) bank. “Settings vary by manufacturer. On ours, we set specific pressures for the clutch, right airbag, left airbag, and main. Over- or under-pressurizing can damage the machine or prematurely wear parts—so check with your manufacturer.”

WEEKLY MAINTENANCE

Each week, you should:

Hydraulic-oil level. Check fill points on all main-tank reservoirs. If the oil level is too low, it runs excessively hot and risks failure. If the oil looks dark and brown—especially after years without changing—it’s time to replace it.

Chain condition. Inspect all chains for kinking; replace any that show stiff links.

MONTHLY MAINTENANCE

On a monthly schedule, be sure to:

Shear-blade inspection. Feel the edge of your sheet for burrs. If you detect a burr, consult your manufacturer about re-tensioning the blades to achieve a clean cut. “A bad shear-blade edge can lead to customer complaints and safety hazards,” Rich emphasizes.

Chain-tension checks. Examine chains around motor areas; slack chains cause premature wear on sprockets and links, and can even break.

Encoder and belt-roller tension.

Encoders: These read sheet length on pre- or post-cut lines; proper tension on the encoder roller is crucial for accurate lengths.

Belt rollers: On infeed tables—especially double-deck systems—check belt tension while raised; tensioning on the lower deck then raising can overtighten belts and cause premature wear.

Bearing greasing. Grease bearings—but only two to three pumps. “Overgreasing extrudes grease past the seal, causing premature bearing failure. We see more failed bearings from overgreasing than undergreasing,” Rich cautions.

(“Monthly” is just a guide: if you’re running millions of feet, check more often; for lighter use, you can check less frequently.)

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE

Once a year, plan to:

Gearbox-oil change. Use the manufacturer’s recommended oil.

Hydraulic-fluid and filter replace-

ment. Fresh fluid and filters help prevent premature failures.

Infeed and drive-roll cleaning. Remove guards and blow rolls clean with air. For heavily soiled rolls, use mild soap and water with a brush, then dry thoroughly. “Clean rolls feed sheets properly and maintain throughput speed,” Rich advises.

CONCLUSION

Consistent maintenance—daily, weekly, monthly, and annually—is essential to prolonging the life of your roll-forming equipment, ensuring product quality, and minimizing costly downtime. By following Rich Boegli’s guidelines—inspecting tooling, lubricating dies, checking fluid levels, and adhering to manufacturer-specified settings—you’ll protect your investment and keep your production running smoothly year-round. **RF**



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Preventive Maintenance

For Portable Roll-forming Machines

■ By Rick Zand, New Tech Machinery

Portable roll-forming machines—whether they’re fabricating standing seam roof panels or seamless gutters—earn their keep on every jobsite. But like any piece of precision equipment, they only perform as well as they’re cared for. Skipping routine maintenance might save a few minutes today, but it risks downtime and repair bills down the road. Maybe you’ve heard the saying, “Take care of your machine and it will take care of you.” It’s no truer than with a portable roll former.

Below is a detailed guide to what a solid maintenance program looks like and the problems you can expect if it’s ignored.

STAYING PROACTIVE

Regular cleaning, inspection, and lubrication do more than keep a machine looking mint. They:

Extend component life—from drive gears to electronics—so the machine stays in service longer.

Produce safer, cleaner outputs, protecting your reputation with customers.

Minimize emergency repairs, slashing unplanned costs and scheduling headaches.

Protect profit margins by preventing defective panels or gutters that end up in the scrap pile.

What is a Maintenance Plan?

A maintenance plan should be tiered—daily, weekly, monthly, and annual checkpoints—so nothing slips through the cracks.

FIVE JOB KILLERS CAUSED BY NEGLECT

Dirty Drive Rollers and Forming Rollers

Dirt, debris, and metal shavings can build up on the rollers, causing black streaks and scuff marks on the material. When rollers are dirty, you might also notice slipping or misfeeds. Regularly wipe down and inspect the rollers, ensuring they’re free of any buildup. Avoid using harsh solvents that could damage polyurethane rollers.

Unlubricated Shear Blade

A dry blade doesn’t just leave ragged edges; it can scar the die faces and warp the blade itself. Cost: new blades plus wasted coil length.

Improper Chain Care

Chains run too tight? They grind shafts and sprockets. Too loose? They skip teeth and throw timing off, causing panel dimension errors.

Loose or Worn Components

Vibration and heavy usage can cause bolts, nuts, and roller stations to loosen over time. If fasteners back out of alignment, the machine’s forming stations may shift, leading to poorly shaped gutters or panels. Conduct routine checks to ensure everything is properly tightened according to the manufacturer’s specifications.

Poor Maintenance of Reels

When it comes to reels, keeping them greased and moving smoothly is vital. A tight reel stresses the coil, leading to defects in the gutter metal. Avoid these issues with proper reel maintenance.

Each of these issues starts small—a nearly invisible mark, a

Interval	Key Tasks	Why It Matters
Daily / Each Use	• Remove metal shavings and debris • Wipe down and visually inspect rollers, shear, and tooling • Keep covers on during operation & storage	Dirt acts like grinding compound, leaving scratches on panels or black streaks on gutters.
Every 30–40 Hours	• Lubricate main drive gears (≈30 h) • Lubricate chains (≈40 h)	Dry gears and chains overheat, stretch, or seize—an avoidable cause of downtime.
Weekly	• Check hydraulic oil level and look for leaks • Inspect battery, fuses, and wiring	Low oil or faulty electrics can stall a job midrun.
Monthly	• Grease reel bearings • Verify chain tension is “snug, not tight”	Tight or dry reels twist coil; loose chains wear sprockets.
Annually	• Change hydraulic oil and filters • Audit overall alignment and recalibrate tooling	Contaminated fluid and cumulative misalignment shorten machine life and hurt product quality.

subtle vibration—but left unchecked they escalate into lost production days.

Storage and Handling—The Often Forgotten Frontier

A machine that lives outdoors under a tarp will still sweat, especially in humid conditions. Condensation breeds rust. Whenever possible, store roll formers indoors or in a well ventilated trailer, and never transport them with coil threaded through the rollers. Material left in the machine traps dust, flatspots drive rollers, and strains chains during transit.

TRAINING: THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Even the best schedule fails if the crew doesn't know *why* each step matters. A quick shop talk—"Here's what dirty rollers did to yesterday's coil and what it cost us"—turns a checklist into a culture. Many manufacturers publish machine-specific manuals and offer service hotlines; make these resources standard for crew members.

For example, New Tech Machinery hosts a Learning Center on its website, full of video tutorials, articles, and downloadable schedules and charts on maintaining your portable roll former, making adjustments, and more.

MEASURING THE ROI

Consider a modest scenario: a gutter machine that produces \$2,000 of finished product per day. A seized chain or chipped shear blade can idle that machine for two days while parts are sourced, instantly wiping out \$4,000 in billable output—far more than the few dollars' worth of chain lube or shear grease that could have prevented the failure.

THE LOWDOWN

Portable roll formers thrive on routine. A disciplined maintenance program—cleaning, lubrication, inspection, and proper storage—protects your investment, your schedule, and your reputation in the industry. The best contractors treat maintenance not as a chore but as insurance: make sure you keep the proper tools, lubricants, and cleansers on hand to maintain your machine. Check with your machine user manual or manufacturer recommendations to learn which products to use. For example, you don't want to apply harsh chemicals to polyurethane drive rollers. If in doubt, check with the manufacturer and stick to their guidelines. **RF**



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CUSTOM ROLLFORMING CORP. EXPANDING FACILITY

Custom Rollforming Corporation, a leading manufacturer specializing in custom roll-formed metal products catering to a diverse range of industries, is expanding its facility in Moundridge, Kansas, to further enhance its capabilities and capacity to meet increasing customer demand.

This facility expansion is a key part of CRC's strategy to improve operational efficiency and increase production capacity. The addition will feature a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled quality lab, ensuring the highest standards of quality control across all products. An updated breakroom will provide employees with a comfortable space to relax and recharge, reinforcing CRC's commitment to employee well-being. The expanded facility will also increase manufacturing capacity, positioning CRC to better serve its growing customer base and meet demand more efficiently.

"Custom Rollforming Corporation represents the rich history of The Bradbury Group," says David Cox, CEO of The Bradbury Group. "Since our founding in 1959 as a custom roll-forming company in Moundridge, Kansas, we have evolved to serve a variety of industries. Under the leadership of Bryan Smith, general manager, and Russ Stucky, plant manager, CRC is experiencing significant growth. This expansion not only allows CRC to double its size, but also positions us to fulfill our 2028 strategic priorities: Focus on Our Core, Expand Our Solutions, and Live Our Values."

Smith calls the expansion a milestone in the company's growth.

"It strengthens our ability to deliver quality products and services while improving efficiency," Smith says. "The new climate-controlled quality lab ensures we continue to meet our high standards and the modern breakroom reflects our

commitment to employee welfare. This achievement is a result of the hard work and dedication to our team. We are excited for the future we are building together."

HIXWOOD WELCOMES WES GINGERICH TO SALES TEAM

Hixwood, a leading roll-formed steel panel building supply company based in Wisconsin, has announced the addition of Wes Gingerich as its new outside coil salesperson for the Midwest territory. Gingerich will serve customers across Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas, reporting directly to Noah Oberholtzer.

With a strong legacy of values and craftsmanship dating back to 1998, Hixwood [www.hixwood.com] has continued to grow and evolve since its 2020 acquisition by Ambassador Supply. Under the leadership of General Manager Paul Zimmerman, the company has invested in people, technology, and operational excellence—doubling its revenue in just three years.

"Wes brings a drive for excellence and a wealth of industry knowledge that perfectly align with the culture and values we prioritize at Hixwood," said Zimmerman. "We are so fortunate to have him join our team as we continue building momentum across the region."

Gingerich is an industry veteran who brings valuable experience in coil sales. His addition strengthens Hixwood's presence across key Midwest markets, reinforcing the company's ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional service and quality materials to its customers.

COMBILIFT INVESTS IN THE ENGINEERS OF THE FUTURE

As part of Engineers Week, Combilift in Monaghan, Ireland, opened its doors to local schools in an initiative aimed at promoting STEM education and announced that the Regional VEX Robotics championships will be held

within the Combilift headquarters, with winners getting a chance to qualify in the world championships.

Combilift, a global leader in material-handling solutions, is dedicated to supporting STEM education and nurturing the future workforce. By hosting this event, the company aims to bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry applications, encouraging students to explore careers in engineering and technology.

At the event, St. Macartan's VEX Robotics Team, winners of the 2025 the North West Regional Finals, presented their award-winning robot to over 250 students from local schools and talked about the process and skills involved in designing, building and programming a robot. To get a full overview of the competitions a friendly match was held, highlighting the excitement and technicalities of the high-calibre VEX competitions.

Through interactive demonstrations and hands-on experiences, young learners gained insight into the real-world applications of STEM and the vital role robotics plays in modern industries.

Through initiatives like this, Combilift continues to play a prominent role in motivating young minds to think innovatively and to develop the skills necessary for their futures. By investing in the next generation of engineers, Combilift is helping to shape a brighter tomorrow for everyone.

HENRY REPEATING ARMS RECOGNIZES THE AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Henry Repeating Arms, one of America's leading firearm manufacturers, is building on its legacy of acknowledging its most valued constituencies with the launch of the American Construction Industry Tribute Edition, a new addition to its lineup of collectible Tribute Edition rifles that honors the men, women, and companies who build America from the ground up.

"America runs on the backs of its builders," said Anthony Imperato, Founder and CEO of Henry Repeating Arms. "This rifle is our celebration of all the skilled trades-



Wes Gingerich



David Cox



Brian Smith

people who work on everything from blueprints to brick and mortar to shape our city's skylines, put roofs over our heads, build roads, bridges, and most importantly, the foundation of our lives and future. This new rifle is our way of saying thanks."

Andy Wickstrom, President of Henry Repeating Arms, said, "We are proud to acknowledge the demanding and dangerous work, which requires a diverse range of skills. From carpenters and plumbers to electricians and engineers to ironworkers and excavators, the construction industry plays a vital role in shaping our communities and creating spaces for growth and progress."

Built on the award-winning Henry Golden Boy .22 S/L/LR platform, this lever-action rifle, like the rest of Henry's Tribute Edition rifles, features highly detailed engraved embellishments that pay tribute to some of the country's most fun-



damental workforces and constituencies.

The right side of the nickel-plated receiver cover features a 24kt gold-plated "Proud to Build America" plaque, an engraving of the American flag, and a portrait of three construction workers standing proudly in front of steel I-beams. The left side shows a residential framer at work on a rooftop and a tower crane erecting a skyscraper—a nod to the vast scope of the construction trades. Both sides are bordered by a brick motif, symbolizing the industry's foundational role in America.

The rifle's American walnut buttstock

features a hand-painted yellow construction helmet beside a scroll banner reading "American Construction Tribute," providing a lasting symbol of pride for those in the trades. It is chambered for .22 Short, Long, and Long Rifle. It features a 20" blued steel octagon barrel, brass buttplate and barrel band, adjustable sights, and the legendary smooth action Henry firearms are known for.

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For your convenience, here's a current list (as of May 5) of the Post-Frame Builder Show exhibitors. **RF**



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For over 40 years, Capital Forest Products has been leading the distribution of lumber and manufacturing materials for the building industry along the east coast. Exclusive relationships with our European and Canadian sawmills allows us to deliver high-quality, premium products to you in full or mixed loads. Supplying exceptional furring strips, framing lumber, panel products, and specialties to industry leaders allows us to be the prime resource that positions you leaps ahead of the competition.



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Booth #607

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CFB LLC Distributors, founded in 2013 in Lebanon, PA, supplies high-quality screws like U2 Fasteners and Big Timber. They also provide ceiling liners for agriculture buildings, KHI KHO reflective insulation, and TR Vent. Committed to excellent customer service and competitive pricing, they deliver top building products efficiently.



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D.A. Hochstetler and Sons is a fourth-generation manufacturing business located in LaGrange County, Indiana. Established in 1950, we have been fabricating agricultural and industrial products for over 70 years. To learn more about our products please visit our website.



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Direct Metals Inc. designs and supplies fasteners, panel clips and many accessories for metal, low slope and shingle roofing. Primary products include long-life Dade County code-compliant SCAMP 304 SS Cap metal-to-wood fasteners as well the popular PANCLIP brand of Pancake head screws and panel clips for standing seam metal roofs. Additional products include drains, pipe flashings, butyl tape, foam rolls and closures, Ridgevent, 304 SS rivets, windows, reflective insulation and polycarbonate

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Royal Crowne Cupolas

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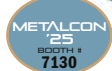

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Manual Brakes

A Guide To Efficiency and Precision

■ By Karen Knapstein

When it comes to forming metal in the shop and on-site, manual brakes are a go-to solution for many professionals. These tools offer reliability, portability, and precision, making them an invaluable asset for contractors and metalworkers alike. But what makes manual metal brakes so effective? And what best practices should users follow to ensure they get the best results? Let's look at some of the details, courtesy of Yoni Kellman, Regional Sales & Marketing Manager at Van Mark, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2024.

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS

One of the biggest advantages of manual metal-forming equipment is that it doesn't require electricity. This makes it ideal for job sites where power access is limited or nonexistent. Many manual brakes are designed specifically for portability, allowing for quick adjustments and modifications right where they are needed. This is especially useful when working on older homes with variable dimensions. Instead of relying on pre-formed metal pieces that may not fit as expected, having manual tools on hand ensures a perfect fit every time.

Additionally, Yoni points out the simplicity of manual brakes makes them incredibly reliable. Without complex electronics or moving parts prone to failure, these tools rarely break down. However, they do have limitations—most notably, the maximum thickness of material they can handle. Selecting the right brake for the job is essential to prevent damage to both the tool and the material.



The Van Mark Industrial Metal Master 20 manual brake comes with a stand and platform that enables users to increase leverage and stabilize the brake while working with heavy materials.
PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN MARK

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING MANUAL METAL BRAKES

Using a manual brake effectively requires more than just bending metal—it involves understanding the tool and setting it up correctly. Here are some key best practices:

Choose the Right Brake: Always select a brake or slitter that is rated for the thickest material you plan to work with. Using a tool rated for lighter gauge materials can result in damage to both the metal and the brake.

Understand Proper Operation: Before using a manual brake, take the time to fully understand its operation. Improper use can lead to injury or damage.

Secure Setup: Make sure your brake is set up securely. An unstable brake can move during operation, leading to inaccurate bends or potential safety hazards.

Routine Maintenance: At the end of

each workday, wipe down your tools to remove debris that could scratch or damage the materials you're working with.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

While manual metal brakes are durable, misuse can shorten their lifespan or cause potentially costly repairs. The most common mistake is attempting to bend material that is heavier than the brake's rating. "Van Mark brakes are very durable," Yoni says, "so generally there isn't much to worry about. The most common issue we come across is when someone tries to bend material that is heavier than what the brake is rated for. This can cause significant damage to the brake, so we strongly advise against this."

Another mistake is using the jaws of the brake to close a hem. Doing so puts unnecessary wear on the brake, potential-

ly leading to premature failure. Always use the tool as intended to maximize its lifespan and efficiency. “Van Mark brakes feature a ‘hem pocket’ built into the hinge for closing up your hem,” Yoni continues. “Occasionally we see people use the jaws of the brake for this purpose, but we’ve found that this method causes unnecessary wear on the brake, so we suggest using the hem pocket for this purpose.

PREVENTING OPERATOR FATIGUE

Though manual tools require physical effort, many features are designed to minimize operator fatigue. Van Mark brakes, for instance, feature wide handles with two-point mounts for bending and locking. Many models also have multiple handle positions, allowing users to find the most comfortable grip.

Industrial model brakes even come with a stand and platform, enabling users to increase leverage and stabilize the brake while working with heavy materials like 24-gauge roofing steel.

FEATURES THAT BOOST EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is key when producing many pieces of the same size. Some brakes have features built in to streamline production. Many models include material stops, making it easier to produce identical pieces quickly. Ergonomically designed handles promote safe posture during use, reducing strain on the user.

Accessories can further enhance efficiency. For instance, wheeled stands allow users to move the brake around a job site with ease, while adjustable heights provide a comfortable working

position for the operator. Additional tools like the Van Mark TrimCutter and TrimFormer enable quick slitting and shaping of common profiles. Also, the MultiGauges accessory simplifies bending precise angles, saving time and improving accuracy.

CONCLUSION

Manual metal brakes are indispensable tools for professionals who need flexibility, reliability, and precision on the job site. By choosing the right equipment, following best practices, and avoiding common mistakes, users can maximize efficiency and ensure high-quality results. Whether you’re working with roofing, siding, or custom sheet metal applications, a well-maintained and properly used manual brake can be a strong ally in achieving high-quality metalwork. **RF**

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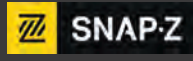



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Low-Tech, High Reliability

Unlocking the Benefits of Manual Metal Forming

■ By Karen Knapstein

Manual metal forming remains a fundamental technique in many fabrication shops, prized for its straightforwardness and cost-effectiveness. As Stoll Metal Works emphasized during a recent interview, manual equipment offers distinctive advantages—yet it also carries inherent limitations that every shop must consider. By understanding both sides of the coin, fabricators can make informed decisions about when and how to employ manual forming alongside more automated solutions.

One of the most compelling benefits of manual metal forming is its lower initial cost. Unlike CNC presses or hydraulic folders, manual brakes and shears require minimal capital investment and consume far less power. “Simplicity in setup and power requirements” means these machines can function in environments without robust electrical infrastructure, making them ideal for remote or off-grid operations. Reliability further reinforces their appeal; with few complex components, manual machines tend to experience very little downtime. For many of Stoll’s customers in non-electric communities, manual equipment isn’t just a primary solution—it’s often a lifeline.

That simplicity of operation extends beyond power. Even shops that already run CNC equipment frequently keep a manual machine on hand as a backup or for special, one-off trim pieces. As Stoll Metal Works’ team explained, manual brakes allow an operator to tackle quick bends or small-batch jobs without the overhead of programming or setup changeovers. This flexibility underscores why so many fabricators view manual forming not as a relic of the past, but as a complementary tool that enhances overall workflow.

Yet manual equipment is not without its drawbacks. Operator fatigue stands out as the most common limitation—especially when bending thicker or longer material by hand. A well-organized shop layout and efficient material-handling strategies can

help, but as Stoll’s experts quipped, “always remember to eat your Wheaties for breakfast!” Beyond human endurance, manual brakes themselves have fixed length capacities. Most units span 10 to 12 feet, and although 14-foot models exist, they are harder to source—particularly on the used market.

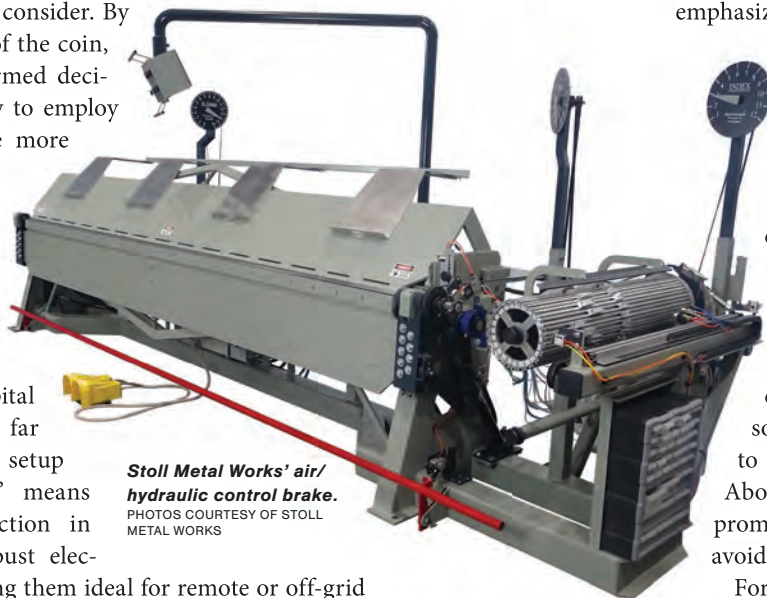
To get the most out of manual machines, Stoll Metal Works emphasizes rigor in safety and best

practices. Guards, counterbalance weights, and pinch points all pose hazards if handled carelessly.

“When a manufacturer puts warning labels on their equipment, they are not just doing it to comply with legal requirements,” the team warned. Clear communication between operators—especially during two-person operations—is essential to avoid finger-pinch injuries. Above all, any action that compromises safety should be strictly avoided.

For shops seeking a middle ground between fully manual and fully automated, a range of power-assist options is available. Air-clamp systems can reduce the physical effort required to hold material in place, while DC-powered finger-safety devices add an extra layer of protection. In facilities that cannot accommodate AC power, automated air-over-hydraulic controls provide non-electrical actuation. Even DC- and hydraulics-only environments can benefit from computerized or non-computerized controls tailored to specific compliance needs. These adaptations ensure that manual forming remains feasible for shops with diverse technical or regulatory constraints.

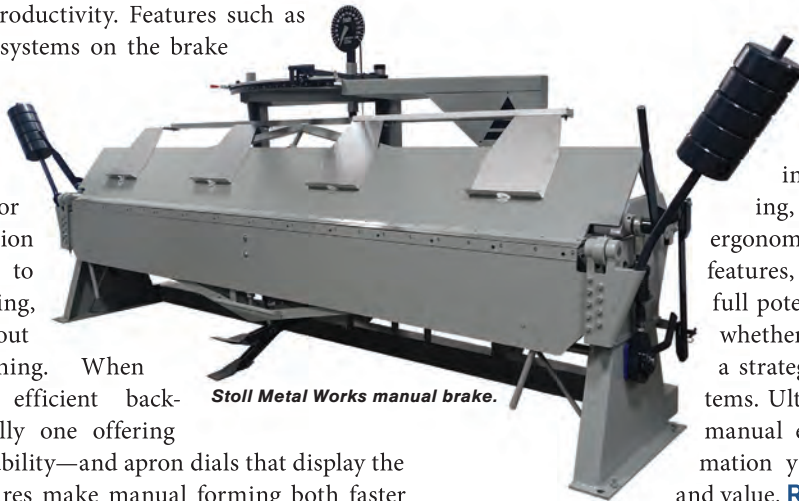
Practical problems may still arise when using manual equipment, but they can often be mitigated. For instance, attempting a full-length hem on tough materials like Grade 80 steel may lead to uneven results. In such cases, Stoll recommends using a dedicated hemmer for superior edge quality. Likewise, the operator’s skill is a critical variable: “Good training procedures and clear instructions, together with a diligent conscientious operator, can



Stoll Metal Works' air/hydraulic control brake. PHOTOS COURTESY OF STOLL METAL WORKS

mitigate” most quality concerns. Investing in comprehensive training ensures that each bend meets the required tolerances.

Ergonomics also play a significant role in reducing fatigue and boosting productivity. Features such as spring counterbalance systems on the brake apron can dramatically lessen the manual force needed for each bend. Moreover, machines designed for one-location operation enable an operator to control clamping, bending, and back-gaging without constant repositioning. When combined with an efficient back-gauge system—especially one offering template-driven repeatability—and apron dials that display the bend angle, these features make manual forming both faster and more consistent.



Stoll Metal Works manual brake.

In conclusion, manual metal forming endures as a versatile and economical process within modern fabrication shops. Its low cost, reliability, and ease of use make it indispensable for certain applications, while power-assist options and thoughtful shop practices help overcome its limitations. By prioritizing safety, investing in operator training, and selecting machines with ergonomic and efficiency-boosting features, fabricators can harness the full potential of manual equipment—whether as a primary workhorse or a strategic complement to CNC systems. Ultimately, a judicious blend of manual expertise and targeted automation yields the greatest flexibility and value. **RF**

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Tariffs, Trade & Tomorrow

Charting the Future of Metal in Design & Construction

■ By Fiona Maguire-O'Shea, METALCON Writer

Navigating a turbulent economic landscape has become the order of the day for the metal design and construction industry. In a recent webinar hosted by METALCON Online, industry leaders came together to discuss the impacts of tariffs, supply chain disruptions and shifting market dynamics on the sector. With METALCON 2025 approaching, now is the time to engage in these critical discussions.

Central to the conversation was Ken Simonson, chief economist at the

Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), whose precise and candid insights about the current state of the economy and the specific effects of tariffs resonated strongly with the audience.

Simonson underscored the importance of understanding how governmental policies directly impact construction markets. The impact of tariffs is profound because they affect not only the cost of raw materials but also the strategic decisions that contractors and manufacturers make every day.

The metal design and construction

industry, particularly in the non-residential segment where structural metal plays a key role, has experienced robust growth up until the end of 2024. “Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been growing now since we got out of the very brief recession caused by the pandemic in 2020,” Simonson explained. He noted that despite a recent drop in confidence—ranging from business and consumer sentiment to specific indices like the architecture billings index—the underlying fundamentals of construction spending remain intact.



Aluminum extrusion warehouse in Texas. COURTESY OF S-51

TARIFF LANDSCAPE

Simonson quickly moved onto tariffs and laid out the evolving and uncertain tariff landscape. He said, “We’re subject to 25% tariffs on aluminum and steel, and tariffs on goods from Canada and Mexico that are not covered by the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), the successor of NAFTA. It’s a very tricky, complex proposition to figure out exactly what is eligible. In addition, tariffs have been imposed on nearly every other trading partner at rates ranging from 10% to 104%. The rates are subject to change at any time, making planning and bid preparation extremely difficult.”

These policies, Simonson warned, could lead to dramatic shifts in pricing and supply chain logistics. The potential imposition of additional tariffs—ranging from as-yet unspecified tariffs on copper to possible fees on Chinese-built ships calling on U.S. ports—adds layers of uncertainty for an industry that depends heavily on imported materials as compared to other industries. Ian Waddell, regional manager at JFE Shoji America, said, “I think if they have the opportunity to use ships that aren’t made in China, that’s something they will try to take advantage of as well.”

ECONOMIC TRENDS AND INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES

Beyond the immediate impact of tariffs, Simonson also painted a broader economic picture. “I do think the economy has shown tremendous resilience in the last five years,” he observed. Simonson’s assessment draws a clear connection between short-term market jitters and the underlying long-term trends that continue to drive construction activity, particularly in areas such as data centers and utility scale battery storage. “Data center construction is up 39% from February of last year to February of this year,” he noted.

Other panelists reinforced and expanded on Simonson’s analysis. Tony

Bouquot, general manager of the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA), highlighted the industry’s cautious approach. He said, “I am hearing caution. I’ve probably taken more questions on tariffs in the last three weeks than in the prior three years. Companies are letting their customers know that they expect that there might be changes on the way.” Bouquot’s remarks reflect a widespread sentiment among manufacturers who are bracing for an unpredictable regulatory environment.

Robert Tiffin, president of the Metal Building Contractors & Erectors Association (MBCEA), probed further into the specifics of tariff coverage and exemptions. He said to Simonson, “I have heard conversations like, ‘We pour and melt our steel here in the U.S., but we fabricate it in Mexico, so will it be covered when it comes back in?’”

Simonson responded, “As I mentioned, it’s very complicated,” highlighting the complexity of determining what falls under tariff exemption and what does not, such as steel or aluminum components or product that has crossed the border once already. The ambiguity of the current policies underscores the difficult decisions that companies must make when planning for the future.

MARKET VOLATILITY

This intricate web of tariffs is also having a cascading effect on manufacturing spending and project planning. Simonson pointed out that, “census totals for total manufacturing construction have hit record levels,” yet remain highly susceptible to market shifts driven by tariff changes. He referenced high-profile projects—such as the semiconductor fabrication plants—that inject massive sums into a single month’s data. However, he also warned that many of these projects might slow down or even be canceled in the wake of tariff uncertainties, making it harder for companies to forecast long-term demand.

The volatility extends to raw material pricing as well. Keith Shuttlesworth, chief commercial officer at Flack Global Metals, provided a stark illustration of the current market volatility: “Looking at just flat roll sheet products, hot roll coil went from \$680 a ton in January to \$950 a ton (mid-March), almost a 40% increase. How quickly does that show up in terms of those construction products?”

Such price swings can have serious implications for contractors, whose ability to lock in margins and forecast project costs is increasingly compromised. Simonson’s analysis dovetails with Shuttlesworth’s observations, as he pointed out the risk of sudden and steep materials cost increases that might leave contractors “not just losing profit margin, but maybe not even able to complete projects.”





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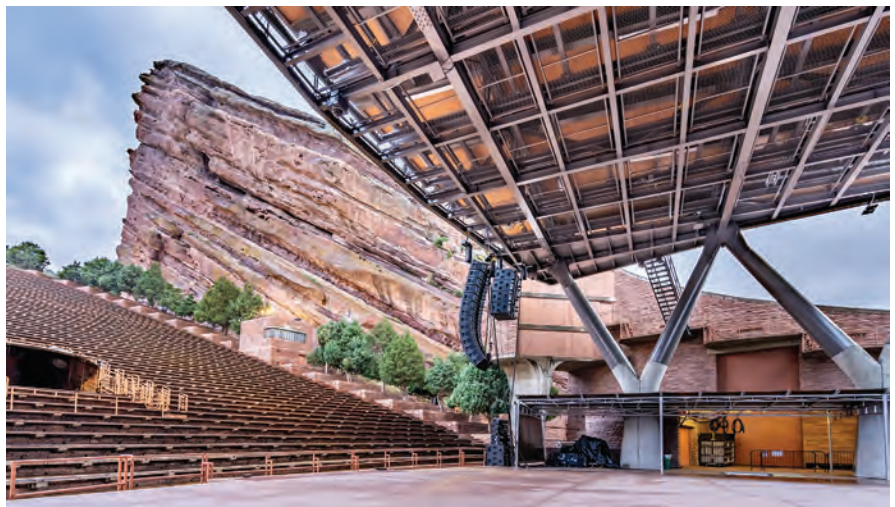
In a discussion of broader economic impacts, Simonson also touched upon the effects of declining confidence among consumers and contractors alike. He noted that “we’ve seen huge drop in all measures of confidence” despite construction spending remaining positive. This divergence between sentiment and spending is critical for understanding the future trajectory of the industry. While current spending figures may suggest a robust market, the underlying uncertainty—exacerbated by tariffs, potential regulatory changes, and geopolitical tensions—could lead to a more cautious approach in the coming months.

Another dimension of the discussion focused on the issue of immigration and its impact on the construction workforce. “Finally, I’d mention the drastic shutdown of immigration and the threat of mass deportation, so-called,” Simonson explained. With 34% of construction trades being foreign-born—and as high as 50 to 60% in certain specialties—any changes in immigration policy could severely disrupt labor availability, further complicating project timelines and cost estimates. This labor uncertainty is yet another factor that contractors must weigh against the backdrop of rising tariffs and material costs.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, the conversation naturally turned to the near future of the industry. With METALCON on the horizon, the webinar provided a timely opportunity to not only dissect current challenges but also to chart a path forward. The industry’s premier event promises to be a critical gathering for professionals seeking to share strategies, network and learn about innovative solutions to manage the volatility of tariffs and other market pressures.

Despite the headwinds of rising tariffs, supply chain challenges and economic uncertainty, there remains a strong belief



Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver, Colorado. COURTESY OF RED ROCKS.

in the resilience and adaptability of the design and construction industry. While there are significant challenges, especially with the unpredictable nature of tariffs and associated trade policies, there are also sectors that are poised for continued growth.

“We have seen a small revival of single-family home building,” Simonson remarked, and even though multifamily construction has tapered off after record levels, new avenues are emerging—particularly in the realm of non-residential construction. His analysis suggests that while short-term adjustments may be required, the long-term fundamentals of the construction industry remain robust.

For contractors and manufacturers alike, one of the most pressing issues is how to manage cost uncertainty. Simonson pointed to the importance of tools and indices that track price movements. “I look every month at the producer price indexes by the Bureau of Labor Statistics,” he explained. “There is a steel mill products index and also one for copper, brass and aluminum.” These tools help contractors gauge when input costs are rising so they can adjust their bids accordingly. However, the lag between mill announcements and actual market prices, as noted by Shuttlesworth, further complicates matters, emphasizing the need for proactive strategies to mitigate

the impact of these delays.

The discussion around tariffs has clearly highlighted the need for robust risk management strategies. The potential for further tariff increases or adjustments underscores the complex interplay between global trade policies and local market realities. These are not abstract concepts for the metal design and construction industry—they are real factors that influence pricing, project feasibility, and strategic planning.

Simonson’s frank assessment that “retaliatory actions by other countries may mean that U.S. businesses that were growing agricultural products for export or producing manufactured goods for export could suddenly find that they have lost markets”—a sobering reminder of the interconnected nature of today’s economic environment.

As the industry braces for potential further volatility, the messages conveyed emphasizes the need for adaptability, vigilance and collaboration. For those in the metal design and construction industry, METALCON represents a unique opportunity to connect with peers, learn from leading experts and explore innovative strategies to manage tariff-related risks. As Simonson optimistically noted, “I remain a chronic optimist...” and that optimism is the cornerstone on which future growth and resilience will be built. **RF**

Changing Times: Using Data To Make Business Decisions

■ By Gary Reichert

Times they are a changin'. I don't particularly like Bob Dylan but the song title is appropriate. One of the trends in media is the migration to digital. In many ways digital is the future. 61% of Gen Z reads primarily on their phone, as do 51% of older generations. (Source: Forbes article titled "New Survey Spotlights Exactly What Gen Zers Are Reading On Their Phones" by Rob Salkowitz, published on December 8, 2022.) It seems reasonable to assume the numbers are currently higher.

At Shield Wall Media we have done several things to follow the digital trend. We offer digital versions of our magazines, including audio versions and podcasts. We continue to look for ways to leverage technology to curate and distribute information.

In July, Shield Wall Media will have been in existence for six years. In that time we have grown from three to seven magazines, added a data generation component, and three trade shows. A primary reason for this growth is we look for under-served markets and position ourselves to where we believe the market will be in two to five years.

We estimate that approximately 20%



of the construction markets we serve are members of the Plain Communities. They are not served by the trend toward the digital distribution of information. Several major publications have moved to a digital-only format. In our view it does not make sense to abandon or move away from 20% of an industry.

One of the areas heavily impacted by Plain Communities is addressed specifically by Garage, Shed & Carport Builder Magazine and the Garage, Shed & Carport Builder Show.

To address this, we are rebranding

Garage, Shed & Carport Builder and slightly shifting the focus of the magazine. The June/July issue of Garage, Shed & Carport Builder will be the last issue under this title.

Starting with a Fall issue, the new title for the publication will be Plain Builder.

The new magazine will still include information on small, special-use residential buildings and additions. It will also include other building types — including post-frame construction — and emphasize the role of the Plain Communities in construction. Naturally, we welcome everyone to read and subscribe to the magazine, but the editorial will focus on the interests and information needs of this vital and growing portion of our industry.

We appreciate feedback and welcome editorial ideas and article contributions. Thank you for supporting Garage, Shed & Carport Builder Magazine and the shift in focus as it transitions to Plain Builder. **RF**

Editor's Note: Plain Builder will be delivered four times each year. Subscribe now so you won't miss a single issue of Plain Builder when it debuts in the Fall. To subscribe, fill out the subscription form on page 15 and mail to Shield Wall Media Subscriptions, PO Box 255, Iola WI 54945.

If you like the CSI columns or find the information useful, help us help you. Shield Wall Media executes a State of the Industry Survey each year.

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