

Tube processing specialist, HMD Ltd's, investments brings work back to the United Kingdom

The process starts **from coil**

Job shop

INSPIRED FOR TUBE



Tube processing specialist HMD Ltd's new 21,000 sq. ft. building in Hoyland Road, Sheffield, has nearly three times the floor area of its current unit and is home to a four-machine tube processing cell supplied by BLM GROUP UK Ltd. This new cell is dedicated to producing copper components and comprises three new machines – BLM Process, BLM Dynamo-E tube bender and BLM Tube-Form ELE tube end former – along with an existing

Four systems in one cell

BLM AST 25N tube end former. The BLM Process is a fully-automatic system that uncoils, feeds, straightens, end forms and cuts copper tube to length burr-free. End forming operations such as beading, swaging, threading and facing can take place in-line on

one tube end if required. All operations can be programmed individually with quick change-over times suiting small and medium size batch work as well as long production runs. The use of coil rather than pre-cut to length tube and minimal material wastage are two of the cost saving benefits that result from this approach.

Cut to length pre-endformed parts are loaded to the Dynamo-E five-axis tube bender, which is capable of bending tube up to 25 mm OD and is equipped with a CARM7 tube loading system. This allows for automatic loading without the need for additional specialist equipment, enabling the machine to run for long periods without supervision. Automatic loading takes place while the bent part is being auto unloaded, thereby minimising 'dead' time during the bending cycle.

Two end forming machines have been included in the cell to keep pace with the output of the BLM Process and the BLM Dynamo-E. The fully CNC programmable all-electric BLM Tube-Form ELE's modular design provides for up to six ram stations and a full combination of ram





and rotary tool operation, making it capable of countless machining and forming variations. The BLM AST 25N is similarly versatile and can also be set up in a wide range of configurations. One requirement at HMD is for tube fittings to be assembled with brass hexagon nuts in place before the final end forming operation is completed.

Copper anche stainless steel

Initially established under the name Hampton Metal Distribution, HMD is celebrating its 10th anniversary and a new chapter in the company's history, as Richard Pearson explains. "This business was set up to service one customer and we could not have taken on additional work without moving to larger premises, or without

investing in new production equipment."

The new tube processing cell will be joined in the near future by existing BLM equipment relocated from the smaller unit, including two coil-fed BLM Planet tube processing machines – one dedicated to copper tube and the other to stainless steel tube. To eliminate any possibility of cross-contamination, the two coil-fed machines will be relocated to separate areas, with the ground floor of the new building dedicated to copper tube processing and the mezzanine floor to stainless steel tube processing and assembly work.

"We spent several months checking out potential suppliers of tube processing equipment and then bought our first BLM coil-fed machine," says Richard Pearson. "The technology has continued to develop over the years, enabling us now to bend small diameter material with a 0.5 mm wall thickness." In the case of steel, for example, which is predominately traded by weight, this equates to a 20 per cent cost saving. It is also essential to be able to bend tube without 'wrinkles' and to produce very tight radius bends. "There was no mention of manufacturing in my original business plan," says Richard Pearson, "and I had no intention of becoming involved in manufacturing rather than stockholding. However, it is a case of seeing an opportunity and acting upon it and BLM has always provided excellent technical support."

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