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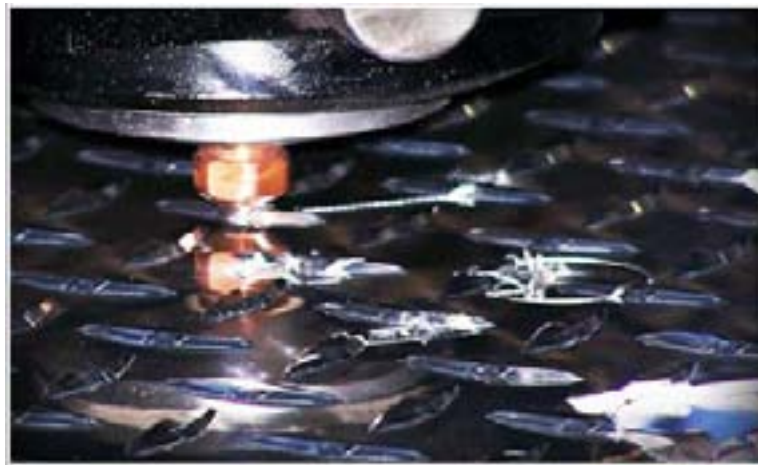
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## Sources

### Han-Kwang USA Inc.

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## Laser

# Three in one

**New laser adds flexibility, reduces costs and opens doors for fabricator**

By Russ Olexa

**West-Mark**, Ceres, Calif., is an integrated design, fabrication and assembly company that needed to add processing equipment to keep up with product demand.

"We saw one area [in our company] that needed better control and cost containment, namely, the laser cutting of the various stainless steel, carbon steel and aluminum materials we processed," says Chris Portmann, fabrication director.

West-Mark used the services of three local laser job shops. Occasional bottlenecks occurred, however, and there were cost factors involved. As the company grew, these production challenges did too. West-Mark knew it had to change.

The company began in 1967 as a manufacturing and repair facility for dairy transport tankers. It expanded into building fluid transport vehicles for many industries, including petroleum, firefighting, military, construction, food, liquid sanitation and arctic equipment through its branch in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Today, the company operates manufacturing, fabrication, assembly and repair facilities in Ceres; Atwater, Calif.; Bakersfield, Calif.; and Alaska.

More than 150 employees provide West-Mark customers a broad range of vehicles for sale or rent. West-Mark also offers full service and repair operations. In the late 1990s, West-Mark started fabricating display enclosures for entertainment venues, kiosks, elevators, airports, shopping malls and other retail and commercial establishments.

To meet this demand, the company opened its **Digital Factory** facility in Atwater, where it produces various enclosures and freestanding kiosks under the Perfected Protection brand name.

To meet its need for laser-cut parts, West-Mark was introduced to the **Han-**



**Kwang** plate laser with integrated material tower automation at a meeting with a machine and equipment dealer. The sale proceeded, and the company hired an experienced laser operator.

"Very quickly, we realized we could run a lot faster to save time and money," says Portmann. "Beyond that, we could be more responsive to the one-off and short-run job requirements we get all the time in our operation. Because of the software we use and the products Han-Kwang provided us, we were able to integrate those short runs into the nesting strategies with our longer-run jobs."

The tower automation permitted the company to stack frequently used materials on pallets in the tower for quick access and start-up, and the fully automated cycle capability allowed a lights-out manufacturing strategy for reduced costs in personnel and power consumption.

West-Mark bought a Han-Kwang model FS 4020 plate laser with a long-bed gantry, which uses flying optics. It has twin 6-ft.-by-12-ft. shuttle pallets and an eight-pallet-high materials tower, all controlled by a Siemens Sinumerik 840D controller.

Materials processed include 304 and 316 stainless steel, A36 and 570 carbon steel, and 3003 and 5054 aluminum.

"When we need another laser, there will be no question about getting another Han-Kwang," says Portmann. "Their machine quality, application assistance, operator and programmer training, plus the overall improvement they made in our company's production, makes that decision an easy one." **FFJ**

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