



Sheet Metal Fabrication

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NIST Director visits Marlin Steel Wire to see US Manufacturing Innovation in Action

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"Strong manufacturing is critical to the U.S. recovery," said NIST director Gallagher. "That is why I was so excited to visit a successful small manufacturer such as [Marlin Steel](#) that is taking advantage of technology to grow and create jobs."

[Marlin Steel Wire](#) is collaborating with NIST to develop quick ways to set up and program robots so they can swing from one short-run job to the next, and to improve the safety of forklift operation. Short run jobs are those in which only dozens or hundreds of parts of a particular design are being produced. However, small- and medium-sized manufacturers are often faced with a situation in which it takes more time to get a [robot program](#) fine-tuned than it would to have the parts processed manually.

"Small manufacturers need to be more agile," said Drew Greenblatt, president of Marlin Wire. "For example, robots that can quickly switch from one job to the next will galvanize U.S. manufacturing so our nation can more effectively compete and even thrive. Innovations in automated manufacturing technology are helping to grow our business, and increase our employment."

Howard Harary, who heads NIST's manufacturing research and development efforts, stressed the "importance of innovation in technology --robotics, [intelligent manufacturing automation](#), and advanced information systems -- for maintaining U.S. primacy in R&D and high-value-added manufacturing."



NIST Director Patrick Gallagher observes CNC Sheet Metal Punch and Forming Robot at Marlin Steel



As part of a broader research program to support more agile robots, NIST is characterizing sensors that allow the robot to adjust its program based on “seeing” the location of a part, obstacle, or person. Prototype systems integrating sensors and other innovations, such as more dexterous grippers, will be deployed at Marlin Steel Wire and could address similar challenges in many other areas of US manufacturing. Headquartered in Gaithersburg, Md., with over 2,900 employees, the agency’s mission is to advance U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology.



Greenblatt was “proud that NIST is doing research work at Marlin Steel,” he said. “The U.S. manufacturing industry could enjoy broad rollouts of useful technology from the innovations created at Marlin Steel. We make stainless steel [wire baskets](#) and [wire forms](#) here. Yet the technological leaps invented on our factory floor will help plastic factories in California and machine shops in the Midwest.”

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