

May 2026

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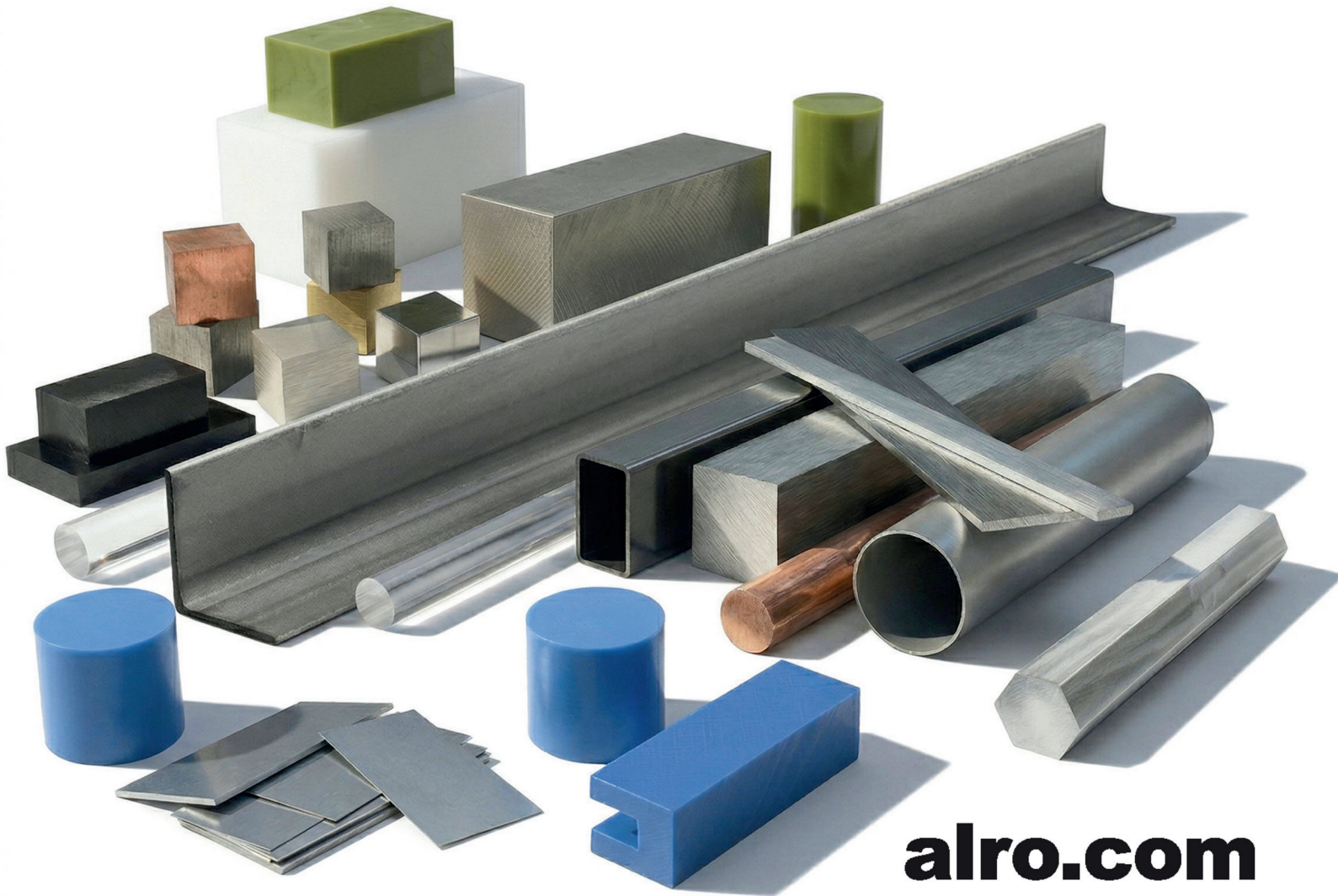
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER EXECUTIVE

Dear NTMA Members,

Another BotsIQ Combat Robotics season is in the books, and as we wrap up our 21st year of competition, I want to thank the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA members who continue to make this program possible.



This season, 565 students and 98 teachers from 53 schools participated in BotsIQ Combat Robotics. Through our Preliminary and Finals Competitions, we recorded more than 1,980 student and educator touchpoints, giving participants repeated opportunities to apply technical skills, solve problems, work as a team, and connect what they are learning in the classroom to real careers in manufacturing.

Those numbers, however, tell only part of the story.

Throughout the school year, BotsIQ also hosted six teacher professional development and training workshops, helping educators strengthen their understanding of manufacturing and bring more hands-on learning into their classrooms. In addition, 31 company tours gave students and teachers the opportunity to step inside local manufacturing facilities, see modern technology in action, meet the people behind the work, and better understand the career opportunities available throughout our region.

Just as important, more than 137 industry professionals volunteered throughout the season, serving as judges, inspectors, referees, technical advisors, and event support. Their involvement gives students an opportunity to interact directly with people working in the industry and helps strengthen the connection between their BotsIQ experience and a potential future career.

That connection is at the heart of BotsIQ.

BotsIQ's impact extends far beyond the battles. Every competition, company tour, workshop, and industry interaction helps students better understand manufacturing and strengthens the future workforce pipeline.

Thank you for continuing to support BotsIQ through your time, expertise, sponsorship, and advocacy. We are grateful for your partnership and proud of what we continue to accomplish together.

Best regards,

Michel Conklin
Chapter Executive
Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Melissa Monarko, Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Board President

Building on Strength: Shaping the Future of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA

The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Board recently held a strategic planning session to define what the next phase of growth looks like for our chapter. One thing was clear—we are building from a position of strength. The conversation wasn't about fixing something broken; it was about elevating what is already working and ensuring we continue to deliver meaningful value to our members and the broader manufacturing community.

Two core pillars continue to define who we are: **Education and Connection.**

Our commitment to education runs deep. Our apprenticeship program, now 50 years strong, continues to play a critical role in developing the next generation of skilled machinists. At a time when workforce challenges remain one of the biggest constraints to growth, this program is more important than ever.

And the impact goes beyond apprenticeship. Since September alone, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA has hosted over 30 manufacturing tours, giving more than 440 students and educators direct exposure to modern manufacturing environments. In addition, 50 high schools participated in the BotsIQ combat robotics program this year, helping to engage and inspire the next generation in a hands-on, meaningful way.

Programs like these are not just about awareness; they are about building a sustainable workforce pipeline and reshaping how the next generation views careers in manufacturing.

But just as important as education is what happens when we come together.

The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA has built a reputation as a place where manufacturers can connect openly and honestly. Our networking events go beyond surface-level conversations. They create an environment where shop owners, leaders, and employees can share real experiences: what's working, what's not, where the challenges are, and how others are navigating them.

Events like our annual golf outing and our upcoming Pirates & Politics event at PNC Park are great examples of how we bring members together in a more relaxed setting. These are the opportunities where conversations start, ideas are shared, and partnerships are formed.

Looking Ahead

As part of our strategic planning discussions, we focused on what growth really means for our chapter. It's not just about increasing membership numbers, it's about increasing **engagement, impact, and relevance**.

It's about building an organization that supports its members at every level: from developing the next generation of talent, to creating meaningful peer connections, to serving as a platform for collaboration and shared success across our region's manufacturing community. We want the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA to continue to be a resource that members rely on.

As we look ahead, we want to be intentional about creating the kinds of events and opportunities that are most valuable to you. Do you want more structured peer networking groups, where you can connect regularly with other shop owners and leaders facing similar challenges? Are you looking for more casual networking events to build relationships in a relaxed environment? Would roundtables, plant tours, or topic-specific workshops be helpful?

We want your input!

Your feedback will directly shape the direction of this chapter and the types of events and programming we prioritize moving forward. Scan the QR code below to share your feedback and ideas. We can't wait to hear from you!

Finally, if you haven't engaged with the chapter recently, I encourage you to join us at an upcoming event. If you're already engaged, consider bringing in a peer or a colleague who could benefit from being part of this network.

We are proud of what we've built together and are even more excited about where we're going next.

Melissa Monarko
President, Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA



MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Ken Smith & John Sinclair Bring Experience, Passion and a Commitment to Manufacturing

The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA is pleased to welcome Ken Smith of Oberg Industries and John Sinclair of FS-Elliott to its Board of Directors. Together, they bring more than four decades of manufacturing experience and a shared commitment to building the workforce, strengthening the manufacturing community and creating opportunities for the next generation.

Ken Smith | Oberg Industries

With 23 years in manufacturing, Ken Smith, General Manager of **Oberg Industries'** Freeport operation, has experienced the industry from several perspectives. His career at Oberg has included roles as a machine operator, in program management and managing a market division before moving into his current leadership position.

Oberg Industries is a contract manufacturer specializing in precision-machined components serving markets including energy, metal packaging, aerospace, medical, communications and space.

Ken became more involved with the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA after participating in Chapter events and hearing about the experience of a colleague who previously served on the Board. For him, NTMA provides an opportunity to stay engaged with an organization working toward many of the same goals as Oberg.

One of those priorities is workforce development. Ken sees building a strong manufacturing workforce and generating greater interest and excitement around the industry as one of manufacturers' biggest challenges. At Oberg, apprenticeship plays an important role in addressing that need. The company's state-accredited apprenticeship combines classroom instruction with focused, hands-on grinding and machining experience, supported by dedicated instructors.

For Ken, developing employees is about more than filling today's positions—it is about helping people develop the skills and good practices they need for successful, long-term careers in manufacturing.



John Sinclair | FS-Elliott

Manufacturing has been part of John Sinclair's life for a long time. His father spent 33 years working for Elliott Company, and John has now built a 22-year manufacturing career of his own. Interestingly, his original associate degree was in Electronic Engineering Technology. Today, John is part of **FS-Elliott**, a manufacturer of industrial air and gas compressors serving customers around the world in markets ranging from oil and gas to air separation and other industrial applications. Asked what he enjoys most about his work, his answer is simple: "The people and the process."



BotsIQ was a major reason John became involved with the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA, along with the opportunity to network with other manufacturers and professionals who share similar goals. He sees the Chapter as an organization capable of making a meaningful difference in preserving manufacturing knowledge and educating the next generation. That mission also motivated him to join the Board. John is passionate about helping shape the future of manufacturing in the Pittsburgh region and believes one of the industry's greatest challenges is the labor shortage created, in part, by a lack of understanding about modern manufacturing careers.

His advice to young people considering the industry reflects that optimism: jump in, stay open-minded and explore the opportunities available. Manufacturing, he believes, can provide a rewarding career and a good living for those willing to learn.

Outside of work, John stays busy with his wife and five children, coaching travel softball, enjoying lacrosse and cars, fishing with his family—and even working as a professional pyrotechnician.

Ken & John join fellow board members: Keith Cardinal, **Kurt J Lesker Company**, John Dalrymple, **Hamill Manufacturing Company**, Rebecca Dalton, **MetPlas**, Bob Dopico, **Catalyst Connection**, Corey Drebot, **Haas Factory Outlet**, David Holm, **Kiski Precision Industries**, and Melissa Monarko, **Metal Solutions**. Please join us in welcoming Ken and John to the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Board of Directors. We look forward to the experience, perspective and enthusiasm they will bring to the Chapter and our regional manufacturing community.

WELCOMING A NEW TEAM TO THE BOTS IQ COMMUNITY -

Todd Landree, BotsIQ

This year, BotsIQ welcomed Indiana Area Senior High School whose journey into combat robotics has been years in the making. It is deeply rooted in student curiosity, community support, and a passion for hands-on learning.

The team's involvement began at the junior high level. Michael Dolges, former BotsIQ Teacher Advisor at Admiral Peary AVTS, and their Technology and Engineering program launched a 6-pound battle bot class that quickly gained popularity. As enthusiasm grew, educators and community members alike began asking an important question: How can these experiences continue into high school?

The answer came in the form of a new high school BattleBots-style course, supported by grant funding and a successful application to join BotsIQ. For the team, BotsIQ represented a natural next step, one that connects classroom learning directly to real-world manufacturing and engineering.

A Realistic Look at Industry Expectations

One of the most eye-opening aspects of the BotsIQ experience so far has been the level of commitment required. From detailed documentation to strict timelines, students quickly learned that building a competitive robot is about much more than fabrication alone.



Pictured: Indiana Area High School BotsIQ team toured Miller Fabrication Solutions in Homer City

Educators shared that this rigor has been a valuable teaching tool, helping students understand the professionalism and dedication demonstrated by other BotsIQ teams and industry partners. The direct communication with manufacturers and mentors has reinforced just how broad, and invested, the BotsIQ support network truly is. For many students, this has been their first opportunity to see how school projects directly mirror industry expectations.



INDIANA AREA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Learning to Work as a Team

Like many first-year teams, collaboration has been one of the biggest challenges. With students bringing different skill sets, interests, and experience levels to the table, effective communication has not always come easily.

However, this challenge has also become a powerful learning opportunity. Students are beginning to recognize the importance of listening, compromise, and teamwork. These are all skills that are essential in manufacturing and engineering careers. Looking ahead, the team is optimistic that returning students will help establish stronger collaboration practices and mentor new members.



Connecting the Classroom to Careers

BotsIQ's industry tours have played a significant role in helping students understand career pathways in manufacturing, engineering, and the skilled trades. Seeing real facilities in action has allowed students to grasp the complexity behind everyday products, and the many roles required to bring them to life.

By stepping outside the classroom, students are gaining exposure to real business environments and learning that successful manufacturing depends on a wide range of talents, from design and machining to quality, logistics, and problem-solving.

Growing Into a Team

While this is the team's first year, growth has been evident. As deadlines approach, students are beginning to understand the value of advanced planning and preparation. What started as a class assignment is steadily evolving into a shared mission: designing and building a bot they are proud to bring into competition.

With their bot now taking shape, enthusiasm is building, and so is their confidence. Students and teachers alike are transitioning from learners to collaborators, united by a common goal and a growing appreciation for what it takes to succeed in a competitive, industry-aligned environment. As this new team continues its BotsIQ journey, their experience highlights exactly what the program is designed to do: connect education to industry, challenge students to grow, and inspire the next generation of manufacturing and engineering professionals.

HISTORY OF THE PITTSBURGH CHAPTER NTMA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Liz Blashock, Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA

For 50 years, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Apprenticeship Program has helped regional manufacturers develop the skilled machinists needed to keep southwestern Pennsylvania's precision manufacturing industry strong. What began as an industry-led effort to provide structured training for machinists has grown into one of the Chapter's most important workforce development initiatives.



Today, the program serves both Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA member companies and nonmember companies that rely on high-quality training to build their machining workforce. This year, 151 apprentices from more than 50 companies are enrolled in the program, demonstrating the continued demand for skilled machinists and the trust employers place in the Pittsburgh Chapter's training model.

The apprenticeship program combines paid, on-the-job training with related technical instruction designed to build the knowledge and competencies apprentices need to succeed in modern manufacturing. The Pittsburgh Chapter also offers a group registered apprenticeship program, which supports companies that do not have their own registered apprenticeship program with Pennsylvania's Apprenticeship and Training Office. Through this model, employers can participate in a registered apprenticeship pathway while receiving administrative, compliance, and instructional support from the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA.

Over the years, the program has continued to evolve to meet the needs of industry. In 2024, the Pittsburgh Chapter began hosting apprenticeship classes at its own Training & Education Center, creating a dedicated space for hands-on learning, technical instruction, and expanded workforce programming. In addition to this site, the Chapter continues to partner with Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center and Northern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center to provide training at locations that are accessible to apprentices and employers throughout the region.

As the manufacturing workforce need continues to grow, so does the program. The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA is exploring additional training locations for this fall in Johnstown, Somerset, Butler, and Washington, PA, expanding access for companies and apprentices across a broader geographic area.

The Pittsburgh Chapter is also developing new apprenticeship pathways to better support employers and entry-level employees. Currently, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA is registering a one-year CNC Operator Apprenticeship Program designed for companies that rely on this skilled talent and need a shorter, focused training pathway for individuals entering the field.

After five decades, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Apprenticeship Program remains rooted in the same mission: helping manufacturers build their workforce from within while giving individuals a clear, structured path to family-sustaining careers in precision manufacturing.

Learn more about the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Apprenticeship at <https://pghntma.org/programs/apprentice-program/>



THE PITTSBURGH CHAPTER NTMA & APPRENTICESHIP HQ

In fall 2025, Catalyst Connection spearheaded a collaboration among seven regional manufacturing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship partners to make it easier for students, job seekers, educators, and employers to navigate manufacturing career pathways in southwestern Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA and BotsIQ are both part of this effort.

With funding from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the group created ApprenticeshipHQ, a centralized resource that showcases manufacturing training and apprenticeship opportunities across the region and helps individuals identify pathways that align with their interests and career goals.

Additional partners include the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy, Catalyst Connection, Community College of Allegheny County, German American Chamber of Commerce Pittsburgh Chapter, and New Century Careers.

To learn more, visit: <https://apprenticeshiphq.org/>.

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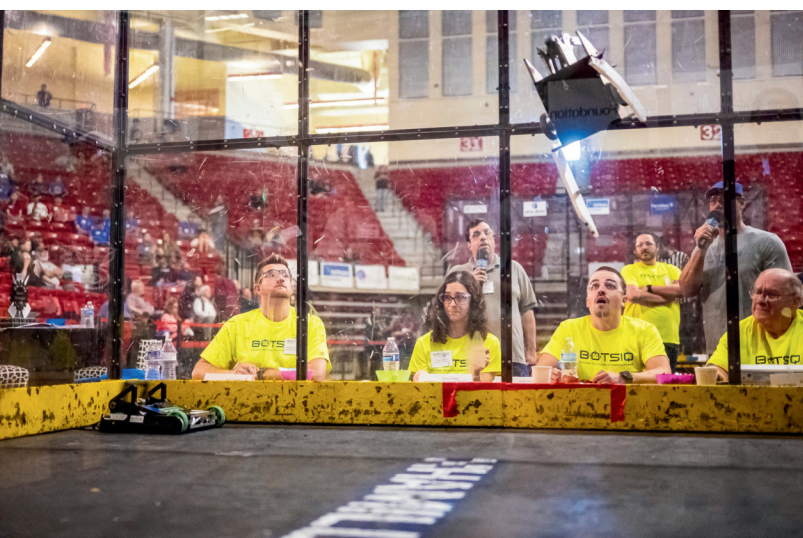
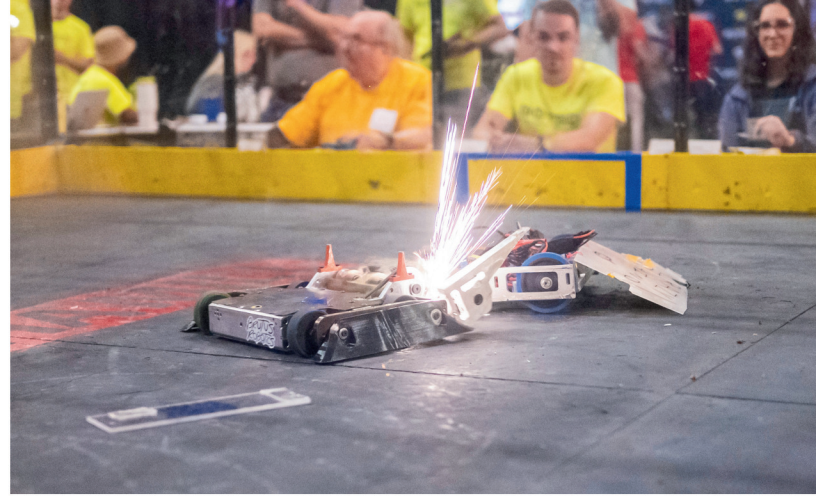
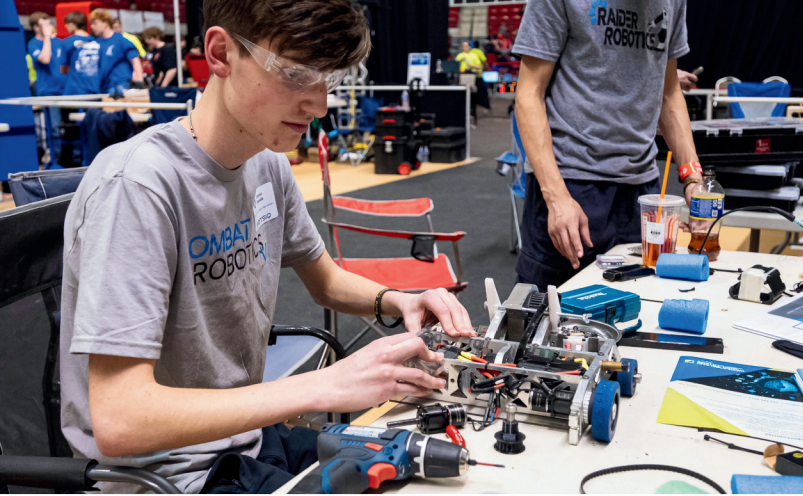
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CLOSING THE SAFETY TALENT GAP IN

Cole Campbell, CSP, Regional Manager, EHS Services

Across southwestern Pennsylvania's precision manufacturing sector, one issue continues to quietly impact operational performance: the growing shortage of experienced Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) professionals.

Additionally, according to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employment of occupational health and safety specialists is projected to grow 13% from 2022 to 2032 (much faster than average) further intensifying competition for qualified EHS talent.

As regulatory requirements become more complex and manufacturing environments increasingly automated, organizations are finding it harder to maintain compliance while sustaining productivity. The result is often delayed safety initiatives, inconsistent program implementation, and increased exposure to operational risk.

For many small to mid-sized manufacturers, the challenge isn't recognizing the importance of safety...it's having the right expertise in place at the right time.

Why the EHS Talent Gap Is Growing

Manufacturers today are navigating:

- Expanding OSHA and state-level regulatory requirements
- Customer-driven safety expectations and audit demands
- Increasing need for industrial hygiene monitoring
- Implementation of ISO 45001-aligned safety management systems
- Workforce turnover impacting institutional safety knowledge

At the same time, experienced safety professionals are in short supply nationwide. Recruiting for specialized roles such as Certified Safety Professionals (CSPs) or Certified Industrial Hygienists (CIHs) can take months—time that many organizations simply do not have during active production cycles or facility expansions.

Operational Risks of Under-Resourced Safety Programs

Without adequate EHS support, manufacturers may experience:

1. Audit Readiness Challenges
Gaps in documentation, training records, or hazard assessments can surface during customer or regulatory audits.
2. Incident Investigation Delays
Lack of internal expertise often results in incomplete root cause analysis and missed opportunities for corrective action.

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3. Inconsistent Safety Culture

Temporary or rotating responsibilities for safety leadership can lead to mixed messaging on the shop floor.

4. Compliance Vulnerabilities

Changes in regulations or standards may go unaddressed without dedicated oversight.

Even well-intentioned safety programs can lose effectiveness when stretched across existing operations or HR leadership teams without formal EHS training.

A Flexible Approach to EHS Support

To address these challenges, many manufacturers are turning to project-based or interim EHS staffing models that allow them to:

- Maintain compliance during hiring transitions
- Support ISO 45001 implementation or recertification efforts
- Conduct industrial hygiene assessments
- Prepare for customer or regulatory audits
- Manage safety initiatives during capital projects or facility upgrades

By aligning qualified safety professionals with specific operational needs—whether for a few weeks or several months—organizations can reinforce safety programs without long-term staffing commitments.

This approach also allows internal leadership teams to remain focused on production goals while ensuring that compliance responsibilities are managed by experienced professionals.

Planning Ahead for Program Continuity

As manufacturing continues to evolve across the region, maintaining a proactive approach to safety program management is essential. Identifying gaps early—whether in staffing, documentation, or compliance readiness—can help organizations avoid disruptions that impact both safety performance and production timelines.

Establishing access to external EHS expertise in advance of major audits, expansions, or workforce changes is one strategy manufacturers are using to ensure continuity in their safety programs.

To learn more about flexible EHS support for manufacturing operations, visit: www.complianceplace.com/ehsoutsourcing.

Compliance Management International is an Associate Member of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA. For more information, contact Cole Campbell at ccampbell@complianceplace.com.



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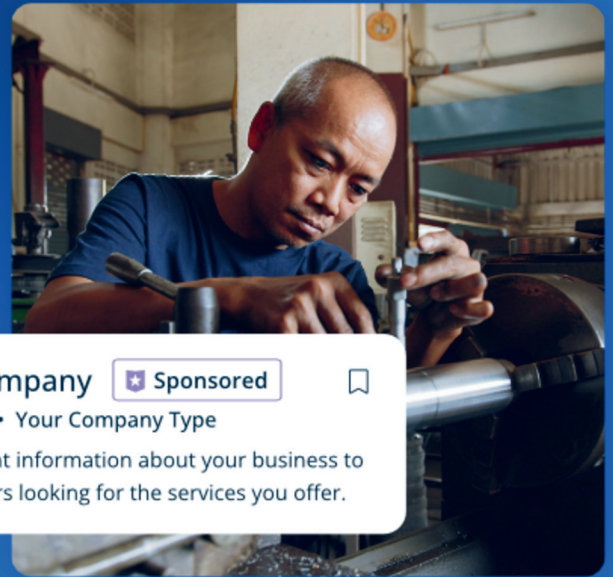
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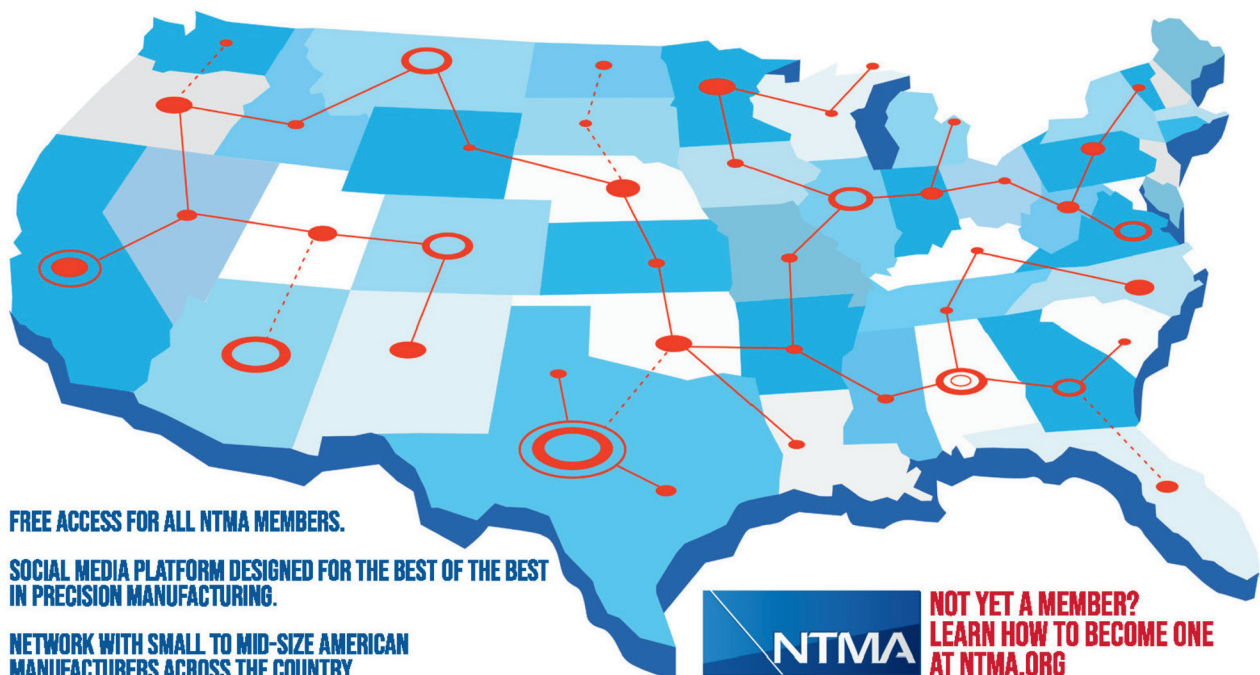
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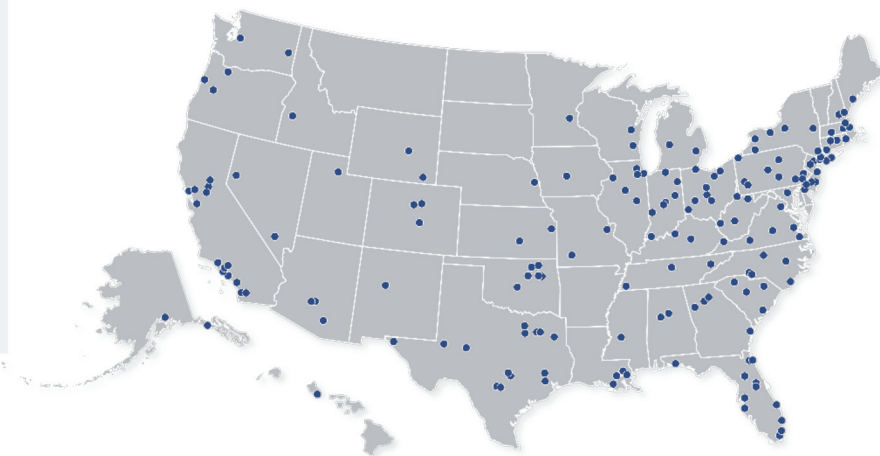
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USI is one of the largest insurance brokerage and consulting firms in the world, delivering property and casualty, employee benefits, personal risk, program and retirement solutions to large risk management clients, middle market companies, smaller firms and individuals. Headquartered in Valhalla, New York, USI connects together over 10,500 industry leading professionals across ~200 offices to serve clients' local, national and international needs.

USI has become a premier insurance brokerage and consulting firm by leveraging the USI ONE Advantage®, an interactive platform that integrates proprietary and innovative client solutions, networked local resources and expertise, and enterprise-wide collaboration to deliver customized results with positive, bottom line impact. USI attracts best-in-class industry talent with a long history of deep and continuing investment in our local communities.

For more information, visit usi.com.

Current USI office locations



History / Ownership

USI began in 1994 with a single office of \$6.5 million of revenue and 40 associates. Since then—through both sustainable, organic growth and a series of strategic acquisitions—USI has become a leading insurance brokerage nationwide. USI is majority owned by entities affiliated with Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. (“KKR”). Over 2,500 USI sales professionals, leadership, and employees also have an ownership stake in USI. KKR is a global investment firm that manages investments across multiple asset classes including private equity, energy, infrastructure, real estate, credit, and hedge funds. USI’s employee owned partnership coupled with a unique evergreen capital structure enables long-term investment and innovation to meet our clients’ needs today, and in the future.



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Special Pricing for NTMA Members

Auris, trusted by 50,000+ business owners, is now offering NTMA members special pricing on payroll, HR, and benefits. Whether a member is bringing on their first employee or opening up an eighth location, Auris has a specialist who knows their account and stays with them the whole way — helping with everything from tax ID setup to pre-run checks that catch problems before payday. Now you know it's right.

<https://www.auris.io/go/ntma/>



PGH NTMA CALENDAR

- 2/23 Pitt IEE Event: State of the Pittsburgh Economy co-hosted with PNC Bank
- 2/5 ARM Institute Workshop: Robotic Machine Tending: Free Manufacturer Workshop
- 2/27 Catalyst Connection Workshop: From Application to Award: Mini-Grant Workshop for Manufacturers (Virtual & In-Person)
- 3/5 BotsIQ Preliminary Competition - CCAC Allegheny
- 3/11-3/12 BotsIQ Preliminary Competition - Westmoreland
- 3/24 Pitt IEE: The Power of Storytelling: Unleashing a company's full potential
- 4/10 BotsIQ 2026 Finals Competition / Haas Networking Event

For details and more events, please visit:
www.PGHNTMA.org