

## CNC tube laser provides stockholder with the ultimate in tube processing performance

Stockholding in the past equated to little more than 'breaking bulk'; buying in volume from mills and selling on smaller quantities to lots of different customers. However, as customers began to request material 'cut-to-length', stockholders responded by offering a processing service using relatively low-tech equipment such as bandsaws and circular saws. Says Ralph Robinson, Managing Director of Barrett Steel Ltd's Tubes Division: "We then realised that what customers actually wanted was a finished component, and we knew we could both justify and fund the purchase of the high-tech equipment needed to deliver exactly that, while taking cost out of the customer's manufacturing process."

The first step was to set up LaserTUBE Cutting, initially as a subsidiary of ISO 9001:2000-accredited tube and hollow section stockholder Tubes (UK) Ltd, to process stainless steel hollow sections for the coach-building industry. Now a separate company within the Barrett Steel Group, one of the largest independent steel stockholders in the

UK, LaserTUBE Cutting in partnership with Tubes UK provides what Ralph Robinson describes as "the total solution in processing tubes and hollow steel sections."

As part of a continuing investment programme LaserTUBE Cutting installed a 48 m x 20 m wide, £1.25 million, tube laser alongside its four existing laser machines. Nine lorries were needed in November 2007 to transport the component parts of the aptly-named BLM ADIGE LT JUMBO CNC tube laser to the Tividale, West Midlands site where it now processes round tube from 80 to 508 mm diameter, square hollow section up to 400 mm by 400 mm and hollow sections up to 500 mm by 300 mm in cutting thicknesses up to 16 mm. The maximum length of tube that can be loaded automatically is 18 metres.

Only the fourth to be installed worldwide and the first to be installed in the UK, the LT JUMBO, which has two Siemens 840D CNCs controlling up to 28 axes, is housed in an extended 100,000 sq. ft. building situated adjacent to more than 5000 tonnes of



hot and cold formed tube and hollow section stock held by Tubes UK. LaserTUBE Cutting can machine the whole of the Tubes UK range for a wide range of customers.

"We now have several years' experience of laser cutting, so rather than just quote against a drawing we look at ways of enhancing a design and making manufacture easier and less costly. All of a sudden, the buyer doesn't have the final say, because discussions focus on more than price and delivery, and it's no exaggeration to say that laser cutting is revolutionising the way in which tubular components are produced."

Contact: Jon Curtis  
E: [sales@blmgroupp.co.uk](mailto:sales@blmgroupp.co.uk)