

On the Docks

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Steel made in Cleveland has a global reach



This winter when you see distinctive yellow-colored plows clearing snow-covered parking lots and driveways consider this: Chances are those plows – manufactured in Cleveland and made with hometown steel – are also on the job in Europe, China, and Australia. In this final installment of our *Follow the Freight* series, join us on visits to Universal Steel Company – which plays a critical role in the steel market – and snowplow maker Meyer Products, a company that’s both an American pioneer and a global exporter.

Located on Cleveland’s East Side, Meyer specializes in snow and ice-control equipment and ships to customers around the United States and in 23 countries across five continents. The company has expanded its reach with one innovation after another. But they all stem back to a eureka moment in 1926 that launched the company. That’s when Edward B. Meyer affixed a wooden board to his Buick so he could clear snow from his driveway.

“Meyer actually created America’s first steel snow plow for use on automobiles,” said Mike Moeller, vice president of manufacturing operations. “And our company is happy to use materials made locally to create products used here in Cleveland and around the world.”

That local sourcing begins at ArcelorMittal Cleveland, where iron ore shipped from other Great Lakes states travels through the Port of Cleveland and up the Cuyahoga River to the company’s integrated steelmaking facility. There, it is transformed with other raw materials into steel.

ArcelorMittal produces nearly three million tons of steel annually and then ships it – mainly in the form of large coils – to manufacturers who use it to make a range of goods, from automobiles to

appliances. Close to 45 percent of the steel is shipped to Ohio businesses, with the remainder mainly going to neighboring states such as West Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana. ArcelorMittal steel is also used to produce goods across the United States, as well as in Mexico and Canada.

The largest portion is purchased by facilities known as service centers. These businesses play a key role in the steel market by transforming large standardized coils and other steel products into various shapes and smaller orders to meet manufacturers' unique needs and specifications.

Universal Steel Company, a service center in Cleveland, buys coils of steel from ArcelorMittal and other suppliers. Once uncoiled, the steel is flattened by rolling pins, and then much of it is run through a stretching machine with powerful grippers that clamp down on one section at a time, and "pull the steel like a piece of taffy to remove stress and flatten it further," said Rich Williams, Universal's president and chief operating officer. After that, members of Universal's 60-plus workforce cut the steel to length to customer specifications.

About half the shipments leaving Universal are destined for Ohio manufacturers. The company's customers make a wide range of products including large agricultural machinery, electronic transformers affixed to utility poles, locomotive engine cars, storage tanks, material handling equipment, and large commercial trucks. "Most customers buy in the form of sheets comparable in size to a sheet of drywall, just a lot heavier and definitely more durable," Williams said.

Meyer is one of Universal's steady customers, making a variety of snowplows – some weighing nearly a ton – from thousands of tons of steel annually, much of it produced by ArcelorMittal and finished by Universal. It has a workforce of more than 100.

"Steel is essential to every plow we manufacture," said Moeller. Machines equipped with large pressing pins create the distinctive curve of the moldboard that forms the plow shovel, while computer-controlled lasers cut a single sheet into dozens of curved brackets, known as "ribs" that support and help attach the moldboards to vehicles. These parts and others are all welded together by hand or with robots to create the plows, most of which are painted with Meyer's signature yellow hue.

Buyers of Meyer products range from municipalities to homeowners. The company recently developed its first product made specifically for people who want to hitch a plow to their pick-up or SUV to perform DIY plows of their driveways. But most of Meyer's plows are sold to companies that provide snow-removal services to clear parking lots and driveways. "If you see a yellow plow out on the streets, chances are it's one of ours," said Moeller.

And if you see a giant freighter wending its way up the Cuyahoga River to ArcelorMittal Cleveland, chances are the iron ore it carries will eventually end up in a consumer product that will make someone's life a little easier – whether a car owner or washing machine user in Northeast Ohio, or someone plowing snow in Qingzhou, China.

For more information on ArcelorMittal, visit www.arcelormittal.com

For more information on Universal Steel Company, visit www.univsteel.com

For more information on Meyer Products, visit www.meyerproducts.com

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