

# Hemco Gage makes sure it fits, sometimes to 0.000010” of an inch

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By [Myron Kukla | The Grand Rapids Press](#), edited with permission.



Press lead man Ed Daigle checks a part ground on a CNC thread-grinding machine at Hemco Gage at the Holland Township plant.

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP — [Hemco Gage](#) is a world manufacturing leader in making sure things fit together.

The 65-year-old company manufactures measurement gages to assure precise fit on everything from the nut and bolt that holds artificial joints together to the screw threads on earth-moving equipment.

“Our expertise is threads — making sure they stay together in critical uses,” said company President Christopher Wysong, whose family owns the H.E. Morse Co. and its Hemco Gage brand.

“It’s critical when an oil company has two miles of drill pipe held together with threads that they stay together. If one breaks, they have miles of pipe to pull out to fix it.”

Founded in 1946 by Detroit businessman Henry Morse, the company originally gold-plated jewelry and fountain pen nibs — the writing points — for Shaffer Fountain Pens.

When the fountain pen market declined with the invention of the ball-point pen, Morse took the plating technology they had developed into chrome plating and began making measurement gages for the U.S. government during the Korean War.

“We don’t make gauges that measure pressure; we make metal gages that measure holes and threads,” said company Vice President Mike Hop, explaining a common misunderstanding people have about gage products.

Gage tolerances can be as precise as 0.000010” of an inch.



Hemco Gage manufactures precision gages for the petroleum industry, including this thread plug and ring.

The company sells gages to a cross-section of industries, including automotive, nuclear power, medical, energy and agricultural companies such as Stryker Medical, John Deere Corp. and Caterpillar Inc.

The privately held company has 75 employees working from the 36,000-square-foot H.E. Morse headquarters and factory located at 455 Douglas Avenue in Holland, MI. The company primarily sells through manufacturing reps and industrial distributors.

Wysong said the firm has annual sales in the \$6 million to \$8 million range and has been preparing for growth in the business with an investment of \$4 million in equipment over the past two years.

“We’ve gone through a total upgrade of our equipment, moving to all CNC-operated machines,” said Wysong, whose company usually ranks No. 1 or 2 in the industry.

It also recently acquired Ekonogage — a company that manufactures pin gages — and rolled it into the Holland operation.

Hemco’s two major U.S. competitors are Glastonbury-Southern Gage, based in Erin, Tenn., and Vermont Gage, of Swanton, Vt.

The company right now is looking to hire experienced CNC machinists and manual machine workers at wages in the \$15- to \$20-an-hour range, plus benefits and profit-sharing.

“It’s been tough finding experienced people,” Hop said. “I think a lot of machine operators left the state for jobs.”