

Mineville plant earns certification

Pre-Tech gets top rating



Jim Martin, left, and Eric Moquin stand with a \$500,000 horizontal mill at Pre-Tech Precision Machining in Mineville. The equipment is used to make aerospace components.

By [Fred Herbst](#)

[As of Monday, January 28, 2013](#)

Mineville — [Pre-Tech Precision Machining](#) keeps a low-profile.

“I’m not sure how many people even know we’re here,” said Jim Kahler, manager of Pre-Tech’s Mineville production facility. “I think people would be surprised to learn what we do.”

Pre-Tech may be a well-kept secret locally, but it's known to people in the aerospace industry. The local shop recently received coveted AS9100C certification. AS9100C is the quality management standard specifically written for the aerospace industry awarded by the Online Aerospace Supplier Information System. The certification places Pre-Tech among the best in the Aerospace and Defense Quality Management System International Standard.

"It's great news," Kahler said. "It's confirmation that we're doing things the right way."

The certification may also be key to future expansion of the Pre-Tech Mineville facility.

"We hope this will allow us to branch out to new customers," Kahler said. "There are companies that won't deal with you without the AS9100C. The first thing they ask is if you are certified."

"We're doing well here, we stay busy," the manager continued, "but we'd like to get more business and expand in the future."

Established in 1985, Pre-Tech is headquartered in Williston, Vt. It opened a production plant in the Moriah Industrial Park in Mineville in 1998. The firm has 71 employees, 22 in Mineville. Pre-Tech is a manufacturer of precision-machined metal and plastic components. At any one time the plant is making up to a dozen different items. Most relate to aerospace, but some are biomedical.

"We make parts in this facility that aren't made anywhere else in the world," Kahler said. "More than 90 percent of what we make flies."

That's a reference to the large amount of work done for government and commercial aerospace industries. For security reasons, Kahler and other Pre-Tech employees do not discuss specific products or customers.

Pre-Tech is part of an aerospace industry where components are made at plants around country, shipped and assembled elsewhere.

"We never do the full assembly of a part," Kahler explained. "We make components for parts. Other plants make other components. Someone else puts them together. There are security and safety issues. If something were to happen at one plant it wouldn't affect the entire industry."

One thing is obvious. The Mineville plant is high-tech and its employees are skilled. In the past year it added a \$500,000 horizontal mill. That mill replaced four older pieces of equipment and allows Pre-Tech to make the latest in aerospace components.

"I'll admit, I was pretty nervous the first time I had to use it," said Jim Martin, the primary operator of the new mill. "It's like anything, though. You learn and it becomes pretty routine."

While high-tech machines make the components at Pre-Tech, workers constantly monitor them for quality control. Adjustments are made throughout each process.

“Most people believe technology has made machining easier,” said Kahler, who has been with Pre-Tech since it opened the Mineville shop. “It’s made it faster, but I think the manual machines were much easier to use. The new machines need to be constantly adjusted. You need to be alert every second.”

“You really need mechanical and mathematical skills,” said Martin, pointing to his machine’s monitor. “All you see there are numbers. You have to be able to work with numbers.”

Kahler agreed.

“If you can’t use sine, cosine and tangent you can’t work here,” he said. “We use trig (trigonometry) every day. Math skills are key.”

But while math and mechanical skills are required, only one of Pre-Tech’s 22 Mineville workers has a college degree.

“High schools do a good job teaching the skills we need,” Kahler said. “Students just have to learn them.

“I never dreamed I could do this kind of work, become a plant manager,” Kahler, a 1986 Crown Point Central School graduate, said. “Pre-Tech does a great job training people, but you need the basics.”

Pre-Tech prides itself on being a local company, Kahler said. He pointed out 19 of the 22 employees at the Mineville plant live in the town of Moriah. The others live in Elizabethtown, Wadhams and Ticonderoga.

“I think Pre-Tech has been good for the community,” he said. “The plant is safe and clean. It provides good-paying jobs.”

The Mineville plant operates two shifts, day and night, five days a week.