

Kobelco Steel Tube Co., Ltd.: Offering North

With headquarters based out of Toyko, Japan, Kobelco Steel Tube Co., Ltd. (KST) is a manufacturer of seamless stainless steel tubes and pipes that are made available in a variety of different alloys. Part of the Kobe Steel Group of companies, KST is internationally renowned for providing high-quality products that are heavily depended upon in severe-service environments common throughout the chemical & petrochemical, nuclear power, aerospace and semiconductor industries.

Over the last year the company has undergone several significant changes in order to better serve its worldwide customers. Last April, on the company's 20th anniversary, it officially changed its name from Kobe Special Tube Co., Ltd. to Kobelco Steel Tube Co. Ltd. At the same time, the Tokyo office became the head office under a dual head office system along with the Shimonoseki main office.

Stainless Steel World Americas had the pleasure of speaking with Kobelco Steel Tube's President, Mr. Keiichi Wada, and Managing Director, Mr. Yoshinori Ojima, about these recent changes and why North American clients should choose Kobelco Steel Tube for all their tubing and piping needs.

By Candace Allison

Recent milestones

Both Mr. Wada and Mr. Ojima explained that KST's parent company, Kobe Steel Group, began operations as Kobe Steel Chofu-Kita plant, which was both a hot & cold extrusion shop. It earned a positive reputation for being the very first seamless steel pipe manufacturer in Japan that used the Ugine-Sejournet extrusion process. Several decades later in 1996, the steel tube division of Kobe Steel was spun off into its own business segment called Kobe Special Tube Co. Ltd. and in 2011 the Chofu-Kita plant was renamed as Shimonoseki Works. Only five years later it was decided that the steel tube division should be renamed as Kobelco Steel Tube Co. Ltd.

State-of-the-art facilities

Kobelco Steel Tube has three locations throughout Japan. The Shimonoseki Head Office and Shimonoseki Works are located in the historic Chofu area of Shimonoseki City, which is in the westernmost part of Honshu Island. Between the head office and manufacturing plant the Shimonoseki facility employs 350 workers. In turn the other Head Office in Tokyo has approximately 20 workers and has planning, administration and sales departments. The third KST office is located in Osaka, which is also on Honshu Island and south of the city of Kyoto. This branch has approximately five employees who are responsible for domestic sales.

Currently, there are no Kobelco Steel Tube offices or factories outside of Japan, but there are Japanese trading companies all over the world that stock and distribute KST products. For example, there are several of these Japanese Trading Companies that operate throughout the United States, especially the Houston area, and they are ready and willing to respond to American clients and are able to do so within the same time zone, which makes it easier for everyone involved.

Both Mr. Wada and Mr. Ojima explained

that it works well distributing KST products to worldwide customers via Japanese Trading companies so right now there are no plans to build any factories or plants outside of Japan. In fact, both men expressed that a goal for 2017 and beyond is to work with more of these trading companies in order to better focus on expanding sales within North America and have even more of the company's products used within the oil and gas, instrumentation tube or automotive sector.

Continual investments

In order to help achieve this goal of expanding sales around the world, especially in the North American market, Kobelco Steel Tube has made several important capital investments. These include installing coil tube manufacturing technology at Shimonoseki Works and investing in the cutting-edge technology to produce both thick and thin-walled pipe (specifically 8" and up). A bright annealing furnace was also purchased for instrumentation tube expansion. All of these investments helped to widen and strengthen the quality of KST's product offerings.

As Mr. Ojima described, "Rapid changes in the energy, electronics and automotive fields have led to corresponding developments in seamless tube production in recent years. There is an unprecedented demand for seamless tubular products with ultra-smooth surfaces, precise dimensions and high levels of corrosion resistance and cleanliness. This trend has been accompanied by a diversification of product shapes and stricter quality standards. We are ready to meet today's technological changes with an integrated management system that effectively utilizes the expertise we have gained through many years of production experience."

High-quality tubes & pipes

Kobelco Steel Tube is very aware of the importance of ensuring the quality of all its products, especially as many of its tubes

and pipes are used in highly corrosive and severe service end-use applications. There is absolutely no room for failure, which is precisely why having the certification ISO 9001 as well as ones from Bureau Veritas (BV) and DNVGL is critical. The company is proud of its most recent certification, the Norsok M-650 Edition 4: *Qualification manufacturers of special materials*. After achieving this certification last April, the company has been in a position to increase its market share by being able to target the specific industries such as offshore and chemical that require both duplex and austenitic stainless steel tube and pipe. Mr. Ojima explained that the very next day after achieving the Norsok M-650 certification, KST was able to start offering these specifically certified duplex products after receiving many inquiries from customers who required these types of top-quality tubes for their critical and time sensitive projects.

All of Kobelco Steel Tube's products are certified and highly dependable for a variety of end-use projects across a wide range of industries.

Precision tube and instrumentation tube

KST's technology for precision tubes and instrumentation tubes has been improved through the manufacturing of stainless steel cladding tubes for high-speed nuclear reactors Joyo and Monju that require the highest level of quality. This technology is currently applied to a number of different



Shimonoseki head office.

applications, such as instrumentation tubes for petrochemical, gas piping for semiconductor plants (clean pipe), automobile-related parts and medical instrumentation. In recent years, KST has also provided very thick high-pressure pipes (cold-worked) for use in hydrogen gas stations and other facilities. KST can accommodate requested size, as well as manufacture coil tubes that can help reduce the number of welding points.

KST's precision tubes acquire a high level of smooth surfacing and cleanliness by repeated special cold working and bright annealing (BA). KST can also handle requests for cold finished and outer surface polishing.

Duplex stainless steel tube and pipe

Duplex stainless steel tubes and pipes have attractive characteristics that combine the corrosion resistance of austenitic stainless steel with the outstanding strength of ferritic stainless.

These tubes and pipes also allow for a high level of strengthening, while enhancing

Kobelco Steel Tube's product offerings

Types: General tubes and pipes, heat-exchanger tubes, instrumentation tubes, boiler tubes, furnace tubes and hollow bars.

Sizes: *Hot-finished*—diameter 33.4mm~168.2mm, Wall thickness 2.77mm~18.26mm *Cold-finished*—Outer diameter 6.00mm~218mm, Wall thickness 0.8mm~11.07mm

Materials: Austenitic steels, super-austenitic, ferritic & martensitic steels, duplex, nickel alloys, high nickel alloys and titanium.



High pressure piping for hydrogen stations.



Instrumentation tube.

American customers top quality tubes and pipes



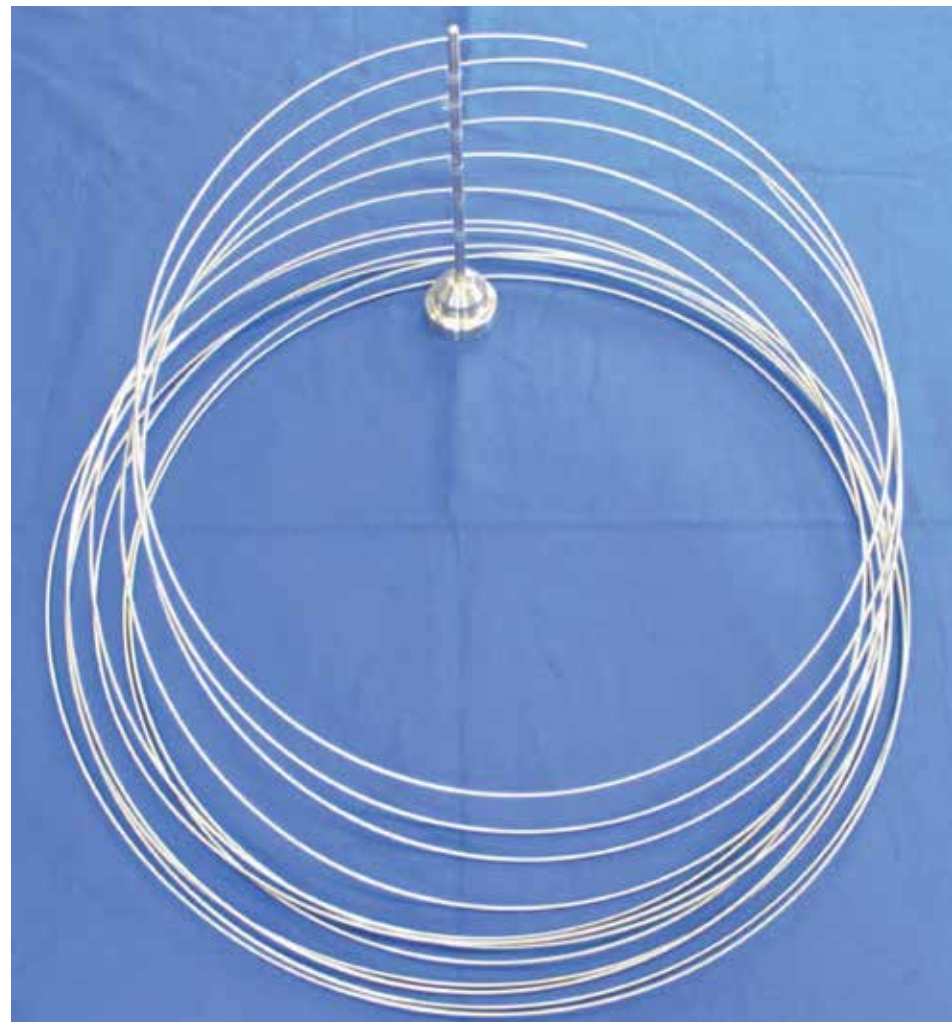
corrosion resistance with a compound of ingredients such as chromium, molybdenum and nitrogen. The tubes and pipes can be used in place of pipes for petroleum and chemical plants and tubes for heat exchangers, which must be resistant to stress corrosion cracking under harsh conditions, and can also take the place of austenitic stainless steel to help weight reduction.

Dependable worldwide service

These products are all produced out of the Shimonoseki Works facility using the highest quality materials and adhering to the strictest requirements such as those for the nuclear and aerospace industries. Quality assurance methods includes non-destructive testing such as eddy current and ultrasonic testing as well as other methods evaluating the tensile and hardness of the item. This adherence to quality is one of the reasons that Kobelco Steel Tube is one of the leading seamless steel tube manufacturers in Japan. Customers,

not only in Japan but also worldwide, know they can trust the quality of KST's tubes and pipes and also expect them to be delivered anywhere they are needed, exactly when they are needed. Fast delivery is provided to each and every customer and within the United States the Japanese Trading Companies make this easy as they already have Kobelco Steel Tube products in stock.

When asked why American customers should choose Kobelco Steel Tube products instead of another company offering similar products, Mr. Ojima was quick to respond, "Most of our materials are manufactured by our parent company, Kobe Steel, LTD., so the quality is extremely reliable. Not only that, but we have advanced processing technology and our own production control technology, which is supported by quality customer service and quick delivery times, so we are convinced that all customers, wherever they are located in the world, are sure to be satisfied with our products."



Coil tube (OD 1/4").

Kobelco Steel Tube's production process

The main manufacturing process for all Kobelco Steel Tube's hot-finished and cold-finished products are as follows:

Hot-finished: Materials → Billet processing → Hot extrusion processing by hot extrusion press → Heat treatment → Pickling → Rolling straightening → Cutting/Chamfering → Pickling → Test/Inspection Printing/Packing → Shipment

Cold-finished: Materials → Billet processing → Hot extrusion processing by hot extrusion press → Heat treatment → Pickling → Drawing/Rolling → Degreasing → Heat treatment → Pickling → Rolling straightening → Cutting/Chamfering → Pickling → Test/Inspection → Printing/Packing → Shipment



Clean pipe for semiconductor (BA tube).

KOBELCO STEEL TUBE AT A GLANCE

Company name:	Kobelco Steel Tube Co., Ltd.
Locations:	Tokyo head office: 9-11, Kitashinagawa 5-chrome, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 141-8688 Japan; Shimonoseki head office & works: 13-1, Chofuminato-machi, Shimonoseki-City, Yamaguchi, 752-0953 Japan
Years established:	Kobelco Steel Chofukita Plant: February 1959; Kobe Special Tube Co. Ltd.(now Kobelco Steel Tube): April 1996
Employees:	Tokyo head office: 20; Shimonoseki head office: 350
Products:	Seamless stainless steel tubes & pipe, precision tube, speciality tube, clean pipe, welded titanium tube, secondary tube forming products, u-bent tube, low-finned tube, etc.
Materials:	Austenitic steels, super-austenitic, ferritic & martensitic steels, duplex, nickel alloys, high nickel alloys, titanium, etc.
Industries:	Chemical & petrochemical, power generation, nuclear, oil & gas, semiconductor, automotive, etc.
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