

# Rocking & Rolling in the Aluminum Industry



Written by William Young

Service Center Metals (SCM) celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September of 2023, ringing in two full decades of serving the United States and Canada as an aluminum extrusions and aluminum billet provider from its native Virginia.

The company dates from 2003, when three former employees of what was once the Reynolds Metal Co.—a larger aluminum supplier based out of Richmond, Virginia—found a need that was not being served, and this would become the company’s initial target market of aluminum distribution centers. Over the years, SCM would expand its footprint into other markets that include the automotive, building/construction, and defense industries, with distribution centers remaining as the focal point and largest share of the company’s interactions and business.

Supply Chain & Marketing Director Fernando Segovia began his career in the aluminum industry at Alcoa, one of the largest aluminum producers in the world; however, upon joining SCM in 2021, he was impressed by the company’s growth and ability to gain market share. Before long, he came to see that its real success lies in its abilities to deliver a quality product and to create and maintain strong customer relationships.

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“We’re very quick to react to any needs or changes that customers want,” Segovia says, and this includes delivering metal in any size or shape to clients in as little as a week or two. Good uptime on equipment, consistent and reliable product quality, and the ability to meet these commitments have helped SCM grow into a successful company.

Coming from a global company that employs tens of thousands, Segovia sees that SCM’s identity as a somewhat small company, employing around 420 people, promotes a more family-oriented and personable atmosphere. This also allows close access to the aluminum industry heavy hitters on staff who bring the knowledge that makes this a strong company on



a technical level. “There’s this personal touch with employees at every level that makes it a welcoming, enjoyable environment.”

Another advantage proving useful for SCM is its start-up environment wherein ideas flow from one department to another, empowering new ideas and unorthodox approaches to the industry. Segovia says that this makes operations fun, exciting, and above all, successful.

When it comes to recent developments, exciting is the word. SCM has further expanded its aluminum services in recent years with the installation of a new aluminum cast house, where it can now cast more aluminum billets used in the extrusion process. The new house includes two new furnaces and a vertical casting table, with a casting capacity of 160 million pounds a year. These billets are also one of the few on the market made with recycled content—up to 91 percent—found in scrap metal, which is increasingly attractive to a more eco-conscious clientele. ▶▶



▶ SCM has also installed a new 11-inch press for extrusions down the street from its existing facilities in its hometown of Prince George, Virginia. All these upgrades represent great momentum within the company, as it can supply more products to customers and continue to increase its market share.

In a fun twist, all the SCM extrusion technology is given names reflecting classic rock musicians, with names like Cash, Elvis, The Boss, and cast lines named after famous double acts like Mick and Keith or Jake and Elwood. These little touches were instituted by the founders years ago and serve as a reminder of that founding spirit today.

SCM's growth has also occurred internally in unexpected and wholly welcome ways. Within the last two years, the company has inaugurated an in-house health center with a full-time nurse practitioner and a physical therapy professional on staff. These services are free to all employees and their families, with the goal of investing in its workforce and making the company the employer of choice in the Prince George area. This endeavor has seen phenomenal success so far, Segovia says, with some employees being able to diagnose underlying conditions and get the appropriate treatment.

The new health center's benefits for the workforce complement the company's strong safety record and commitment to the health of its workers. Segovia says that companies must be responsible for putting in systems and people to mitigate risk, and SCM's sterling safety record reflects the fact that safety is its number one internal priority.

Another value that is highly regarded at SCM is competition, which Segovia says makes things fun and engaging for employees at every level. The workforce likes to win in all respects, so a friendly, competitive nature is encouraged. Although the workforce is competitive with one another and the broader industry, every action is taken with great care and attention to safety. ▶▶



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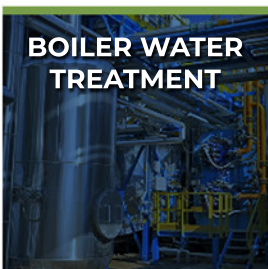
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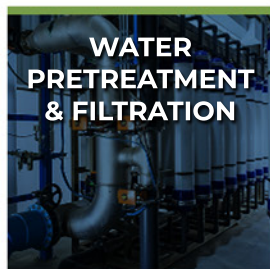
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► Segovia says that the aluminum industry is in an interesting place now because manufacturing in the United States has been constricting for the past 18 of the last 19 months. This is due to the federal reserve raising interest rates starting around March 2022, which also impacted inflation and other areas of the economy. As a result, manufacturing is challenging and in a depressed state, which further affects the aluminum side of the metals industry.

While SCM has been affected by these economic forces, there is still a tangible need for manufacturing in the U.S. Segovia believes that 20 to 30 percent of aluminum-finished products that are imported into the country could instead be made domestically.

Making prime aluminum is a very resource-intensive process, so SCM only uses a certain percentage of it when necessary. The vast majority of the metal made from its products comes from recycled sources, which is an important part of how the company does business.

“We’re as green as they come when it comes to environmental-friendly industries or companies,” Segovia says. This extends to relations with other clients. The automotive industry currently has a push toward going green, which is beneficial to the aluminum sector as it has a high recycled content and is infinitely recyclable, while also being a lightweight material that can lead to less gas usage for vehicles.





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Although manufacturing is still in something of a down state, the aluminum industry has a great outlook. There is more passion on both the legislative and consumer levels toward going green across multiple industries that SCM serves, and aluminum has a huge role to play in that push. Whether in the creation of electric vehicles or solar panels, aluminum is a key player in sustainable manufacturing. The company itself has managed to maintain and even grow during this contracted time because of the products it delivers, how it delivers those products, and its relationships.

Looking ahead, SCM is expanding with new alloys, enabling further research and development with its products. It is also endeavoring to reach customers outside its traditional base, aiming to diversify its portfolio with its new alloys and extruded shapes as well as expanding into markets that benefit from products with high recycled content.

Like its push for continuous improvement, SCM is investing resources and time into its technology infrastructure to stay ahead of the curve. Some of its team members were present at the first-ever Artificial Intelligence Expo for National Competitiveness in Washington, DC to investigate how artificial intelligence can be leveraged into improving manufacturing processes.

Above all, Segovia is certain that SCM will keep doing the things it is best at: excelling at delivering its products, impressing its industry, and nourishing the warm and family-oriented organization it has cultivated over the last 20 years. ■

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