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[www.millsmanufacturing.com](http://www.millsmanufacturing.com) / HQ: Asheville, N.C. / John Oswald, president/CEO: "By keeping everything in-house, we are able to closely monitor and keep track of our processes."

# BUILDING TRUST

MILLS MANUFACTURING'S PARACHUTE SYSTEMS ARE TRUSTED BY THE U.S. ARMED FORCES AND THE COMPANY TAKES THAT TRUST SERIOUSLY.



MILLS MANUFACTURING HAS BEEN MANUFACTURING PARACHUTES FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES SINCE THE KOREAN WAR.

**A parachute is one thing that absolutely must work every time it is needed, especially in military applications.** The men and women of the United States armed forces depend upon these lifesaving devices to keep themselves and their vital equipment safe, and so they need to know that the people supplying those parachutes and related equipment can be trusted to do the job right. For more than 75 years, Mills Manufacturing has been one of those trusted sources for the U.S. military, and President and CEO John Oswald says that's a responsibility that

the company does not take nor will ever take lightly.

Founded in 1935, Mills Manufacturing concentrated all of its efforts on the military parachute market during the Korean War. Today, the North Carolina-based company manufactures parachutes used for dropping troops and cargo from planes as well as extracting cargo from planes and decelerating jet aircraft for landing. According to Oswald, the fact that Mills Manufacturing remains a family owned and operated business means it has cultivated and maintained a strong relationship with

the federal government and the armed forces based on trust.

"All of our decisions are made here," Oswald says. It's that attention to detail and responsibility that have made Mills Manufacturing a trusted supplier of parachute systems for more than three quarters of a century, and Oswald says those will continue to be the principles under which the company will operate well into the future.

## QUALITY CONTROL

It takes a lot to maintain the level of trust Mills Manufacturing has »



THE FACT THAT MILLS MANUFACTURING DOES NOT OUTSOURCE ANY OF ITS WORK MEANS IT CAN KEEP A TIGHT CONTROL ON QUALITY.

» developed over the years, and Oswald says the company ensures that its parachutes are the best they can be because it keeps every aspect of the manufacturing process in-house. Its 175,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Asheville, N.C., is where every stitch is made, and the company never subcontracts out any of the work that goes into its products. “By keeping everything in-house, we are able to closely monitor and keep track of all our processes,” Oswald says.

Being a family owned and operated company also means Mills Manufacturing can provide its military customers with direct access to its top decision-makers anytime they have questions or concerns. The company’s extensive expertise that covers decades of military technological advancements also gives Mills Manufacturing a strong knowledge base from

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which it can draw to help customers make positive changes to the products. Oswald says that the longevity of its employees is another key reason why Mills Manufacturing has remained at the top of the industry.

**RAMPING UP**

Supplying the armed forces is in many ways similar to serving any other customer base, but there are

some key differences. In particular, one of the biggest challenges facing Mills Manufacturing today is the most recent round of military spending cuts, which have impacted the military parachute industry to varying degrees.

With the market shrinking, Oswald says, some cargo parachute manufacturers have found themselves having to close up shop.

Mills Manufacturing also went through a necessary reduction in workforce to keep its operations running within the last several years, but over the last year business has started to pick up again. In fact, the amount of work is starting to flow so quickly now that Oswald says Mills Manufacturing is being challenged to bring itself back up to the right level of production personnel. In addition, the company has

had to ensure that its training staff is capable of handling the influx of new production workers.

Oswald says the company also has had to contend with changes in the way the federal government enacts quality verifications. The company's new processes for pre-approval and approval of products take much more time than in the past, he says, and Mills Manufacturing continues to work on adjusting to the new processes.

### MAKING CHANGES

Another change that Mills Manufacturing is adjusting to also is related to military spending and could define the company's future. In the past, Oswald explains, the company used to have a small number of large, multi-

year assembly contracts for parachute systems. In more recent years, however, the company has been receiving shorter, smaller contracts, but in greater numbers. Although managing a large number of small contracts creates more administrative work for the company, Oswald says Mills Manufacturing is getting a handle on a new way of doing business and sees benefits in having smaller contracts filling its schedule. For example, he says, the ending of one smaller contract doesn't create as large of a gap in the company's schedule as the end of a larger one would, making it easier for Mills Manufacturing to stay busy.

No matter what form its work takes in the near future, Oswald explains that Mills Manufacturing remains

dedicated to being a supplier that the armed forces can put their trust in time and time again. **mt**

**Mills Manufacturing** Since 1957, Orlando Spring has been a dynamic leader in manufacturing highly engineered and customized precision springs and wire forms. Our commitment is always to provide 100% quality products and services with on time delivery through lean and cost effective processes. We have served the Aviation, Space, Defense and Commercial industries for over 50 years. Current Third party certifications for Orlando Spring include ISO 9001:2008, EN/JISQ AS9100:Rev.C, NADCAP process certification, Boeing and Lockheed Martin heat treat certification and registration with DDTC for ITAR compliance. In 2013 we began a relationship with Mills Manufacturing, lending our support for their parachute manufacturing operation. Orlando provides springs, assemblies and hardware applications to Mills for their final parachute assemblies. We provide our customers the utmost attention to detail from the smallest, complicated spring or wire form through the larger more complex assemblies. Parachute Spring assemblies in particular are a very critical application as they safely bring our warfighters back to earth. We look forward to continuing to grow with Mills as well as other companies in the aerospace and defense markets.



## Services Offered:

- Engineering
- Coiling
- Heat Treating
- Secondary
- Inspection
- In-House Finishing
- Assemblies

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## Products

Core manufacturing competencies that have distinguished us as a leader in our industry include:

- Precision Compression Springs
- Precision Wire Forms
- Custom Clock Springs
- Precision Extension Springs
- Precision Clutch Springs
- Torsion Springs
- Precision Flat Stock Components
- Metal Stamping & Fabrications
- Double Torsion Springs

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