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Investigating the Impact of a "Made in the USA" Claim

[see page 3]

Why Small Manufacturers Are Turning to UV Curing



[see page 11]



MAY / JUNE 2026

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C o n t e n t s

MAY / JUNE 2026 | ISSUE 317

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

03 Investigating the Impact of a “Made in the USA” Claim

11 Why Small Manufacturers Are Turning to UV Curing

Spring in full bloom with summer around the corner! With that, we’ve got a fresh features to share with you.

The first explores where we’re at in an era of shifting trade policies and heightened consumer awareness. The “Made in the USA” label has evolved from a simple marketing tool into a high-stakes regulatory minefield. Our first article explores the dramatic implications of the 2026 Executive Order 14392, which has transitioned the Federal Trade Commission from a reactive observer to a proactive enforcer of domestic origin claims. By examining the strict “all or virtually all” legal standard, the rise of personal liability for CEOs, and the million-dollar penalties facing non-compliant brands, the piece provides a vital strategic roadmap for manufacturers and e-commerce leaders. Ultimately, it argues that in a landscape defined by aggressive audits and digital scrutiny, supply chain transparency is no longer just a compliance obligation—it is a critical competitive advantage for building authentic consumer trust.

This month’s company showcase features Uvitron from West Springfield, Massachusetts. Small manufacturers are adopting UV curing technology to reduce waste, cut energy costs, and improve production speed compared to traditional curing methods like ovens and air drying. UV curing delivers instant, consistent results that help reduce scrap, increase throughput, free up floor space, and eliminate delays caused by long curing times. The technology also lowers electricity usage and labor inefficiencies while creating a cleaner and safer work environment. Companies like Uvitron provide compact, in-house designed UV curing systems that help small shops improve productivity, shorten turnaround times, and save thousands of dollars annually through faster processing and reduced operating costs.

We hope you take something away from these pieces! If you’ve got anything YOU’D like to share, don’t hesitate to send your idea along; or, better yet, submit your 1,200+ word article to chris@thegatewaymag.com attention: “For Publication.” We’d be happy to get you featured.



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PUBLICATION MANAGER

Matthias Roberge

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Chris Hislop

ART DIRECTOR

Adam Kaufmann

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

(877) 463-4020

info@thegatewaymag.com

Hours: 9am-5pm Mon-Fri

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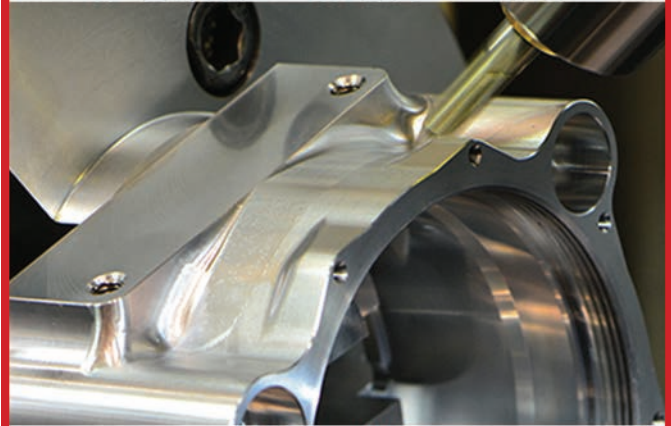
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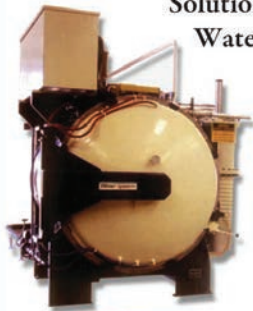
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ISSUE 317

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF A “MADE IN THE USA” CLAIM

The “Made in USA” label has long been a badge of honor for domestic manufacturers, carrying with it an implicit promise of quality, community support, and national pride.

However, for many business leaders, that badge is becoming a source of significant regulatory anxiety.

On March 13, 2026, the landscape shifted dramatically with the signing of Executive Order 14392, “Ensuring Truthful Advertising of Products Claiming to be Made in America.” This directive doesn’t just ask for honesty; it signals an era of proactive, aggressive enforcement that should put every manufacturer and online retailer on high alert.



The “Big Three” Risks

Proactive Enforcement: The FTC is no longer waiting for complaints. They are actively auditing e-commerce listings, digital “Made in USA” badges, and patriotic imagery (flags/maps) that imply U.S. origin.

Platform Liability: Online marketplaces are now under pressure to verify sellers’ claims. If your digital “badges” aren’t backed by a paper trail, your products face immediate delisting and site-wide bans.

Personal Liability: The FTC is increasingly naming individual owners and CEOs in lawsuits, not just the corporate entity.

The Compliance Standard: “All or Virtually All”

To claim “Made in USA” without qualification, you must meet a three-part test:

Final Assembly: Must happen in the U.S.

Significant Processing: All major manufacturing steps must be domestic.

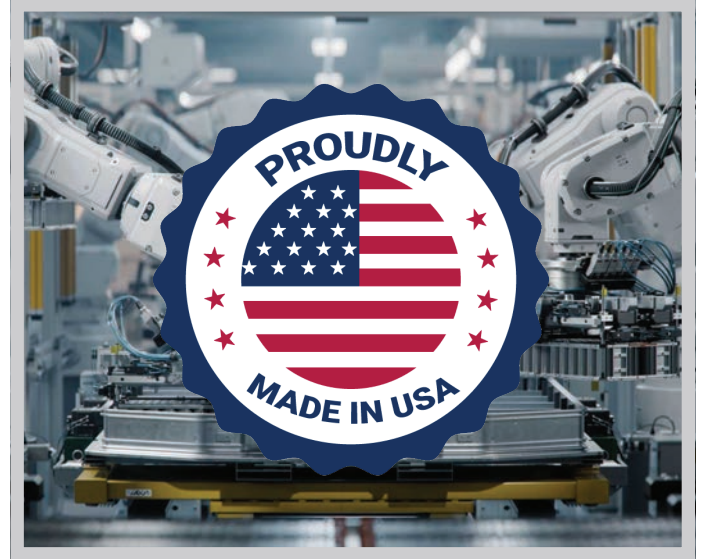
Negligible Foreign Content: There is no “safe” percentage (like 90%). If a key functional component is imported, you likely fail this test.

The Cost of a Mistake

Record Fines: Recent penalties have topped \$3 million for repeat offenders and \$2 million for first-time major violations (e.g., Kubota, 2024).

Clawbacks: New England companies (Chaucer/Bates) were recently forced to pay \$140,000+ in direct consumer refunds.

Government Blacklisting: If you sell to the government, a false claim now triggers False Claims Act investigations and permanent removal from procurement catalogs.



Immediate Action Items

Audit “Implied” Claims: It’s not just the label. If your website has an American flag next to a product with a Chinese motor, the FTC views that as a deceptive claim.

Pivot to “Qualified” Labels: When in doubt, use: “Assembled in USA” or “Made in USA with U.S. and Global Parts.” These are safer and legally defensible.

Map the “Substantial Transformation”: Document exactly where raw materials become finished goods. This documentation is your “get out of jail free” card during an audit.

The Shift from Complaint to Scrutiny

For years, Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforcement regarding origin claims was largely “complaint-driven.” A company might only find itself under the microscope if a competitor or a disgruntled consumer blew the whistle.

Those days are over. The new Executive Order instructs the FTC to adopt a more proactive approach to scrutiny. This is particularly relevant for the e-commerce sector. The order specifically targets online marketplaces, suggesting that platforms may soon be held liable if they fail to verify the origin claims made by third-party sellers. For manufacturers, this means the digital “Made in USA” badge on a website is now just as legally binding—and dangerous—as the physical sticker on the box.



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Understanding the “All or Virtually All” Standard

To navigate this new environment, leaders must master the FTC’s “All or Virtually All” standard. It is a deceptively simple phrase that hides complex supply chain requirements. For a product to carry an unqualified “Made in USA” claim, it must meet three strict criteria:

- 1. Final Assembly:** The product must undergo its final assembly or processing within the United States.
- 2. Significant Processing:** All significant processing that goes into the product must occur domestically.
- 3. Domestic Content:** All or “virtually all” ingredients or components must be made and sourced in the U.S.

The FTC does not use a fixed percentage (e.g., 90% or 95%) to define this. Instead, they look at the “remoteness” of foreign content. If a critical component of a complex machine is imported, even if it represents a small fraction of the total cost, an unqualified “Made in USA” claim could be deemed deceptive.

The High Cost of Non-Compliance

The financial stakes have reached record highs. Recent enforcement actions illustrate that the FTC is no longer satisfied with mere warning letters.

In early 2024, Kubota North America was hit with a \$2 million civil penalty for false claims regarding replacement parts. Even more striking was a 2024 case involving a high-end cookware and kitchen accessory retailer. Because they violated a prior 2020 order by continuing to list Chinese-made products as “Made in USA,” they were slapped with a record \$3.175 million penalty.

For regional players, the impact is just as personal. In late 2024, New England-based Chaucer and Bates Accessories were forced to return over \$140,000 to consumers after being found in violation. These cases prove that the FTC is willing to pursue individual owners and executives, making this a matter of personal professional liability.



The Rise of “Qualified” Claims

Because global supply chains are rarely 100% domestic, many savvy manufacturers are pivoting to “qualified” claims. These allow a company to be transparent about foreign involvement while still highlighting their domestic footprint.

Examples of safe, qualified claims include:

- “Made in USA of U.S. and imported parts.”
- “Assembled in USA.” (This is permissible if the principal assembly is substantial and the last “substantial transformation” happened domestically).
- “60% U.S. Content.”

The key is that the qualification must be **clear, prominent, and understandable**. Hiding a disclaimer in the fine print of a website footer will not satisfy a 2026 auditor.



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A Strategic Roadmap for Leaders

In this heightened enforcement environment, “Made in USA” should no longer be treated as a marketing detail. It is now a core compliance issue. Manufacturers should immediately adopt the following four-step strategy:

1. The Comprehensive Claim Audit

Review every touchpoint where an origin claim is made. This isn’t just about the physical product label. It includes:

- Product pages and e-commerce filters.
- Social media imagery (e.g., photos featuring American flags near products).
- Influencer content and third-party advertising creatives.

2. Supply Chain Mapping - Go beyond your Tier 1 suppliers. To satisfy the “all or virtually all” standard, you must understand where your suppliers’ components come from. Documenting this “substantial transformation” is your best defense in the event of an inquiry.

3. Procurement Verification - The 2026 Executive Order has a specific focus on government procurement. Agencies are now required to periodically review American-origin claims for all acquired products. Contractors found to be misrepresenting origin face more than just fines; they face removal from procurement availability and potential liability under the False Claims Act.

4. Training and Documentation - Marketing and sales teams often use patriotic branding without understanding the legal nuances. Regular training sessions are essential to ensure that the creative team isn’t inadvertently creating “implied claims” that the legal team can’t back up.



Turning Compliance into Competitive Advantage

While the new Executive Order introduces significant risk, it also provides a unique opportunity for those who do it right. As the FTC cracks down on “bad actors” and “patriotic washing,” companies that can genuinely prove their domestic footprint will stand out.

By treating supply chain transparency as a strategic asset rather than a regulatory burden, manufacturers can protect themselves from million-dollar fines while building deeper, more authentic trust with a consumer base that is increasingly looking for the truth behind the label. In 2026, the most valuable thing a manufacturer can produce isn’t just a product—it’s proof.

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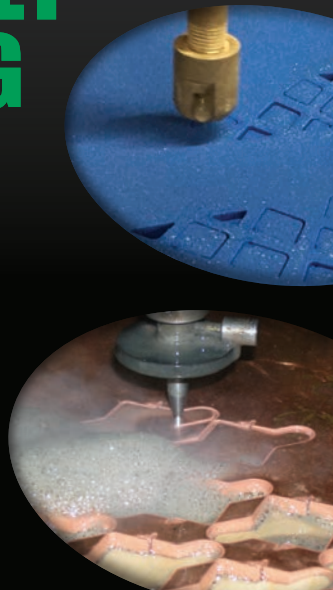
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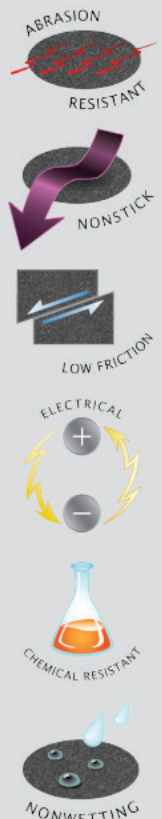
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WHY SMALL MANUFACTURERS ARE TURNING TO UV CURING



Small-shop manufacturers don't have room for waste. When curing takes too long, when heat drives up energy bills, or when parts get rejected, the costs stack up fast. Traditional curing methods like heat ovens and air drying are slow, inconsistent, and expensive to run. They take up floor space, consume power all day, and create bottlenecks that limit output.

UV curing removes those issues without overcomplicating your process. It delivers consistent results without the overhead of traditional systems. Cure times drop from hours to seconds. Energy consumption is significantly lower. Quality becomes more repeatable, scrap is reduced, and finished parts can move immediately to the next step or out the door.

What used to be seen as high-end equipment for large-scale production is now available in compact, cost-effective systems designed for smaller operations. The impact is not theoretical. Lower energy usage, faster turnaround, and increased throughput all translate directly into measurable savings.

Where the Waste Hides

If you run a small shop, you know exactly where the waste hides. It's in slow equipment, long drying times, energy bills that make no sense, and parts that don't pass inspection.

It's the oven you leave running all day, just in case. It's the rush job that gets delayed because the adhesive isn't cured yet. It's the coating that looked perfect, until it failed in the field. It's the guy standing around waiting for the green light to move the part along, burning payroll while the clock ticks. And it's the customer who says, "When can I get it?" while you're still waiting for the batch to finish setting.

You don't need a consultant to tell you this is killing your margins. You see it every week. What you need is a way to cut that waste without throwing your process into chaos. That's what UV curing offers. It doesn't change what you make, it changes how fast and how cleanly you can make it.

Faster Curing Means More Jobs Per Day

Time is your most limited resource. Traditional curing methods burn it fast. Ovens need time to heat up, time to cure, time to cool down. Air drying? Even worse. You end up building buffer time into every job just to let things set properly. With UV curing, there is no buffer. The cure happens instantly. You hit the part with UV light, and it's done, ready for the next step, the next process, or straight into packaging.

Stop Bleeding Money on Electricity

Ovens chew through electricity. They run hot for long hours, and in a small space, they often overwork your HVAC system too. You pay twice: once to run the oven, and again to cool the building. UV curing systems use a fraction of that power. LEDs and lamps only run when you're curing. There's no idle burn, no wasted heat, and no 240-volt monster humming all day in the corner.



You Stop Throwing Parts in the Trash

Bad cures ruin good parts. Maybe the coating didn't dry evenly. Maybe the bond didn't hold. Maybe someone opened the oven too soon. Now it's junk. Multiply that by a few errors per week, and you're bleeding time, material, and customer trust. UV curing is exact. The intensity, exposure time, and coverage are controlled and repeatable. You're not relying on airflow, ambient temperature, or someone remembering to set a timer. The light goes on, the job cures, the result is consistent.

You Free Up Space and Reduce Overhead

In a small shop, floor space is valuable. Every square foot taken up by a bulky oven is space that could be used for storage, assembly, inspection, or another workbench. Add in clearance zones, ventilation ducts, and safety barriers, and ovens become expensive just to house. UV systems are small. Many fit on a benchtop. Some roll under the line. There's no warm-up zone, no burn hazard, and no need for exhaust systems. You can place them right where the work happens.

You Get Paid Sooner

This one's simple: faster curing = faster shipping = faster invoicing. If a part sits waiting to cure for hours or overnight, it's not making money. It's just sitting. When the cure is instant, the part moves. The job finishes. The invoice goes out. The cash comes in. This also shortens your queue. Customers who used to wait a week might get their orders in four days. That keeps them happy, brings in repeat work, and helps you stand out from bigger shops that still move slowly.

You Stop Paying People to Wait

How many times have you seen a tech or operator standing around waiting for a part to come out of the oven? Or dragging their feet because the next job can't start until curing finishes? UV curing removes that gap. Operators can move from one job to the next without delay. No heat-up time. No cool-down time. No clock-



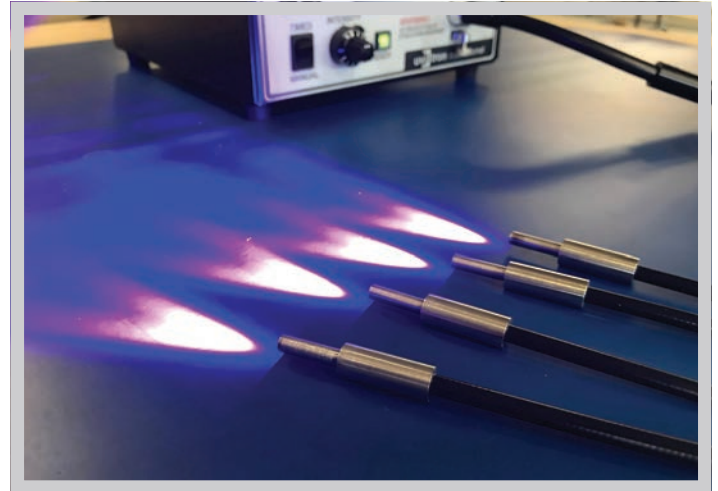
watching. That means every paid hour goes further, and you get more done without adding payroll. Even a 10% bump in productivity adds up over the course of a year.

Your Shop Runs Cleaner and Safer

This one isn't always about saving money, but it is about avoiding problems. Ovens create heat, fumes, and potential burn risks. They may require permits, inspections, or added insurance. UV systems don't. No open heat, no combustion, no extra ventilation. They're safer to use, easier to maintain, and more reliable over time. And in the long run, fewer safety issues mean fewer injuries, fewer slowdowns, and fewer headaches.

How Much Can a Small Shop Really Save?

The numbers speak for themselves. A small manufacturer running a single curing oven for adhesive bonding might spend roughly \$400 to \$525 a month on electricity, based on a 15-20 kW oven operating 6 hours a day, five days a week, at an average electricity rate



of \$0.20 per kWh. A UV curing system doing the same work could cost as little as \$40 a month to run, saving roughly \$4,000 to \$5,800 per year on energy alone.

Labor savings stack up quickly, too. If curing time drops from 30 minutes to 30 seconds per part, operators are freed up to handle other tasks or boost throughput, adding thousands in value. Even a small reduction in scrap, say, 2% on \$250,000 of annual production, can reclaim \$5,000 in lost material. And by freeing up just 100 square feet of floor space, shops can avoid expansion or make room for revenue-driving equipment. Altogether, the move to UV curing can put \$15,000 to \$25,000 or more back into the business every year, depending on production volume, labor utilization, and material savings.

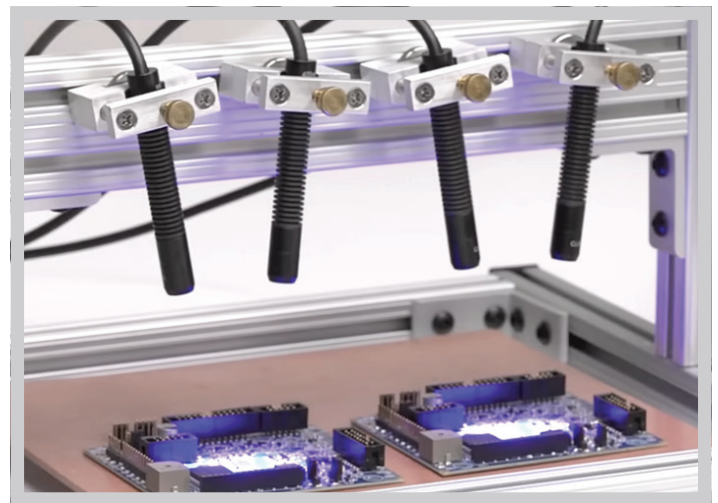
WHY UV CURING?

- Quick Setup
- Easy Use
- Dries Fast
- Strong Bond
- Less Waste
- Saves Power






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How to Get Started with UV Curing

If you're ready to stop wasting time and money on slow curing, the first step is simpler than you think. You don't need to tear out your current setup or overhaul your shop. You just need the right system for the job, and the right company backing it.

Step 1 - Pick One Process to Replace

Start with your bottleneck. Maybe it's a bonding step that takes 30 minutes to set. Maybe it's a coating that ties up half your bench space while it dries. UV curing makes the most impact where you're currently losing time, so focus there first.

Step 2 – Work with Uvitron

Uvitron designs and manufactures full-spectrum UV curing systems. Flood lamps, spot systems, LED units, and enclosures. All built in-house in Western Massachusetts. We are not a reseller. We design the equipment, build it, test it, and support it ourselves.

Our systems cure UV-curable adhesives, coatings, inks, and epoxies in seconds with consistent, repeatable results. Whether you're bonding parts, coating surfaces, or post-curing resins, we match the right technology to your process. Arc or LED. High power or fine control. No off-the-shelf junk rebranded at a markup. Just proven hardware, built to perform.

We've equipped cleanrooms, job shops, dental labs, medical device lines, aerospace suppliers, electronics manufacturers, and packaging facilities. Some customers

run two cycles a day. Others run hundreds an hour. We size the system to fit your job, your space, and your pace.

Every unit is backed by a 2-year warranty. If something goes wrong, we fix it. If you need support, you're talking to someone who built the system. We build everything in-house. The controllers, the firmware, the lamps, the power supply. That's how we keep quality high, lead times short, and support personnel. Other companies ship boxes. We deliver tools that help manufacturers run faster and cleaner.

If you're ready to stop waiting on heat and start curing with speed and control, Uvitron is the right call. We'll help you choose the system, get it running, and keep it running for years.

Give us a call at (413) 731-7835 or send a message to info@uvitron.com. We're happy to walk you through the technology, recommend the right system, or talk through your application. We work with all types of manufacturers, but helping small shops move faster and run more efficiently, that's what we enjoy most.



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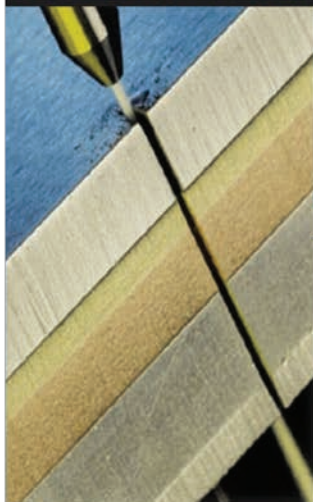
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