

Elkhart Brass Manufacturing makes the only glow-in-the-dark fire hose nozzle in the world, and it comes in 12 different colors.



COOLEST
THING MADE
IN INDIANA

Each year, the Indiana Chamber turns the spotlight on Hoosier ingenuity with its Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana contest – a fast-paced, bracket-style showdown celebrating the state’s deep manufacturing roots and the companies producing everything from everyday essentials to cutting-edge innovations sold stateside and across the globe.

Powered by public voting, the tournament follows a Hoosier Hysteria–style, single-elimination format, with the top vote-getter in each matchup advancing to the next round.

The matchups are set by an online randomizer, and from there, momentum takes over as fans, customers and communities rally behind their favorites. There’s no entry fee, no requirement to be headquartered in Indiana – only that the product be made in the state.

With 49 standout contenders in the field, victory was no small accomplishment. Competition was fierce and interest intense throughout the tournament, making Elkhart Brass Manufacturing and Stone Horses’ 1-2 finish a powerful statement about the strength of their customers and the community support that propelled them to the finals.

CHAMPION: ELKHART BRASS MANUFACTURING

Outshining the Field by Lighting the Way

By Anthony Schoettle

When you think about innovation in Indiana manufacturing, a glow-in-the-dark firefighting nozzle probably isn’t the first thing that comes to mind. But it’s about as important as you get. For firefighters working in pitch black, life-or-death conditions, that luminous detail can make all the difference.

That nozzle, which comes in multiple colors, now has captured statewide attention for Elkhart Brass Manufacturing by claiming the title of the Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana.

100-plus years of saving lives

While Elkhart Brass is new to the Coolest Thing competition – winning in its first try – the company has deep roots as a Hoosier manufacturer.

Founded in Elkhart in 1902, the company has been making water flow equipment for fire departments for more than 100 years. A company catalog from the 1920s shows a variety of equipment from hose nozzles for fire departments, sprinklers and brass fire extinguishers, among other items.

The fire extinguishers, which could be found at many public places, turned out to

be a great marketing tool and helped the company expand far beyond Indiana, explains Chris Martin, Elkhart Brass vice president of marketing, who also has 27-plus years experience as a firefighter.

With well over a century of innovation in firefighting and fire protection equipment, Elkhart Brass now makes and sells more than 2,000 products used in virtually every aspect of firefighting by fire departments; building systems; off-shore drilling sites; and military, marine and industrial firefighting applications. The company sells products nationwide, and 20% of its sales are international.

Unique hue

Elkhart Brass won this year's Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana contest with its XD Glow-in-the-Dark Smooth Bore Nozzle.

"Built with extreme durability in mind, the XD nozzle can withstand the heat, impact and stress of the fireground, because firefighters can't afford equipment failure when lives are on the line," says Martin, who began working at Elkhart Brass in 2000.

What makes this nozzle especially unique is its glow-in-the-dark components.

"Firefighting often takes place in zero-visibility environments, heavy smoke, extreme heat and nighttime operations," Martin explains. "By integrating glowing elements directly into the nozzle, firefighters can instantly locate and orient their most critical tool, reducing confusion and improving safety when every second counts. The XD Glow-in-the-Dark Nozzle represents what Indiana manufacturing is all about. It is tough, reliable and designed to make dangerous work a little safer."

Elkhart Brass introduced the glow-in-the-dark nozzle in 2010, and it quickly became "very popular," Martin states. It's the only glow-in-the-dark nozzle offered in the world, and the nozzle comes in 12 different colors and can be color coordinated with control panel levers on the truck to assure firefighters have the right hose for the right circumstances.

While Elkhart Brass is a long-established Hoosier manufacturer, officials only heard about the Indiana Chamber's Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana competition in 2025.

"When I learned about the contest, I thought 'Hey, we make a pretty cool product. I know the competition is stiff, but I bet we might do pretty well. Let's find out,'" Martin recalls. "As it turns out, we have a huge following. Firefighters really spread the word once we entered. It was really amazing



The XD Glow-in-the-Dark Nozzle – often color matched with levers and dials on fire truck control panels – allows firefighters to pick up the right hose for the right circumstances.

and a lot of fun to watch the success we had round by round."

The contest was a "rallying point" for Elkhart Brass' employees as well as the firefighters that use the nozzle in the field, Martin imparts. The staff was updated in the office and through digital communication channels and Martin noted, "You could really feel the momentum building."

"For something that started as a fun thing to do, we're really going to promote this," he expresses. "Elkhart is a manufacturing heavy region, and we're proud to be a part of that. This is a lifesaving piece of equipment. It could make or break an incident for a fire department. It could, and does, save lives. In addition to that, it's the Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana. To win this contest against a lot of great competition is a true honor, and something we're not taking lightly."

Challenging path to victory

Elkhart Brass had no easy path to the championship. In the first round, it defeated Evansville-based Lewis Bakeries, which entered its popular half loaf of fresh bread. In the second round, Elkhart Brass defeated Upland-based NearSpace Launch and its FastBus Spacecraft, which powers missions for the U.S. Space Force, NASA and other Department of Defense partners. In the

quarterfinals, the nozzle maker beat out Spiceland-based A&S Crafted Products, which entered The Session-Pro Double-Stack Guitar & Case Shelf Racks.

And then it took out three stalwarts: Unionville-based Wireless Deer Fence in the quarterfinals, Indianapolis-based Goulding and Wood Pipe Organ Builders in the semifinals and Shipshewana-based Stone Horses – which has a global following for its Collectible Model Horse Art – in the title bout.

Elkhart Brass officials are already planning to market and promote the Coolest Thing Made IN Indiana victory.

"This hasn't been announced yet, but we're going to do some surprise stuff for our employees and supporters," Martin says. "We're going to have some T-shirts and other promotional items made up to promote this title. We're also going to promote this at trade shows, including the FDIC International (conference) in Indianapolis."

Since 1929, FDIC International has been the premier event for fire and rescue professionals worldwide. FDIC is expected to draw 40,000 attendees for a week in April.

"It's going to be great to tell people at the trade show we make the Coolest Thing IN Indiana," Martin emphasizes. "We're definitely going to get the word out and have a lot of fun with it."

RESOURCE: Chris Martin, Elkhart Brass Manufacturing, at www.elkhartbrass.com