

Shield Manufacturing, Nephron Nitrile JV to 'transform PPE manufacturing in America'



COLUMBIA, S.C.—A new women-owned joint venture is on a mission to establish one of the largest PPE manufacturing operations in the U.S.

Alpharetta, Ga.-based [Shield Manufacturing](#) and Columbia-based [Nephron Nitrile](#)—both founded and led by women—are partnering up to "(usher) in a transformative era for American-made medical products."

And they're doing this with a state-of-the-art, 434,000-sq.-ft. facility, where they plan to create jobs and drive innovation "at an unprecedented pace," according to a Nephron Nitrile press release. The facility is on track to feature 14 production lines and three clean rooms by the end of 2025.



Nephron Nitrile's 434,000-sq.-ft. facility in Columbia, S.C., is on track to feature 14 production lines by the end of 2025. The facility currently has the capacity to produce 3 billion gloves annually.

Committed to domestic manufacturing of PPE in the U.S., the JV currently employs and contracts over 200 individuals in Columbia. Its product portfolio includes exam, industrial, clean room, surgical and prophylactic gloves made from nitrile and "advanced synthetic materials."

"Partnering with Shield Manufacturing is a natural fit," Lou Kennedy, founder of Nephron Nitrile and CEO of Nephron Pharmaceuticals, said in statement. "With Alison (Bagwell) bringing unmatched subject matter expertise and her team's experience in building seven similar plants, we've combined this with Nephron's ready-made resources and advanced machinery."

"Together, we're not only poised to dominate U.S. glove production, but also to redefine the global market by introducing the safest, biodegradable, chemo-rated gloves available today," she added.

Bagwell, CEO of Shield Manufacturing, is an engineer who holds over 50 patents—75 percent of which are used today and have driven over \$500 million in combined sales over the past 10-plus years.

Her patents include sterling gloves and "purple nitrile," which "revolutionized the glove industry," according to the news release. Before founding Shield, she worked with Kimberly-Clark for over 25 years as a senior R&D manager for Class 1 and 2 medical devices and PPE.

"Developing medical equipment, especially gloves, has been my life's work," Bagwell said in a statement. "When I left corporate at the onset of COVID, it was because I saw an opportunity to do things better—to harness technology, data and AI to deliver the highest quality products at competitive prices."

"Teaming up with Lou and the Nephron team allows us to expand faster with a world-class team and manufacturing plant we can all take pride in," she added.

Together, Kennedy and Bagwell have developed businesses and initiatives that have collectively generated over \$1 billion in annual value, according to Nephron. Through this JV, the two plan to "amplify their impact" by working with investors, suppliers and team members "equally committed to excellence."