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The "tint" in tinted glass windows starts here. Madico Inc. president Robert Connelly stands in front of a "metalizer" machine that vaporizes aluminum, which it then sprays onto a roll of polyurethane to make a reflective window glass film.

Madico sees sunblock coatings as growth mkt.

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WOBURN – The Louvre in Paris, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and Scotland Yard are just a few of the prestigious institutions that use a product manufactured by a quirky Woburn company that just celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Madico Inc. sells window films for decoration and energy conservation, as well as to protect against hurricane winds or damaging ultraviolet rays from the sun. But it was the threat of terrorist bomb blasts that boosted the company's sales of safety films 400 percent in the five-month period following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, said Madico president Bob Connelly.

"Safety films are the hot buttons in the industry right now. And I think they're here to stay," says Darrell Smith, executive director of the International Window Film Association of Martinsville, Va.

Safety films hold glass fragments together when a window breaks, preventing shards from flying into a room and causing injuries or damage. Smith says he believes Madico is one of the top six manufacturers that are responsible for about 90 percent of the world's production of window films.

But the company, which started as a leather postcard company in Boston in 1903 and then morphed into a greeting card and wrapping paper company before becoming a window film manufacturer in the 1960s, hasn't always been at the top of its game. In fact, over its 100-year history, the company has had "a lot of near brushes" with death, Connelly says.

The company, which is owned by Lintec Corp. of Tokyo, was almost put out of business several times by suppliers who decided to compete against it. Connelly says the company was also almost done in by a particularly embarrassing episode in the 1950s, when the company manufactured movie screens that contained metal and rusted. "That nearly killed the business," Connelly says.

But the company's fate had been secured in 1935 when it acquired a patent on the vacuum metalizing process: a process it still uses today to attach metals to window films. The company has had patents on other things as well over the years, including decorative tinsel, Connelly notes.

In 1968, the company, which was founded under the name Hy-Sil Manufacturing,

spun off its metalized solar control window film manufacturing business to form Madico. The company was bought by Dutch firm Van Leer in 1978, which owned it until 1983, when it encouraged a management buyout. Lintec has owned the firm since 1987.

Although the 100-plus employee company's sales of safety glass films have increased a total of about 30 percent over the past three years, it still only accounts for less than half of Madico's revenue, which was about \$40 million last year, Connelly says. Automobile glass films that are applied after a car has been manufactured account for about 50 percent of the company's sales.

However, the market is shrinking because more car manufacturers are installing tinted glass in factories, according to Penny Beverage, editor of industry trade journal Window Film Magazine.

Madico, whose manufacturing is done in Woburn, has only recently tried to go after the pre-manufacturing segment of the market by working with automobile glass makers and has some pilot programs with Pilkington PLC, which sells glass to Mercedes and Volvo, Connelly says. It also has plans to increase its production of films for residential glass and has started supplying its distributors with marketing materials that can help them boost sales.

The company is developing new films and is currently working on a project to make a film that will repel bacteria. The microbial film could be used in hospitals, restaurants and other germ-sensitive locations.

The sun-blocking "solar control" films the company started developing in the 1960s are also seen as a growing market for the company, according to Connelly, who pushed the window film industry to lobby California legislators to include window films in energy-conservation rebate programs that sprung up after that state's energy crisis three years ago.

Smith, of the window film association, claims the industry is still reaping the benefits of that lobbying campaign, pointing to a call last week from a power company saying it planned to double the rebate amount they are offering in California.

"Bob recognized that even if it didn't mean immediate dollars, this was an opportunity for the future that we couldn't be left out of," Smith says.