



Metalworking

## Swipe Right to Bring Smartphone Tech to Your Metrology Tool Cabinet

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L.S. Starrett's new touchscreen electronic indicator brings smartphone simplicity to precision metrology without the time-consuming recalculations that are sometimes required with analog gauges.

Instead, the large easy-to-read screens on the W4900-1 allow users to choose between digital or analog displays, customizing the tool based on personal preference and job type. Menu options include dial configurations, resolutions, presets, limits and up to seven different languages.

Choose the wrong option? Going back is as easy as touching a screen

"With the other electronic indicators on the market today, you have to have a user manual to change settings like resolution and the degree to which it will measure—unless you're an expert," says Seth Downing, strategic account manager for Starrett. "This touchscreen makes it intuitively easy to adjust those settings. You also eliminate the need to use multiple indicators when you're taking measurements on different parts."

The company's first touchscreen model, the new indicator reflects two decades of research and development as well as Starrett's more than 140 years of familiarity with the needs of the machining and manufacturing industries.

The ability to choose between digital or analog readouts, for instance, allows machinists and manufacturing workers of all skill levels to use the tool comfortably, an important consideration as less-experienced Gen Z workers replace retiring baby boomers amid a widening labor shortage.

"An old-school metalworking employee may prefer a dial indicator, whereas younger workers in this industry may not know how to read one, so it's going to **be more efficient for them to use the digital**," Downing explains. "My guess is that 90 percent of the time, people are probably going to use the digital, but it's nice to have another option."



Infographic courtesy of L.S. Starrett

Wireless output (which can be turned off in settings where it's not permitted) allows the W4900-1 to transmit data as far as 30 feet to data collection systems such as Starrett's DataSure® 4.0 that are used in statistical process control.

"In the past, when shops were inspecting multiple parts, people wrote down the measurements and they were then entered into a spreadsheet," Downing says. "It was easy for that information to get jumbled, based on someone's handwriting or something else."

Data captured on Starrett's new touchscreen, however, "is designed to be fed directly into an Excel spreadsheet, which is compatible with a wide variety of data software," he adds. "That really takes the potential for human error out of the equation."

**"Even if you're in a really messy metalworking or manufacturing environment, it will stand the test of time."**

Seth Downing  
L.S. Starrett

Unlike early smartphones, whose fragility prompted many users to protect them with shock-absorbent cases, Starrett's touchscreen gauge is designed for use in the harsh environments of machine shop floors and manufacturing facilities.

It has an IP, or ingress protection, rating of 67, under standards set by the *International Electrotechnical Commission*, or IEC. The first number, 6, indicates that the device is dust-tight, and the second, 7, means that it's protected from the effects of temporary immersion in water.

"Even if you're in a really messy metalworking or manufacturing environment, it will stand the test of time," Downing says.

The indicator, built with a Corning® Gorilla® Glass screen, was subjected to drop, vibration, cycle and thermal testing during development, Starrett says. It withstood all at levels similar to standard indicators.

Compatible with custom building and designing tools as well as in-process applications, the W4900-1 also comes with an auto-on feature activated by touching the screen or the indicator stem.

It has a rechargeable long-life battery and can be set to turn itself off after a specified period of time.

The feedback from initial users has been positive, Downing says. They reported that the gauge runs well, is easy to use and has every feature they need.

"The setup is much faster than competitors—and our older indicators—and up to 10 setups can be saved at once," he says. "No other indicator has as many functions and is as easy to set up."

**How would a touchscreen precision measurement gauge simplify quality control at your machine shop? Tell us in the comments below.**

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