

Local physicist's metal helping save soldiers' lives



Story Published: Sep 2, 2008 at 9:18 PM PDT

Story Updated: Nov 21, 2008 at 1:36 AM PDT

By [KOMO Staff](#)

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SEATTLE -- A local woman is making it her mission to save soldiers' lives while also saving drivers money on gas.

Her solution: a new kind of metal.

Fremont physicist Christina Lomasney makes metal magic happen at her company, Modumetal.

The laboratory is filled with containers that resemble dirty fish tanks, but inside each one Lomasney is growing an alternative to steel.

Modumetal is creating armor that Lomasney says acts tougher and weighs half as much as steel, the material typically used to make military combat vehicles and soldier's body armor. Supporting the troops is a personal matter to the chemist.

"I have three little brothers in the Marine Corps so the idea of developing armor that's going to protect them in the field is something very close to home," she said.

Lomasney's brother, Patrick, is a chemist.

"It's going to save more Marines' lives," he said.

When the Moduarmor is put through ballistics tests, the bullets failed to pierce through the metal. Instead, they flattened like thumbtacks on contact.

The military is buying this nanotechnology, and not just for armor. The company is also making alternative metal for lighter automobile suspension systems -- a development that could someday affect all of us.

"Well, every time you reduce the weight in a vehicle you improve the fuel economy," said Lomasney.

Making metal weigh less lifts a huge weight off of Lomasney, whose mission is saving lives and the environment.