

New requirements and a new standard
set the stage for a simplified certification
process with consistency built in.

conference
preview

STREAMLINED CERTIFICATION

BY TODD ALWOOD

IN 1980, LESLIE H. GILLETTE, author of *The First 60 Years, The American Institute of Steel Construction 1921–1980*, wrote, “AISC Quality Certification Program: provides a means by which each fabricator may be inspected and rated to be certified that each function of the plant has the commitment, organization and equipment to perform at various levels of quality assurance. This program is increasingly requested by code bodies and designers who wish their product fabricated by a quality certified plant.”

Gillette’s words, though written long ago, still ring true today. Over 40 years later, AISC Certification has grown both in numbers and acceptance by the construction marketplace. From that first forward-thinking certified fabricator in 1976, the program has grown to more than 1,500 certified companies.

New standard. Through the years, the needs of the marketplace changed, and AISC Certification changed to meet those needs. In 1976, the fabricator program included a checklist system that auditors used for evaluation and to document a company’s commitment to quality. In 2003, checklist-based programs started being replaced with standards-based programs, requiring companies to have written procedures, quality goals and management’s commitment to quality. Because additional certification programs were introduced over time, inconsistencies in language and format made the multiple standards unnecessarily confusing to administer and specify. To remedy the confusion, the Certification Standards Committee developed a new “harmonized” standard. This new single document, *Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components* (AISC 207-16), was released last December and will replace all previous individual program standards.

“The significance of the harmonized standard lies in Section One,” said Michael A. West, PE, a principal with Computerized Structural Design and chair of AISC’s Certification Standards Committee. “The provisions in it are common to all four industry segments. Because the previous four separate standards were developed over time, minor differences in terminology and requirements have been discovered in the documents. The common requirements in Section One correct this situation and leave any differences among industry segment requirements to their four unique industry sections.”

New program requirements. In the same way that our government uses rules and regulations to administer and enforce the laws of the land, AISC Certification uses program requirements to administer the certification standard. This means that for certified fabricators, erectors and component manufacturers, program requirements are the go-to document for

compliance with the standard. (For more information on this relationship between the program requirements and standards, consider attending the upcoming NASCC: The Steel Conference session Q1: “Certification Is More Than Just a Standard.”)

Prior to the new harmonized standard, each standard was administered through its own individual program requirements document. With the release of the new *Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications*, there is now a single set of requirements. Similar to the new standard, general requirements for all certified companies are being consolidated into one document, and each program has a tailored set of supplemental requirements.

You may be wondering how these documents might affect you and your company, and we have compiled the following resources to help guide you through the transition.

Kickoff and related NASCC sessions. Migration to the new standard will kick off at this year’s conference in Baltimore. For building, bridge and hydraulic fabricators and component manufacturers, there will be technical sessions within the Quality Track:

- Q1: Certification Is More Than Just a Standard (Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)
- Q2: The New Certification Program Requirements and Standard: What Do They Mean for You? (Wednesday, 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 a.m.)
- Q3: The New Certification Requirements and Standard: Additional Update for Bridge and Hydraulic Fabricators (Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.)
- Q4: The New Certification Requirements and Standard: Additional Update for Building Fabricators and Component Manufacturers (Wednesday, 3:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.)

Todd Alwood (alwood@aisc.org)

is AISC’s director of certification.



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Areas of Concern

Areas of Concern (AOCs) are written to provide a participant the opportunity to engage their management system(s) to review, evaluate and implement changes to prevent a potential corrective action request during the following audit. They are written for:

- ▶ Program requirements that have been issued/revised since the last audit
- ▶ Reference documents required by the program requirements that have been revised and issued since the last audit
- ▶ Special circumstances specifically required by AISC certification (i.e., program conversions, gap analysis, etc.)

AOCs are proactive in nature and are not issued for a non-conformity to audit criteria other than those described previously. These are to be reviewed during the next audit to confirm effective implementation. If nonconformity is observed at that time, then a corrective action request will be issued to the participant.

This timeline provides a glance at the various milestones in the transition from the previous certification criteria to the new program requirements.

December 15, 2017: *Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components* (AISC 207-16) published

February 7, 2018: *Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications* released for public comment

March 30, 2018: *New Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications* published

April 11, 2018: NASCC Sessions on new requirements and their rollout

May 1, 2018: Fabricator and erector applicants to meet the new requirements

June 1, 2018: Certified fabricators to meet new requirements and standard, certified erectors to meet the new requirements

June 1, 2019

Certified erectors to meet the new standard

June 1, 2020

Program Requirements transition complete

Rollout schedule. The tables below identify the dates of transition for certified fabricators and erectors to both the new requirements and new standard. Please note that all companies will transition to the new *requirements* on June 1, 2018. Fabricators will transition to the new *standard* on June 1, 2018 and erectors on June 1, 2019.

When a certified company is transitioning to the new requirements, added provisions and new revisions will be identified as Areas of Concern (AOCs) during a participant's site audit (see above sidebar for more on AOCs).

Here is the rollout plan for new program requirements for **certified fabricators**:

	Fabricators Site Audits conducted prior to June 1, 2018	Fabricators Site Audits conducted beginning June 1, 2018
Program Requirements for site audit	(Current) Program Requirements, Specific to Certification Standard(s)	(New) Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications
Program Standard for site audit	(Current) Standard(s), Specific to Desired Certification	(New) Certification Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components

Here is the rollout plan for new program requirements for **certified erectors**:

	Erectors Site Audits conducted prior to June 1, 2019	Erectors Site Audits conducted beginning June 1, 2019
Program Requirements for site audit	(New) Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications	(New) Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications
Program Standard for site audit	(Current) Standard(s), Specific to Desired Certification	(New) Certification Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components

Identifying differences between the standards. To help answer the question of changes between the new standard and previous ones, we have published a handy matrix, available at www.aisc.org/certconversion. The matrix summarizes the changes and added provisions to the current standards. And we will soon add resources, such as online access to the 2018 NASCC Quality Track sessions and a "Participant Gap Analysis Form" to use if you choose to conduct your own internal gap analysis or internal audit.

Fabricators and erectors interested in applying for AISC Certification: Beginning on May 1, 2018, all new applicants for certification will be required to meet the new *Program Requirements for Fabricator, Erector and Manufacturer Certifications* and the *Certification Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components*. The application document submittals (formerly called program prerequisites) for each program and endorsement will be published by April 1, 2018.

As much as possible, the new standard has retained the same program names, categories, acronyms and specification language of the standards being replaced. Publication of these new documents is a major milestone for AISC Certification and would not have been possible without the efforts of the Certification Standards Committee and its chair, Mike West.

Please contact AISC Certification at conversion@aisc.org or 312.670.7520 with any questions. And to access the new standard and requirements, visit www.aisc.org/certconversion. ■

This article is a preview of Sessions Q1-4 ("Certification Is More Than Just a Standard," "The New Certification Program Requirements and Standard: What Do They Mean for You?" "The New Certification Requirements and Standard: Additional Update for Bridge and Hydraulic Fabricators" and "The New Certification Requirements and Standard: Additional Update for Building Fabricators and Component Manufacturers") at NASCC: The Steel Conference, taking place April 11-13 in Baltimore. Learn more about the conference at www.aisc.org/nascc.