

No More Waivers!

Project specification requirements for AISC Certification are there for a reason—and AISC can help you keep them from being waived.

By Roberta L. Marsteller, P.E.

As this issue of *Modern Steel Construction* was going to print, the letters in response to the May issue were starting to roll in. Many of you had some strong reactions to the *Quality Corner* on how to specify a certified company. It wasn't so much that we missed the mark, but the importance of this matter seemed to pale in comparison to a more pressing one: Once an engineer specifies an AISC Certified company, how do they keep the specification requirements from being waived?

One of our readers shared the following story:

...I had specified an AISC Certified fabricator. When the bids came in the lowest was attributed to a non-certified company. The GC pressured me to waive the requirements, but I held on. Then they came back and said that the fabricator would get certified before they started fabricating the steel. I agreed to waive the requirement under these conditions. To make a very long story short, fabrication started before the company was certified. When we tried to make a fuss about it during shop drawing review, we were told that we

would be held responsible for the construction delay if we continued to pursue the requirement for an AISC Certified company.

Specifying AISC Certification—and resisting the requests for waivers from the penny-wise and pound-foolish—provide engineers with the confidence that the fabricators and erectors working on their designs are qualified, capable, and knowledgeable about current codes and specifications.

But resisting isn't easy as we heard above! To help engineers protect their project requirements AISC has launched the "No More Waivers!" program. When AISC learns about a project where the specification requirements are in jeopardy, they quickly respond by contacting the parties involved in the hopes of discussing the differences between a certification program and inspection, and the potential risks and costs associated with a company that hasn't implemented a quality management system and demonstrated repeatability and reliability in their processes.

Our long term goal is to ensure that the engineer's project specifications are used as a prequalification for the bid list, not something evaluated once the bids are on the table. And "No More Waivers!" is an important step towards achieving that goal. To date, the program has been very successful. The earlier we find out about a project, the greater the likelihood that we will be able to keep the certification requirements from being waived. Such reactive measures are an integral part of our plan to educate the marketplace regarding how AISC Certified companies are raising the bar for quality in construction. Other efforts include myriad seminars and presentations being given across the country. AISC will come to your area and educate anyone in the construction food chain regarding the AISC Certification program.

Categories of Certification:

Standard for Steel Building Structures (STD)	Advanced Certified Steel Erector (ACSE)
Major Steel Bridges (CBR)	Certified Steel Erector (CSE)
Complex Steel Building Structures (CBD)	Fracture Critical Endorsement (F)
Conventional Steel Building Structures (SBD)	Sophisticated Paint Endorsement-Enclosed (P1)
Simple Steel Bridges (SBR)	Sophisticated Paint Endorsement-Covered (P2)
Metal Building Systems (MB)	Sophisticated Paint Endorsement-Outside (P3)

It's easy to find an AISC Certified company using the search page at www.aisc.org/certification.

We can help!

If you are an engineer being pressured to waive the certification requirements or you are an AISC Certified company bidding against a non-certified company, you can contact AISC at 312.670.7520 or certinfo@aisc.org. Use our "No More Waivers!" form below (or download one in PDF format at www.aisc.org/nomorewaivers) and fax it to 312.670.9030.

We can provide you with the facts and resources you need to support specifying AISC Certification. AISC doesn't lobby for any one fabricator or erector; we simply support the need for the company to be AISC Certified. ★

Bobbi Marsteller is Vice President of Certification for the American Institute of Steel Construction in Chicago.

Waivers: Fact vs. Fiction

Here are some other stories you might have heard:

"We'll just hire an inspector later for a couple thousand dollars."

Fact: Finding—and fixing—mistakes after they're made is expensive and time consuming. And just because it looks good when it gets to the site doesn't mean it will work. Welding is a good example—appearance alone does not ensure that proper procedures were followed in making the weld, nor does it ensure the performance in years to come. Using an AISC Certified company increases the likelihood of getting a product that doesn't require rework. The fabricator with a quality management system is more likely to catch the error before it leaves the shop. It's important to remember that special inspection costs are covered directly by the owner. Often the increased costs of using non-certified fabricators can sometimes be overlooked and result in inaccurate bid comparisons.

"Certified companies are more expensive."

Fact: A good quality program will actually make a fabricator more efficient and can often result in more competitive bids. And while a lot of effort is required to measure up to the standards of the AISC Certification program, the annual fee for certification is typically only \$5,000—which equates to less than half-a-percent of total sales for a mid-sized fabricator.

"There are no certified fabricators in the area."

Fact: Today, most companies work in a multi-state region. So just because there are no certified companies in the same city as the project, there are usually plenty among the more than 700 AISC Certified fabricators and erectors who perform work in that city (see figure on previous page). Remember, AISC Certified companies are typically located proportionally to areas of population and construction activity. So while there is only one AISC Certified fabricator in South Dakota, there are over 25 in eastern Pennsylvania.

"They aren't certified, but they've been in business for a long time."

Fact: There are some good companies who are not certified, but it is very difficult for an individual engineer to assess and evaluate a specific company. The AISC Certification program audits against real codes and contracts and requires the fabricator or erector to demonstrate that they can follow current code and contract requirements. AISC Certification ensures that even a good firm doing quality work for 60 years is up to date—a positive for the fabricator and erector and the customer.



AISC Quality Certification
312.670.7520 (tel)
312.670.9030 (fax)

no more waivers!

If you are involved in a project where the specification requirement for an AISC certified fabricator or erector is in jeopardy of being waived, complete this form and fax it to us. We can help!

Project Information

Your Firm _____
Your Name _____
Phone _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____

Project Name

Location _____ city, state
Building Code _____ example: IBC 2003
AISC Certification Specified _____ CSE, ACSE, CBD, SBD, etc.

Project Type

example: multi-story residential
Approx. sq. ft/
stories _____
Steel Tons _____

Total Project Cost _____ estimate

Steel Package Cost _____ your bid

Project Schedule

Drawings Released	Pre-Bid Meeting	Bids Opened	Contracts Awarded
date	date	date	date

Waiver Situation (example: pressure from GC/CM)

Contact Information

Owner _____
Contact Name _____
Phone _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____

Engineer

Contact Name _____
Phone _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____
Web Site _____

Architect

Contact Name _____
Phone _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____
Web Site _____

GC/CM

Contact Name _____
Phone _____
Fax _____
E-mail _____



structural steel: the material of choice

American Institute of Steel Construction, Inc.
One East Wacker Drive, Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601-2000

312.670.2400 www.aisc.org