

AISC Erector Certification: Where Do We Grow From Here?

Erection is the “last word” in steel construction, but we’re only just beginning to understand the importance of erector certification.

BY BOBBI MARSTELLAR, P.E.

WHILE MOST DESIGNERS KNOW ABOUT AISC’S FABRICATION CERTIFICATION PROGRAM, FAR FEWER ARE AWARE OF THE ERECTOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM. But specifying one without the other is like a peanut butter sandwich without jelly—still good but somehow not as satisfying.

What’s worse, the benefits of high-quality fabrication can be easily diminished if the erection is not of equal quality. After all, erection is often the final impression your client has of the project. The obvious answer is specifying erector certification together with fabrication certification.

However, while the fabrication program is nearly 30 years old, the erector certification program was established less than a decade ago and is only now gaining ground. For years, specifiers hesitated to require erector certification because of a scarcity of AISC Certified erectors, and erectors declined to become certified due to the infrequency of the requirement in specifications: a classic “chicken and egg” problem. Today, however, nearly 100 erectors are AISC Certified—and most of these work in large geographic regions—so there is always a competitive situation when AISC Certification is required.

AISC is committed to moving this program forward through education and program enhancements. “Whenever there’s a problem on a steel project—whether in design, detailing, fabrication, or erection—it reflects poorly on the entire project,” stated Roger E. Ferch, P.E., president of AISC. “Quality is important in every aspect of the project and AISC believes that specifying a Certified Erector is a critical step to ensuring that steel projects are completed on time and within budget.”

Step one has been to get the word out to specifiers, including department of transportation engineers. AISC spent the last year conducting more than 16 seminars across the country with the aim of helping engineers learn more about AISC Certification and the inherent differences between certification programs and inspection. AISC also revised its web site to include more information regarding all AISC Certification programs, including the erector program. AISC also offers a “No More Waivers!” program to support specifiers who are being pressured to waive the AISC Certification requirements for their project.

Plans are in place to continue marketplace education efforts

through 2006. In addition, the scope of the education efforts will be expanded to include general contractors who are too willing to overlook specification requirements to be able to select a low-bidder.

The second, and perhaps most important, step toward moving the erector certification program forward is to revise the program criteria. A lot has changed over the last ten years, especially in the area of safety, which is an essential component of the program. A task group to develop the new program held its first meeting in February. The anticipated format will resemble the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* on which the Building Fabricator Certification program is based. This format eliminates the checklist system and score-keeping concept in favor of a program that emphasizes a total quality management system. A final draft of the new program is anticipated by the end of the year, with audits to the new program beginning in 2007, and all program participants certified to the new program requirements by the end of 2009.

We are beginning to see the fruits of our labor. By the time this article is published the program expects to certify our 100th steel erector. Further, an aggressive goal has been set: 150 program participants by the end of 2006. With 25 erectors currently in the process of becoming AISC Certified, confidence is high that this goal will be reached. Stay tuned!

Year	Total Participants as of December 31	Increase From Previous Year
2005	92	26 %
2004	73	33 %
2003	55	25 %
2002	44	47 %
2001	30	—

Visit www.aisc.org for certification program details and a list of AISC Certified Erectors. For more information regarding AISC Erector Certification e-mail us at certinfo@aisc.org or call 312.670.7520.

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