

25 Years is Just the Beginning

BY BRIAN RAFF

AISC's certification program has come a long way in 25 years. Imagine what the next quarter century has in store!

BEGINNING A NEW YEAR ALWAYS PUTS LIFE INTO PERSPECTIVE FOR ME.

January is my clean slate, a great time to reflect on where I've been and to daydream about where I'm going. Looking back, I have learned a lot about our current steel industry as well as its history, and it is incredible to see the progression that has taken place over the years. As we take a walk back in time, I would like to acknowledge those individuals and companies who have dedicated their personal and professional lives to shaping and molding this industry into what it is today. Our certified fabricators have helped build this program from the ground up and are the reason for its success.

Growth over Time

Looking at the time line on the following page, it's clear that the AISC Certification program has grown significantly, its participants establishing the program as a credible source of information and quality fabrication based on quality principles. In the late 1960s, the idea of a quality management system within the steel construction industry did not exist as we know it today. Management of quality was implemented by catching defects through product inspection instead of preventing them through standardization of procedures. Although quality management and process control was being refined, it wasn't until 1987 that the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) developed a standard (ISO 9000) that addressed an organization's processes and procedures, and not the product or service itself as product inspection did. The AISC *Standard for Steel Building Structures* is based on the principles of quality management, with features that are tailored specifically for the structural steel industry.



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The following fabricators have been AISC Certified for 25 years or longer:

AFCO Steel, Little Rock Plant
 Augusta Iron & Steel Works, Inc.
 Berlin Steel/FEI Ltd.
 Bridges & Towers, Inc.
 Cannon Western Constructors Inc.
 Capitol Steel & Iron, LLC
 Carolina Steel Corp.
 Central Texas Iron Works
 Cives Steel Co. Mid-South
 Cives Steel Co. New England Div.
 Cives Steel Co. Southern Div.
 Comm Steel, Inc.
 DeLong's, Inc.
 Egger Steel Company

Fought & Company
 Geiger & Peters, Inc.
 Globe Iron Construction Co.
 Harris Structural Steel Company
 High Steel Structures, Inc.
 Hirschfeld Steel Group LP
 L.B. Foster Company
 L.B. Foster Company, Precise
 Structural Products
 Lehigh Utility Associates
 Michelman-Cancelliere Iron Works
 Owen Steel Company, Inc.
 Paxton & Vierling Steel Company
 RP'S Machinery Sales, Inc.

Safety Guard Steel Fabricating
 Schlosser Steel, Inc.
 Shepard Steel Company
 Southwest Steel Fabricators, Inc.
 Steel Service Corporation
 Stupp Bridge Company
 Trinity Industries, Inc.
 W & W Steel Company
 Zalk Josephs Fabricators, LLC

AISC also recognizes those fabricators that have reached five-year and 10-year milestones. Visit www.aisc.org/certappreciation.

Quality Corner is a monthly feature that covers topics ranging from how to specify a certified company to how long it takes to become a certified company. If you are interested in browsing our electronic archive, please visit www.aisc.org/QualityCorner.

AISC CERTIFICATION TIMELINE

- 1950s** Welding was introduced.
- 1969** The Quality Criteria and Inspection Standards Committee was formed. Members of note include Jack Long, President of American Bridge Co., Div. of U.S. Steel; Jack Coneed, Manager of Bethlehem Construction, Division of Bethlehem Steel; and C. Farnham Jarrard, Jr. of Allied Structural Steel, who became chairman of this new AISC Committee.
- 1971** AISC published the first edition of *Commentaries on Quality Criteria and Inspection Standard*, a booklet containing recommendations on problem areas of quality control in fabrication and erection.
- 1976** AISC started the AISC Certification program to establish an industry standard that would enable fabricators to demonstrate that they have a quality system in place.
- 1976** January 16: Stupp Bros. Bridge and Iron Co. became the first AISC Certified company.
- 1980** 71 plants had been certified by this point.
- 1984** AISC began to implement awareness marketing for the program to aid interested fabricators who did not know how to begin the certification process.
- 1995** To improve the quality of the auditing, AISC restructured the program and created the Quality Auditing Company (QAC) to assess fabricators' qualifications. The program's criteria were revised, eliminating redundant issues and adding requirements related to bolting, welding, and quality control procedures. Certification categories, which had once combined bridge and conventional buildings fabricators, were separated in order to make the information on bridge fabricators more pertinent to bridge builders. A Fracture Critical Endorsement and a Sophisticated Paint Endorsement were added to the program this year.
- 1997** AISC and QAC developed paint seminars in six cities around the country to teach fabricators advances in painting techniques as well as changes in the criteria for sophisticated paint certification.
- 1998** AISC coordinated its own sophisticated paint endorsement with SSPC: The Society for Protective Coatings' Certification for Independent Painters.
- 1996** A committee made up of representatives from AISC, the National Erectors Association (NEA), and the Structural Steel Erectors Association of America (SSEA) implemented a program to certify erectors.
- 2000** The number of Certified fabricators passed 600, and 21 erectors were certified, a number that almost tripled by the end of 2003.
- 2001** QAC was dissolved and the Quality Management Company (QMC) formed as a limited liability corporation (LLC), retaining its separate company status while moving under the auspices of AISC.
- 2002** A new AISC *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* was created in accordance with modern auditing science methodology, requiring fabricators to describe their business, fabrication, and quality-control procedures in a written company manual that includes all aspects of the fabricator's quality management system.
- 2003** June: Fabricators in the process of certification could no longer choose to be audited to the checklist, and had to Certify to the *Standard*. By the end of this year, there were more than 700 Certified fabricators in the program.
- 2005** Release of the SPE Standard.
- 2006** The *Building Standard* was updated and all certified building fabricators were required to be certified to the new standard.
- 2007** Active development of three certification standards: erector, component, and shop-applied protective coatings.
- 2008-** In addition to converting the fabricator certification program to the standard, AISC also plans to implement a new certification category, component certification, in 2008. The conversion of the erector standard is targeted for the second half of 2008 and the bridge program in 2009.



25 Years

Industry Support is the Key

Today, more than 700 Certified fabricators and 115 Certified erectors support AISC, and should be recognized for building the Certification program from the ground up. At the close of 2007, AISC Certification announced a customer appreciation program to recognize those fabricators that have been Certified for five, 10, and 25 years. All fabricators that have been Certified for more than five years will receive a commemorative flag (shown above) for indoor or outdoor display. The flag represents their long-standing efforts to provide quality fabrication to the steel industry. It signals to their customers, clients, suppliers, and competitors that they have not only the personnel, experience, knowledge, and equipment to deliver a quality project, but also the ability to bid on projects that require Certification. It also shows their employees that they care about them as well as the industry.

The erector Certification program is young, but that does not make our erectors' achievements any less significant. The program has its own distinct characteristics, and as we reach appropriate milestones, erectors will be recognized for their achievements as well.

I would like to personally thank all of our certified fabricators for their unrelenting dedication to our industry and their efforts to improve it through the adoption of quality principles. Your work provides the necessary security and safety to the general public, a value that cannot be measured.

One of the core elements of the *Standard* addresses continual improvement. As you look back at your relationship with AISC, think about all of your achievements, not just for your company, but for the steel construction industry. Have you achieved everything that you set out to do when you began your career in the steel industry? Looking through the history books, it has been an incredible journey. I am happy that you have let me share a few short years with you, and look forward to many more.

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