

Change is the Name of the Game

BY TODD ALWOOD, LEED AP

What changes affect certification?

And what is the difference between a certified facility and company?

IF YOU WERE TO ASK someone in the industry what the difference is between a fabricator and an erector, the simple answer would probably be that a fabricator fabricates structural steel, while an erector erects that same steel. Sounds simple enough, right? If that same person were to look to AISC’s *Code of Standard Practice* (available as a free download at www.aisc.org/freepubs), he or she would find a definition along the same lines—a fabricator is the entity responsible for fabricating the structural steel, and the erector is responsible for erecting it.

Facility vs. Company

When it comes to AISC Certification, the terminology changes a bit in how these two entities are defined. A *fabricator* is noted as a certified facility, and an *erector* is noted as a certified company. This difference is due to the fact that a fabricator is determined to be site-specific in terms of a fabrication plant and equipment, while an erector is expected to be somewhat transient due to the variety of construction locations where the company’s work is performed. This is not to say that the erector will not have a specific physical headquarters, but often its job sites will be located in a different city, if not a different state.

Obviously, each group will have the commitment, organization, procedures, personnel, experience, and knowledge to be certified, which are the core values of AISC Certification. But the program accommodates and accounts for the specific differences between the two.

Participant Changes

With the terminology difference noted, there are several changes that may occur during the life of a business that have a direct effect on its compliance with AISC Certification requirements. One of the most common occurrences that AISC Certification runs across is a change to the name of a business. This can be as simple as dropping the “Inc.” or as significant as eliminating a partner’s name—see Table 1 for additional information.

Regardless of whether the change is minor or major, the first step is for the participant to notify AISC in writing within 30 calendar days of such a change. If the change is minor, it will be reviewed and confirmed at the time of the annual audit, and then processed when the new certificate is printed. At that time, AISC records and website listings will be updated to reflect the change.

On the other hand, if the change is a major one, the participant must explain the reason for the change and submit documentation. The supporting information could include the business’s new organizational chart, new letterhead/stationery, quality manual, etc. AISC will determine if a supplemental audit is required to confirm the validity of this change. If it is required, the participant will have 60 calendar days from the date of AISC notice in which to schedule and complete that audit with Quality Management Company (QMC). The client is responsible for the cost of the special audit.

There are two other major changes I wanted to mention: change of location and change of executive management. The first change is significant only with regard to certified fabrica-



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Participant Changes	Examples	Time Allowance/ Requirement
Minor Change to Certificate Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating the LLC or Inc. Smith Steel and Ornamental Fabricators 	AISC must be notified in writing within 30 calendar days of change.
Major Change to Certificate Name	“Smith & Jones Erectors” to Smith Erectors	AISC must be notified in writing within 30 calendar days of change—along with supporting documentation as to the reason for the change. A supplemental audit may be required based on the findings of AISC.

Table 1: Requirements and Time Allowances for Name Changes

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.

tors. If a certified fabricator changes its location (the physical address of the facility listed on its certificate), then its AISC Certification is no longer valid due to this category being facility-based. In addition, certification cannot be transferred between locations, contrary to a very common misconception. Each *facility* must define a quality management system and provide the resources to ensure it is being followed and tracked.

The other change is concerning changes in executive management. This is a cornerstone of the AISC Certification program, because we pride our program on being customer-focused, management-driven, and process-based. For example, Section 5 of the *AISC Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* covers management responsibility and is very specific with regard to the requirements of continuous quality goals, ongoing direction/leadership, and that there is a management representative championing the firm's quality program.

In either case, the first step is for the participant to notify AISC in writing within 30 calendar days and submit documentation as to the specifics of the said change. AISC will review the submitted material to determine how best to proceed. For example, if a participant's management is passed from father to daughter or a partner retires, a supplemental audit may be required to prove the

firm or facility still is in compliance with both AISC Certification requirements and its own quality management system.

Another example is when one business purchases another. This usually results in changes to the business name, key management positions, and core quality values—and typically results in termination of a participant's certification. ~~In years past, we would see this situation once or twice a year, but with today's changing market, we see more and more fabricators and erectors being purchased or merging into partnerships. Often there has been a little shock when a new owner finds out that continuity of AISC Certification was not part of the purchase.~~

The only thing constant is change and the above topics are no different. As I mentioned in the July installment of this column, AISC Certification hopes to increase the transparency of its program and better educate the industry on the program benefits. We continue to solidify the requirements and guidelines of our program to protect participants, specifiers, and overall end-users. By better defining program requirements, we simplify and reduce confusion in the industry and possible misperceptions.

As always, if you have additional questions or comments, I would encourage you to contact AISC Certification at certinfo@aisc.org. MSC

Participant Changes	Result
Facility Location	AISC Certification is no longer valid if the physical location of the facility changes.
Executive Management	AISC must be notified in writing within 30 calendar days of change, including supporting documentation as to the reason for the change. This could result in a supplemental audit or termination of certification.

Table 2: Requirements and Time Allowances for Additional Changes