

QMC Launches New Web Site

to answer fabricator questions about AISC Certification

By Roberta L. Marsteller, P.E.

The new quality assurance web site by Quality Management Company, LLC (QMC) includes a frequently asked questions (FAQs) database with more than 125 questions answered. The module is an ongoing project with new questions added monthly. At present, the majority of questions focus on AISC Certification for building fabricators and the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures*. The Erector and Bridge Certification FAQ sections will be completed by March 2005.

Visit www.qmconline.com for answers to FAQs and much more. And if you don't find what you are looking for, please call or email us at 312.670.7520 or certinfo@qmconline.com.

Here is a sample of what you will find at www.qmconline.com:

My company has several facilities. Do all of them have to be certified?

AISC certifies each firm that fabricates or manufactures product. Each firm location seeking certification must meet all category criteria. While some criteria may be met at a separate location, only the location where the actual manufacturing or fabrication is conducted is certified.

Example 1: A fabrication firm may conduct operations, management, purchasing, and QA/QC at their shop location, yet their detailing function is at another location an hour, or even a whole state, away. In this case only the shop location is certified.

Example 2: A company may have two fabrication shops that conduct operations and QA/QC at each of their locations. The management, procurement, and detailing are performed at a third, central corporate location. Although the corporate location must be audited to satisfy the criteria for the Standard, only the two fabrication shops qualify for AISC Certification.



The new QMC web site now features an ever-growing database of frequently asked questions.

Do my procedures need to be written in a specific format?

No, but the format you choose must define the purpose of the procedure, assign the responsibilities for the activities described in the procedure, identify the management responsible for reviewing the procedure, and identify the records that the procedure generates.

Why do I need to have the most current version of all of the library books in addition to older editions referenced by my jobs and contract documents?

As an AISC Certified fabricator you are making a statement to your potential customers that you have demonstrated competency using the most current requirements. Certification requirements are not customized. Customers need to choose any certified firm and be confident of universal understanding and competency.

How long does it take to get my certification after my CARs are answered—is no news good news?

If the evidence you have supplied satisfies the CAR(s), your certificate should reach you in one to two weeks. Certificates are generally processed once a week for firms that have met the criteria in full. Contact QMC if you don't receive CAR closure status (either a request for more information or notification of the closure of the CAR(s)) or your certificate within three weeks from QMC's receipt of your information.

My auditor communicated to me that a bolting demonstration was required of our facility this year? What does this entail?

During your initial audit and each full audit (occurs every third year of your cycle) thereafter, your facility is required to obtain a tension testing device (e.g. Skidmore Wilhelm) to

demonstrate that you have the capability and the know-how to perform pre-installation verification testing should the installation of fully tensioned fasteners be required of your facility.

I don't do any painting at my facility. I subcontract everything, even primer. Do I need a written procedure?

Yes. You must have a procedure that describes at a minimum the requirements of a procedure for the painting process (as defined by the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures*, Section 4.11). At least one employee must be able to explain how the procedure would be executed if painting were performed at your facility.

Why? Any customer who wishes to choose a certified fabricator is confident that at least the knowledge of the processes defined by the program is present in any fabricator that they choose. The certification program also requires that you have knowledge of the element to effectively control and evaluate any subcontracted processes.

How often do I need to conduct an internal audit?

At a minimum, you must audit each element of the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* once a year. You

can audit one element at a time at a different time throughout the year or do them all at once. If an element has problems, auditing it more than once will help you verify that the corrective actions have been effective.

What is the difference between in-process inspection and final inspection?

Final inspection is any time you look at an attribute of the product the last time before you ship it. These inspections constitute your acceptance that the product meets requirements.

An in-process inspection is performed when an attribute of the product can't be checked at final. This inspection needs to be performed before the process (welding, bolting, painting, and dimensional) is complete. Some examples of in-process inspection include wet film thickness, weld joint preparation, and faying surface condition of a bolted connection. Although you must perform in-process inspections, you must define the level and extent that your firm performs them.

I've never done a supplier or subcontractor evaluation before. What are some ways to do that and document it?

Some firms create a simple table of the firms they do business with and create a place for a signature that indicates the

evaluation has been conducted. Their procedure explains what that signature means. Other firms write the record of evaluation directly on one of the purchasing records. Still other methods are more elaborate, with documented results of audits conducted of suppliers and/or subcontractors using a numerical rating system that offers guidance on how to select them for critical projects.

The basis for evaluation of suppliers is up to you. At a minimum, it must mean that a subcontractor has been evaluated for quality of the finished products and timely, proper delivery of products. The procedure must show who is responsible for the review, (see Section 10.2 in the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures*). Remember, the evaluation of both subcontractors and suppliers must be documented. ★

Roberta (Bobbi) Marstellar is Vice President of Certification for AISC.