

The Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures is here!

By Roberta L. Marsteller, P.E.

Since 2002, AISC has been talking about the *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* (the *Standard*). Through the 2004 auditing year, fabricators had the choice of being audited to the new *Standard* or to the existing checklist. If you're a fabricator who decided to stick with the checklist for your 2004 audit, just remember—you no longer have that option. By January 1, 2006, all AISC Certified fabricators in the building structures category will have completed an audit to the *Standard*.

Don't be caught off guard—becoming certified to the *Standard* will require additional work the first time through. From experience, we know that many fabricators underestimate the time it takes to prepare their materials for their first audit to the *Standard*. Fabricators who have already been certified to the *Standard* tell us the first submission is the hardest because of the documentation required. After that, it's a matter of doing

what their documentation says—and then maintaining the system they've established.

Below is a quick list of the documentation required for an audit to the *Standard*:

- AISC Certification Application Form or Corrected Renewal Form
- Job/Position Descriptions
- Biographical Information
- Facility Plan
- Equipment List
- WPS and Welder Qualifications (*only one for each process used at the facility*)
- Quality Manual and Procedures (*this is where the work is*)
- Cross Reference Matrix
- Internal Audit
- Record of Management Review Meeting

Audits are performed by Quality Management Company, LLC (QMC). Detailed descriptions of each documentation item are available online at www.qmconline.com.

Some of the most significant changes from checklist auditing fall under the "Management Responsibility" and "Detailing" elements in the *Standard*. Under "Management Responsibility," responsibility for the direction of the quality management system is now more focused on the executive manager. The executive manager now must perform a formal review of the quality management system—including procedures for addressing customer complaints.

In "Detailing," fabricators must define the process for creating and checking drawings and have effective systems in place to qualify detailing subcontractors. Quality management system conventions that may be new to some structural steel fabricators include document and record control requirements, corrective action procedures, and internal audit procedures. While planning for some additional work is smart, many fabricators find that their existing documentation

simply needs to be edited and their existing procedures just need to be "tweaked."

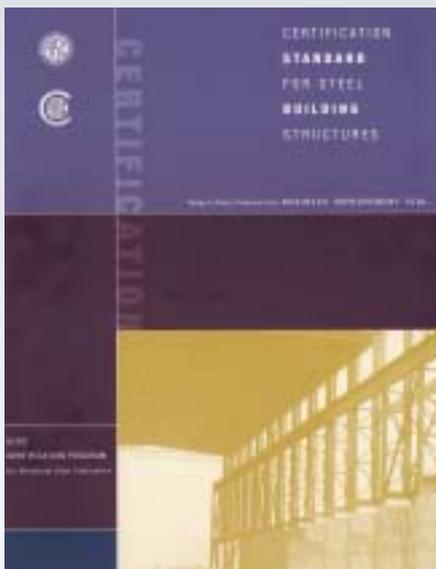
Under checklist certification, fabricators were accustomed to documenting a minimum of four procedures. Under the *Standard*, there are 12 additional areas that must be addressed—but remember, simplicity is the key! QMC's auditors have observed that uncomplicated manuals and simple procedures are most effective because they are easiest to understand and implement. If you're already an AISC Certified Fabricator, chances are good that you are already doing most of what is required. You'll just have to record those procedures in writing.

"It was worth it, and we are a better fabricator because of it."

A question I'm frequently asked by fabricators is, "Why would I want to put myself and my company through this?" My response is to repeat what other fabricators have told me time and time again: "It was worth it, and we are a better fabricator because of it."

AISC Certified Fabricators who haven't been audited to the *Standard* should start getting ready now. If you are feeling overwhelmed, let QMC help. QMC recently launched a new web site at www.qmconline.com with over 75 frequently asked questions pertaining to the *Standard*. In addition, you'll find other resources, including sample procedures, to get you started on the right path. If you don't find what you need, please call 312.670.7520 or e-mail certinfo@aisc.org. ★

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All AISC certified fabricators will have been audited to the new *Certification Standard for Steel Building Structures* by the close of 2005.