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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR INSPECTION AGENCIES

AC98

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PREFACE

The attached accreditation criteria has been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced in the accreditation criteria. The criteria was developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and is effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with criteria. If the criteria is an updated version from a previous edition, solid vertical lines (|) in the outer margin within the criteria indicate a technical change or addition from the previous edition. Deletion indicators (→) are provided in the outer margins where a paragraph or item has been deleted if the deletion resulted from a technical change. This criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

IAS may consider alternate criteria provided the proponent submits substantiating data demonstrating that the alternate criteria are at least equivalent to the attached criteria and otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.

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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR INSPECTION AGENCIES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope: This criteria sets forth the requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), inspection agency ("agency") accreditation and for the qualifying data that must be submitted relating to the scope of inspection for which accreditation is sought. This criteria supplements the IAS Rules of Procedure for Inspection Agency Accreditation.

1.2 Reference Documents

1.2.1 ISO/IEC (International Organization for Standardization/International Electrotechnical Commission) Standard 17020:1998, General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection.

1.2.2 IAS Rules of Procedure for Inspection Agency Accreditation.

1.2.3 IAF/ILAC-A4:2004, Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC 17020.

2.0 BASIC INFORMATION

The following basic information is necessary:

2.1 Data showing compliance with the IAS Rules of Procedure for Inspection Agency Accreditation.

2.2 Data showing compliance with ISO/IEC Standard 17020:1998, General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection.

3.0 SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Inspection Reports: Inspection reports shall accurately and clearly outline the results of inspections. Inspection reports shall contain the following information, as applicable:

3.1 Inspection date, and arrival and departure times of the inspector.

3.2 Information pertaining to review of incoming-material records.

3.3 Products inspected.

3.4 Any changes in supervisory personnel, vendors, production or process, and equipment relating to the product inspected.

3.5 Results of tests observed or performed.

3.6 Information pertaining to review of labeling and label control system.

3.7 Evidence that the inspector has checked product traceability from incoming material to finished product through product records.

3.8 Resolution of any discrepancies noted during previous inspections.

3.9 Description of samples obtained, if any, including quantity, dimensions and relevant physical characteristics.

3.10 Information pertaining to review of calibration records for manufacturing and test equipment.

3.11 Signatures of the inspector and a manufacturer's representative (as applicable).

4.0 GUIDANCE ON THE APPLICATION OF ISO/IEC 17020

Although ILAC A4:2004 is termed a guidance document, the guidance and interpretations therein are considered mandatory for inspection agencies accredited under ISO/IEC 17020. This guidance document will form the basis of mutual recognition arrangements between accreditation bodies and is considered necessary for the consistent application of ISO/IEC 17020. This guidance document is available for free from the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) website at http://www.ilac.org/documents/IAF-ILAC-A4_2004_guidance_on_the_application_of_ISO-IEC_17020.pdf

5.0 TRAINING AND SUPERVISION/MONITORING OF INSPECTORS

Inspection agencies shall have procedures for the training and supervision/monitoring of inspectors. Detailed records of training and supervision/monitoring activities shall be maintained and be made available for review by IAS during on-site assessments, reassessments and surveillance visits.

5.1 Inspector Training: All inspectors shall undergo training in specific competencies by a supervisor or senior inspector or shall obtain training/education through other formal arrangements that are applicable to the inspector's duties. Plans for continued training to keep pace with developing technology shall be considered.

All such training shall be documented by the inspection agency.

5.2 Supervision/Monitoring of Inspectors

5.2.1 To ensure consistency in inspections and compliance with accreditation requirements, inspection agencies shall have an effective supervision/monitoring system for their inspectors.

5.2.2 Each inspector shall undergo annual review of his/her performance in conducting inspections by the agency. The annual review shall, at a minimum, include: review of the inspector's reports for adequacy and completeness, compliance of the inspector with the agency's internal SOPs and client feedback.

5.2.3 Inspectors shall be monitored periodically in the field but not less than once every three years. Inspector monitoring schedules may be based on the inspector's performance. Inspectors who grade well in field monitoring and grade well in accordance with the criteria in Section 5.2.2, above, may have field monitoring intervals extended, to a maximum of four years. Conversely, inspectors not grading well shall be monitored yearly until an acceptable level of performance is demonstrated. The agency shall retain records of the monitoring of its inspectors.

Note: Agencies whose inspectors are observed conducting inspections in the field by an IAS assessor during the reassessment process satisfy the once-in-

three-year field monitoring requirement outlined in Section 5.2.3. However, the inspection agency is still required to maintain annual performance review records required under Section 5.2.2.

5.3 Management Review: In accordance with a predetermined schedule and procedure, the agency's top management shall periodically conduct a review of the agency's management system and inspection activities to ensure their continuing suitability and effectiveness, and to introduce necessary changes or improvements. The review shall take account of:

- Follow-up actions from previous management reviews,
- the suitability of policies and procedures,
- reports from managerial and supervisory personnel,
- the outcome of recent internal audits,
- corrective actions,
- assessments by external bodies,
- changes in the volume and type of the work,
- customer feedback,
- complaints and appeals,
- staff resourcing and training.

Note 1: A typical period for conducting a management review is once every 12 months.

Note 2: Results of management reviews should feed into the inspection agency's planning system and should include the goals, objectives and action plans for the coming year.

6.0 ASSESSMENT

6.1 Prior to accreditation, inspection agencies shall be subject to an on-site assessment by IAS. This assessment is to determine compliance with this criteria (AC98) and to evaluate expertise in the area(s) of inspection where accreditation is sought.

6.2 After the initial year of accreditation, inspection agencies are subject to an on-site surveillance assessment. The surveillance assessment shall include review of at least the following: internal audit reports, minutes of management review meetings, any changes in key personnel or facilities, and information on any other significant changes in the quality system of the inspection agency.

6.3 IAS will conduct an on-site reassessment of accredited inspection agencies at a minimum of once every two years, for verification of continued compliance with IAS accreditation requirements.

7.0 WITNESSING INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

IAS will periodically witness actual on-site inspections by each inspection body. The minimum amount of technical witnessing per inspection body is:

7.1 One activity in each major category of inspection prior to the granting of accreditation.

7.2 One activity relating to each major sub-area of the major disciplines of the inspection body's scope of accreditation at least every four years.

8.0 CROSS-REFERENCE MARK

IAS-accredited agencies that conduct quarterly inspections of IAS-accredited fabricator inspection programs shall prepare and submit to IAS a cross-reference matrix to the fabricator's quality management system manual showing that the manual addresses the general requirements in Section 4.0, data in Section 5.0, the statements in Section 6.0, and the written procedures noted in Section 7.0 of the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Fabricator Inspection Programs for Structural Steel (AC172) or the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Fabricator Inspection Programs for Reinforced Concrete (AC157), or the Accreditation Criteria for Inspection Programs for Manufacturers of Metal Building Systems (AC472), as applicable.

The cross-reference matrix must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the IAS-accredited inspection agency attesting that the agency has reviewed the fabricator's quality management system and that it is sufficiently compliant with the applicable accreditation criteria to schedule an on-site joint assessment with IAS. ■