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Steel Fabricator Builds on Quality Reputation with Accreditation

Over the last 20 years, Mutz Manufacturing, a premier structural steel fabricator based in Slinger, Wisconsin, has developed a reputation for quality and skilled workmanship. Mutz's growing client base has expanded from California to Florida.

With an increased demand for its services, Mutz Manufacturing realized that it needed third-party proof of its expertise and skills.

James D. Zemek, Quality/Materials Manager, Mutz Manufacturing, Inc., says, "Building departments in various parts of the country have different requirements for steel fabrication control procedures,

documentation, staff competency and inspections. As we continued to grow beyond the upper Midwest, it became clear we needed to make sure we could demonstrate compliance with national and even international standards, by obtaining third-party recognition of our expert welding and fabrication capabilities."

RAISING THE STANDARD

With a crew of highly skilled and qualified fitters/welders, Mutz Manufacturing fabricates a wide range of steel components and subassemblies within its 24,000-square-foot structural steel fabrication shop that can accommodate up to 30,000 pound weldments. The

shop includes a 40-foot plasma table with an oxy fuel torch, plasma head as well as beveling capabilities.

Prior to 2008, Mutz Manufacturing had never realized the significance of third-party accreditation. Most building departments in the Wisconsin and surrounding areas relied on special inspectors to inspect fabrication work on a continuous basis at the job site per Chapter 17 of the *International Building Code*® (IBC®).

That all changed when one of Mutz Manufacturing's long time clients who deals with high-end, high-visibility glass and steel structures, including Miami

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Dolphin Stadium, required the company to become IAS accredited.

In a growing trend, building departments are looking to third-party fabricator accreditation programs like IAS to help fulfill their oversight responsibilities to ensure that code requirements are being effectively enforced. For instance, the Clark County, Nevada, Department of Development Services designated the IAS Fabricator Inspection Program as a recognized accreditation resource for structural steel fabricators. Some building departments in Florida have initiated similar requirements. “Accreditation is an ideal way to demonstrate to the local regulation board that a product or service has been developed under rigorous standards of quality and will perform as demanded,” said Doug Wise, Construction Services Director for the City of West Palm Beach, Florida.

Chief Building Official Scott Marsell with the City of Sandy, Utah, tells an oft-repeated story about the importance of fabricator accreditation. “During construction of a particularly large project in Sandy, our building inspectors discovered that 90 percent of the structural steel welds did not meet the code requirements. Construction stopped until the problem could be corrected and reinspected—costing significant project delays, owner dissatisfaction and budget overruns.”

Today, Marsell and his building inspection team require that all fabricators designated on a building plan obtain professional accreditation that includes third-party oversight as defined by the *International Building Code*® (IBC®). “We’ve never had that welding problem again,” says Marsell. “Now, our builders carefully select fabricators who meet stringent building code requirements.”

IAS provides its fabricator accreditation program to help building departments fulfill their oversight responsibilities

while ensuring that the code requirements are being effectively enforced. “Programs like this are a real luxury for a city building department,” says Roy Fewell, Building Official for the City of La Habra, California. “I don’t have to set up a custom criterion to evaluate fabricators. Instead, I know that if our designated building fabricators meet the stringent accreditation requirements such as those required by IAS, then we have confidence to move forward.”

Mutz Manufacturing’s Zemek says, “Bottom line, if we want to continue to support our best clients as they work on projects across the country, we need IAS fabricator accreditation.”

PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

The IAS accreditation process begins with a review of the company’s quality control procedures, documentation and staff competency. Throughout the accreditation process, IAS and representatives of an IAS-accredited inspection agency assess a fabricator’s operations against industry best practices, identify

deficiencies and offer suggestions for improvement.

The fabricator must develop and submit a detailed fabrication procedural manual that references key quality control procedures as outlined in the applicable IAS accreditation criteria.

This manual provides a basis for internal quality control and inspection of workmanship at the fabrication facility. The fabricator must successfully undergo an initial on-site inspection conducted jointly by IAS staff members and representatives of an IAS-accredited inspection agency. This joint assessment verifies that the fabricator is competent to do the work. It also verifies that the fabricator’s quality control system is fully implemented.

Zemek says, “This was a great learning process for us. IAS accreditation has helped us to standardize a quality system that was already in place for years. With this accreditation our customers are assured that the products that



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leave our company are of high quality and meet project specifications. IAS has helped us to create a detailed history for our projects that was previously lacking prior to accreditation.”

In particular, Zemek points to the more formal inspection procedures that his company has implemented over the last year. As part of these procedures, all welders are part of the inspection process, helping prevent losses and checking final components for quality.

Once accredited, a fabricator must undergo quarterly, unannounced inspections by an IAS-accredited inspection agency. These inspections provide on-

going monitoring to confirm that the fabricator continues to operate in accordance with the procedural manual, and that work complies with plans and specifications.

Mutz Manufacturing earned IAS Fabricator Accreditation April 1, 2009 demonstrating compliance with the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Fabricator Inspection Programs for Structural Steel (AC172) and per Section 1704.2.2 of the 2000, 2003, 2006 or 2009 *International Building Code*®.

Zemek concludes, “Accreditation has helped us define ourselves as a premier welding shop with a stringent quality control system. With this acknowledgement

from a respected third-party organization like IAS, we’ve opened the door to work for anyone in the industry, here in Wisconsin or anywhere else in the nation.”

IAS accreditation provides assurance to the building official that the fabrication facility has been evaluated in accordance with Section 1701.7 of the *Uniform Building Code*™, Section 1704.2.2 of the *International Building Code*® and the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Fabricator Inspection Programs for Structural Steel AC172 requirements.

Details about the IAS fabricator inspection program can found on this page of the IAS website: www.iasonline.org/Fabricator.