

AC472 + AC478 =

A Winning Combination

By Tom Gilligan

In some cities, you can't drive down the street without seeing a metal building or two or three. Whether strip malls, warehouses, retail stores, doctors' offices or car dealerships, metal buildings are taking over the low-rise, non-residential construction market. The use of metal building systems has grown exponentially as more markets have embraced the metal solution. As a result of these diverse end-uses, metal buildings are addressing more complex design requirements, requiring more careful planning and construction job-site staging, and more intricate erection. This leads me right into the issue of quality.

A few years ago, the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA) partnered with the International Accreditation Service (IAS) to implement a comprehensive, robust quality assurance program. Today, all MBMA Building Systems member companies are accredited in accordance with IAS AC472, "Inspection Programs for Manufacturers of Metal Building Systems."

AC472 is the most comprehensive quality-assurance accreditation program of its kind and is designed specifically for manufacturers of metal building systems. This program sets accredited metal building manufacturers apart from those that are not accredited. By setting a high standard of excellence, the industry has been able to demonstrate competence and gain the trust of design professionals and building owners.

Now, it's time to go a step further. It's time to raise the bar again. To have true quality assurance for our industry it is essential that we extend the expectation of quality beyond the AC472 accredited manufacturing facilities and into the field. Precision engineering and fabrication of the metal building parts is an important part of the process, but the final grade for our industry often is in the hands of the erectors and general contractors that

complete the projects in the field.

The Metal Building Contractors and Erectors Association (MBCEA) has created a companion program for metal building system assemblers that can help achieve our mutual goal—a complete accounting of quality assurance from start to finish for metal building projects. This new program is called IAS AC478, "Accreditation Criteria for Inspection Practices of Metal Building Assemblers." The program was spearheaded by the MBCEA in consultation with MBMA members and is an achievement worth noting.

Like AC472, AC478 addresses quality management system review and inspections. To achieve accreditation, builders must demonstrate that they have the personnel, organization, experience, knowledge, management procedures and commitment to assemble metal building systems in accordance with specified requirements. The accredited builders must also comply with a documented safety and training program, and are subjected to periodic job-site inspections from independent auditors, as well as IAS examiners to verify continued compliance with the AC478 criteria.


This new program has the potential to be a real

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win-win for the entire industry. Together, the accreditation systems create a higher quality program that can have a tremendous positive impact on our industry. However, for the AC478 metal building assembler quality assurance program to succeed, it must be embraced by erectors and encouraged by metal building manufacturers through their builder networks. I encourage all MBMA member companies to motivate your builders to take on the challenge of AC478 accreditation and promote it to your erectors and subcontractors as well. In fact, builders and building owners should require it in their specs, and consider it a major factor in their subcontractor decision process.

If accredited manufacturers and their builders team up with these two quality assurance programs it will make our industry more competitive and increase its prominence. This is a commitment to a partnership in quality and a reflection on us all. It is an opportunity we can't afford to miss.

If you haven't reviewed the AC478 program yet, you can download the program criteria for free by visiting www.iasonline.org/PDF/AC/AC478.pdf. MBCEA is in the process of developing course materials and program templates to help you become accredited, but you have to take the first step by committing that you will become accredited.

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. With the partnership of AC472 and AC478 we can take the industry on the journey to a better future together. 



Tom Gilligan is chairman of the Cleveland-based Metal Building Manufacturers Association. More information about the association is available at www.mbma.com.