

## Understanding IAS: The future of quality accreditation in the metal buildings industry

by Robert A. Zabcik, P.E., reprinted from *Metal Construction News* February 2009

The American Institute of Steel Construction, Chicago, and the Metal Building Manufacturers Association, Cleveland, issued a joint statement announcing the termination of AISC's sponsorship of the Metal Building Certification Program in mid-2007. While the discontinuation of this program was a mutually amicable decision between the organization and our industry, it has left many metal building professionals asking how to go about accrediting their manufacturing operations.

Fortunately, quality control and assurance in the metal buildings industry has found its new partner in the International Accreditation Service. This organization is already providing metal building companies with an excellent alternative to AISC-MB certification through its existing accreditation program.

IAS is a subsidiary of the International Code Council, a public consortium that maintains the International Building Code®. In working for ICC, IAS maintains and implements numerous accreditation programs in construction related businesses across the country. In turn, these businesses have an open avenue to code compliance by obtaining these accreditations.

More significant still is the fact that IAS is working in concert with MBMA to develop and implement a specialized metal building accreditation program designed to meet the unique needs of our industry.

### A New Plan

Many metal building manufacturers already know IAS as the sponsor of the current approved Fabricator Accreditation, a program governed by IAS Accreditation Criteria AC172. Maintaining it allows steel fabricators to meet the requirements of special inspections required by IBC Section 1704 continuously, rather than on a project-by-project basis. This enables them to offer better service to customers by eliminating the need for project specific inspections, ultimately reducing costs and delays in those projects.

IAS's industry-related accreditation expertise has made it a natural fit to replace the role previously played by the AISC. However, some work had to be done first. An inherent shortcoming of the approved fabricator program is that it does not cover requirements for cold-formed members and in-process engineering—hallmarks of the services provided by metal building manufacturers. Therefore, MBMA began discussions with IAS to extend the approved fabricator program to include these two important elements specific to our industry.

Starting with AC172, MBMA began extending this document through its Technical Advisory Committee, which consists of seasoned metal building professionals with extensive experience in quality certification.

"IAS is pleased to work with a proactive association such as the MBMA. Their committee members demonstrated commitment to quality and code compliance throughout the development of the AC472 document," said Sandi McCracken, senior accreditation officer with IAS.

On April 8, 2008, the resulting document, Accreditation Criteria for Inspection Programs for Manufacturers of Metal Building Systems (AC472), cleared public review and was approved for implementation starting May 1, 2008. MBMA then hosted an AC472 workshop with training provided by IAS on April 22 and 23 in Dallas to jump start the accreditation program.

### Single Certs Source

So what does this mean to customers of metal building manufacturers? The most attractive aspects are compliance with IBC Chapter 17 and quicker acceptance of plans by building officials across the country with whom the IAS maintains an excellent working relationship. But perhaps more important is the commitment to public safety and code compliance that having this accreditation demonstrates. Architects, engineers and building specification writers can provide their clients with a high level of comfort that things will be done right without compromising public safety and quality.

The good news for metal building manufacturers is that most of the quality practices that were in place to support AISC-MB still will be applicable. Contract review procedures, engineering practices, shop processes, tolerances, welder qualifications, traceability records and others will go virtually unchanged. Best of all, with the increasing acceptance of IAS accreditation to satisfy local code requirements, the need to carry multiple certifications will decrease.

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IAS is already accepting applications for the new accreditation program and is optimistic that the program will flourish and grow throughout 2009.

To learn more, the best online source for information about metal building system inspection accreditation is the IAS web site ([www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org)). The criteria itself may be downloaded by clicking on "Accreditation Criteria" on the left-hand side. The Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA) web site ([www.mbma.com](http://www.mbma.com)), is another good source. You can get to the accreditation page by clicking on the "Certification" link.

It would be beneficial for you to encourage your clients to require IAS accreditation on all new projects. Look for the "IAS Accredited" logo, as shown in this article, to be sure you are purchasing from an IAS-accredited manufacturer. From sell to paint, you can rest assured that your product will meet the quality needs of today's construction projects in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

*Robert A. Zabcik, P.E., was the manager of engineering development for NCI Building Systems, Houston, and was chairman of the NCI Engineering Council and a member of the MBMA Accreditation Advisory Committee until he was named the technical director of the NCI Green Building Initiative in September 2008*