

# Why Become an AWS Certified Welding Fabricator?

*Some of the benefits of achieving this certification — both for the fabricator and the inspectors working with them — are explained*

BY STEVEN T. SNYDER

So exactly what is an AWS Certified Welding Fabricator (CWF)? Simply stated, a CWF is a company that has demonstrated through an on-site audit evaluation, by a qualified AWS auditor, the ability and commitment to produce fabricated welded components to the highest standards. Those standards meet or exceed the requirements of published AWS fabrication codes and standards governing welded fabrication — Fig. 1.

Many organizations believe they perform at this level, when in reality they may have no actual quality system(s) implemented or any qualification of personnel at all. And, what can potentially be worse, they may not have valid documentation that supports that they are even capable of ensuring compliance to AWS codes and standards.

Many weld-fabrication shops say they have “AWS certified” welders and claim they fabricate to AWS codes, when in reality they don’t, or in many cases they may not have a complete understanding of the actual AWS code requirements.

The process of becoming a Certified Welding Fabricator should include educating the client, project managers, engineers, inspectors, and supervisors about the importance of project and code requirements, as well as about professional industry certifications that would both enhance their careers, businesses, and client base.

AWS Certified Welding Inspectors should review and familiarize themselves with AWS B5.17, *Specification for the Qualification of Welding Fabricators*, and to educate and encourage fabricators to also strive for excellence in their field by achieving a level of certification that speaks of their company’s commitment and ability to produce quality fabricated compo-



*Fig. 1 — Fabricators such as Modern Welding Co., Elizabeth Town, Ky., an AWS Certified Welding Fabricator, undergo an on-site auditing process to demonstrate that the welded components they produce, such as those shown here, are built to the highest standards.*

nents. Let’s face it, if a fabricator is committed to following the requirements of a referenced standard, the inspector’s job becomes straightforward. You don’t have to feel like you’re pulling the required project documentation through a keyhole in order to satisfy your inspector duties.

If an organization fully implements the requirements of the AWS B5.17 qualification standard for its welding and fabrication operations, it will have a comprehensive quality system that will result in a sound welding program. It can then apply for certification as an AWS Certified Welding Fabricator.

Those companies that do take this step and become AWS Certified Welding Fabricators may expect to see the following as a result of achieving this certification:

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Fig. 2 — CWFs like Schuff Steel Atlantic, Inc., Orlando, Fla., put controls in place for all aspects of welded fabrication, from purchasing base and filler metals to inspection.

◆ Increased exposure and consideration during the bid phase of projects, especially for domestic operations. International operations in Asia and South America also seem to be an area with increased fabrication needs; however, there is a very small pool of qualified fabricators for a number of projects worldwide.

In closing, the economics of achieving the AWS CWF status are very reasonable. Any welding fabricator worthy of being awarded AWS-specified code work projects should already have many of the required elements of the AWS CWF program in place. Companies of all sizes can benefit substantially through the systematic improvements supported by the CWF quality system. ❖

- ◆ Minimized prequalification and audits; “short listing” by owners searching for quality fabricators.
- ◆ Limited liability exposure because they established the Welding Procedure Specifications and welder qualification requirements. They will also have clearly stated inspection requirements for the project.
- ◆ Controls in place for base metals, filler metals, purchasing, receiving, inspection, and handling nonconformances.
- ◆ Increased overall product quality and awareness as a result of the required personnel training that must be implemented to achieve the AWS CWF status.

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