

APPRENTICESHIP & TRAINING DEPARTMENT REPORT

By Mike White

Ironworkers National Welding Certification Program

Here in the Apprenticeship and Training Department one of our biggest goals is to update our training materials and standardize the training in each of our Ironworker Training Programs throughout the US and Canada. Our welding accreditation program is another important catalyst in obtaining this goal. As we train our apprentices and journeymen to weld and then acquire the welding certifications needed to man the Ironworker jobs available to us it's important that our methods and procedures remain consistent and held to a standard.

The Ironworkers Welding Certification Program of North America has been designed and implemented to help us reach this goal. The program is continuously updated with the necessary changes and welding procedures in order to facilitate the needs of the employers. Many of our training facilities are now accredited and we have more getting their accreditation all the time

The Ironworkers National Welding Certification Program became effective in June of 1998 when an agreement was signed between the Ironworkers National Training Fund and the American Welding Society. Since 1998 the program has certified nearly 10,000 union iron worker members and provided credentials for almost 30,000 processes.

Flexibility

New procedures are developed and tested on an as-needed basis to provide employers and iron workers the certifications necessary to perform work on specific job sites and in different geographical areas. The National Fund holds periodic meetings with the Accredited Testing Facility Assessors in order to update and revise the QA Manual (the Quality Assurance Manual is the detailed reference guide for all Accredited Test Facilities).

Quality Assurance

The Program has stringent guidelines for the accreditation of testing facilities as well as for the testing and certification of welders. These guidelines were developed in conjunction with, and approved by, the American Welding Society. The National Fund's oversight office is audited regularly by the American Welding Society to ensure conformance and quality. The 60 Accredited Test Facilities are randomly audited by the American Welding Society.

Oversight

The Program is administered by the Ironworkers National Fund Office and managed by Ed Abbott, General Organizer for the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers. The Program has 5 Accredited Test Facility Auditors located throughout the United States in order to facilitate quick response and convenient oversight of the program's test facilities.

Each Accredited Test Facility is audited by the above-mentioned Auditors every 3 years. Facilities are also responsible for an annual self-audit to be conducted by the Quality Assurance Facility Representative, Facility Test Supervisor, and a local joint apprenticeship committee member. Documentation is then forwarded to the National Fund Office for review and verification.

Benefits of the Program:

Easily verify certification.

The Program provides certificates and photo identification cards to each welder for the process(es) in which he or she is certified to allow easy verification of skills by the employer.

AWS support.

As an additional measure, the American Welding Society is provided with a current list of welders certified through the program so that employers may call to verify their certifications in specific processes.

Up-to-date skills

Renewal of welder certification is dependent on the welder providing proof and documentation that he or she has used the process in question during each 6 month period.

Don't you think its time for your facility to rise to the standard? For more information about getting your facility accredited contact General Organizer Ed Abbott at (202) 383-4802 or via email at Ed_Abbott@iwnf.org.