CALHOUN

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RE: Why the AWS CWF Certification Matters

In the world of structural fabrication, trust is built not only in steel, but in the systems that ensure its reliability. For the cutting-edge fabric structures we build for industrial storage, livestock management, indoor sports, or event spaces, every tensioned membrane is supported by a welded steel skeleton.

Behind that framework lies another kind of structure: a commitment to excellence, proven by our American Welding Society (AWS) Certified Welding Fabricator (CWF) designation. This certification goes beyond the skills of individual welders. It affirms that our entire fabrication process, from quality control to engineering oversight, meets the rigorous standards of the American Welding Society.

In this article, we'll explore what AWS CWF certification means, why manufacturers should consider it, and how it benefits our customers. We'll also share what it's like to maintain this certification and why it helps us ensure that our customers receive a fabric structure that will serve them well for decades.

What Is AWS CWF Certification?

The AWS Certified Welding Fabricator program is a company-level certification awarded by the American Welding Society. While individual welders may earn personal AWS qualifications, the CWF credential focuses on the entire fabrication operation.

To become a CWF, a company must demonstrate excellence in:

- Personnel qualifications (all welders and supervisors must be properly certified)
- Welding Procedure Specifications (WPS) and related documentation
- A written Quality Manual outlining internal controls, traceability, and inspection protocols
- Quality inspections performed by an AWS Certified Welding Inspector (CWI)
- Consistent audits by AWS to ensure ongoing compliance

In short, CWF certification proves that our company not only welds well, but does so reliably, and repeatably.

Why Should Fabricators Pursue AWS CWF Certification?

Verified Quality Standards

At its core, AWS CWF certification is about consistency and control. It ensures that all welds are made under pre-approved, tested conditions using qualified personnel and traceable processes.

For fabricators working on structures where public safety or long-term durability is a concern, these standards provide assurance that the welding operations produce high quality products. Whether you're supporting a massive grain storage tent or a high-traffic sports venue, every weld matters. CWF gives clients peace of mind that those welds meet the highest quality standards.

Increased Marketability

CWF certification is not just a badge of honor—it's a business advantage. Many commercial, industrial, and government projects in North America require AWS standards to be followed. Holding the certification positions our company to:

- Bid on larger or higher-profile jobs
- Partner with U.S. or international clients
- Demonstrate credibility to engineers, inspectors, and general contractors

In a crowded market, this certification helps our company stand out as a trusted, verified provider.

Risk Mitigation

CWF-certified companies have rigorous recordkeeping, allowing every weld to be traced back to a certified welder, a qualified procedure, and an inspection history.

This traceability ensures reliability, reduces the chance of rework, and helps maintain strong relationships with clients and insurers.

Why AWS CWF Certification Matters to Us

As a company that manufactures tension fabric structures, our welding isn't just a fabrication step—it's the foundation of our product's strength and safety.

Structural Integrity in Demanding Environments

Our buildings are exposed to heavy snow, high winds, and a wide range of interior uses. Welded steel tubing must perform flawlessly under bending, shear, and compression. CWF certification gives us the assurance that every weld is executed to the required specification.

International Competitiveness

Even though we're based in Canada, we regularly engage in cross-border projects and collaborate with U.S.-based contractors and design teams. Since AWS standards are widely accepted

internationally, having the CWF credential enables seamless coordination, fewer inspection delays, and greater project confidence.

Internal Discipline

Pursuing certification elevates our entire company. Welders are tested regularly. Supervisors are engaged in quality reviews. Documentation is maintained and audited. Over time, this creates a culture of excellence and accountability that extends well beyond the weld shop.

What's Involved in Becoming a Certified Welding Fabricator (CWF)?

The path to certification is rigorous and requires both technical competence and organizational discipline. To become AWS Certified, a fabricator must submit:

- A comprehensive Quality Manual describing every phase of their welding operation
- A complete library of approved welding procedures (WPS)
- Documentation showing all personnel are certified for the processes they perform
- Evidence of inspection and oversight protocols

AWS then conducts an on-site audit to evaluate compliance. The audit includes interviews, documentation reviews, and real-time inspection of welding activity.

Maintaining certification is an ongoing process that involves:

- Surveillance audits by AWS inspectors
- Documentation of any personnel, equipment, or procedure changes
- Ongoing welder requalification and recordkeeping

The investment is significant—not just in dollars, but in time, training, and administrative effort. It requires dedication across every department: welding, engineering, quality control, and leadership.

Challenges for Obtaining and Maintaining CWF Certification

While the benefits are clear and for us, they outweigh the challenges, maintaining AWS CWF certification is not without its challenges.

- **Cost**: Annual fees, audit expenses, and engineering support can add up.
- **Documentation**: Maintaining up-to-date records, manuals, and testing logs takes ongoing administrative effort.

In the short-term, these constraints may slow innovation or require extra planning during the design process, but from the long-term viewpoint they protect the integrity of our final product, our clients, and our reputation. We've seen real benefits: faster permitting, smoother inspections,

fewer reworks, and higher customer satisfaction. It's not just about meeting a standard—it's about embracing a higher one.

For manufacturers serious about welding, CWF certification is a long-term investment in trust, safety, and competitive growth.

What It Means for Our Customers

We don't think of ourselves as simply selling fabric and steel, but rather as providers of proven engineering and fabrication practices that result in safe, long-lasting structures. Our CWF certification is a part of our product and guarantees that structural welds are performed with care, precision, and documentation.

With CWF certification widely recognized across jurisdictions, building inspectors and insurance providers are more confident in projects built with certified fabrication so we are able to get our permits faster due to our CWF certification.

Due to practices we put in place to meet CWF certification standards, our structures have are reliable, longer service lives, and better resale potential. They're also easier to maintain and modify in the future thanks to clear documentation.

Certified to Serve Better

AWS CWF certification is not a marketing gimmick. It's a serious commitment to technical excellence and customer protection. CWF certification reflects our belief that quality isn't a one-time achievement—it's a daily discipline. Whether we're fabricating a livestock shelter in Alberta or a sports dome in New York, we know that every weld carries weight—literally and figuratively.

If you're planning a project with us or if you simply want peace of mind that your investment is built on integrity, we invite you to learn more about our certified fabrication process.

We're not just building structures—we're building trust.

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