

AN INSPECTION AGENCY'S INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION SERVICE, INC.

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Why Accreditation?

Almost any evaluation of a product, material or piece of equipment is based on reports from inspection agencies that are, in turn, supported by testing laboratories and calibration laboratories. Industry depends on accurate inspection results, which are vital for the protection of public health and safety. Accreditation provides the industry with assurance that the services rendered by accredited inspection agencies are of good quality and have been evaluated and proven.

Accreditation helps provide confidence in inspection agencies and in the services that they offer. It provides evidence of the reliability of the service rendered by an inspection agency and is an effective marketing tool when submitting bids that require independent verified inspections.

International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), provides you assurance, through accreditation, that inspection agencies have been evaluated against internationally accepted standards. Importantly, also, the IAS accreditation process is independent, transparent and dependable.

About IAS

IAS is a subsidiary corporation of the International Code Council (ICC). IAS is a nonprofit, public-benefit corporation that offers accreditation programs in several areas of conformity assessment.

Advantages of IAS Accreditation

Complete confidence: IAS accreditation to internationally accepted criteria provides complete confidence in the quality of services provided by inspection agencies.

Transparency: IAS accreditation is independent and objective, and is based on a completely transparent accreditation process, thereby instilling confidence in the accreditation results.

Competency: IAS accreditation provides evidence that inspection agencies render competent and consistent services in line with international standards.

Outstanding quality of assessments: IAS places tremendous importance on the training of its assessors. This leads to high levels of assessor competency and increased technical expertise.

Enhanced knowledge base: With its excellent knowledge base and team of technical experts, IAS helps to improve the quality of its accredited inspection agencies.

The IAS Staff

The expert technical staff of IAS includes highly qualified technical assessors, engineers, and experts in testing, calibration, fabrication inspection, and quality control. Staff members have received special training on international standards and laboratory and inspection agency assessment methods.

The Inspection Agency Accreditation Process

The IAS inspection agency accreditation program is modeled on international standard ISO/IEC 17020:1998, *General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection*.

The accreditation process begins when an inspection agency submits an application, appropriate fees and a copy of the agency's quality management system manual. The manual must show compliance with the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Inspection Agencies AC98 which incorporates all the requirements of ISO/IEC 17020. An IAS representative will work closely with the agency to bring the manual into full compliance with the accreditation criteria. Once this is achieved, the IAS representative will schedule on-site assessments at the agency's headquarters and in the field (to observe the agency's competence in conducting inspections).

During the headquarters visit, the IAS assessors review the agency's documents and records and interview agency staff (this is done to determine whether the agency's quality system has been effectively implemented.) At the end of the on-site assessments, the IAS assessor provides, to the agency management, an assessment report which may require corrective actions that must be carried out before accreditation is granted. Accreditation is awarded after the agency has satisfactorily implemented and documented all the corrective actions and satisfied all other accreditation requirements.

Inspection agency accreditations are initially granted for one year, and are renewable thereafter at one-, two- or three-year intervals, depending on the preference of the agency. IAS requires on-site assessments at least once every two years, to make sure that agencies continue to comply with IAS requirements.

Other Accreditation Programs

Besides inspection agency accreditation, IAS accredits testing and calibration laboratories, fabricator inspection programs, building departments, IBC special inspection agencies, product certification agencies, training and curriculum development agencies, building department service providers and inspection programs for manufactures of metal buildings. The IAS testing and calibration laboratories accreditation program is modeled on the international standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005 and is recognized globally by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation and the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation.

For More Information

You may contact IAS by telephone at (562) 699-0541, ext. 3309, or by fax at (562) 699-8031. Or send an e-mail to info@iasonline.org. We also encourage you to consult the IAS website: www.iasonline.org.