



"WTCA QC: The Answer to Your Quality Control Needs" by Jay Edgar

Over the past several years we have shared information with you about *WTCA QC*—in brochures, the series of articles appearing in *WOODWORDS* entitled "Why Use *WTCA QC*" and on our web site. Many times the *WTCA QC* certification program has been mentioned. I would like to take this opportunity to give you more information about what is involved in the certification process and give answers to some of the frequently asked questions I've fielded over the past few years.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "CERTIFIED"? IS WTCA A THIRD PARTY INSPECTION AGENCY?

To answer the second question first: no, WTCA is not a third party inspection agency. There is already an infrastructure in place to fill this need, so there is no cause for us to offer this service. Our role has been to support the existing services in the market.

A component manufacturer is certified in using *WTCA QC* when they fulfill the steps which are outlined briefly below. Certification means simply that WTCA acknowledges and actively monitors a manufacturer who has a thorough understanding of the program and uses it as it is intended to be used by the *WTCA QC* Committee.

WHY SHOULD I BECOME CERTIFIED? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The two main benefits of becoming certified in *WTCA QC*, above and beyond the benefits of simply using the program, include marketing and quality mastery.

**Marketing:** Companies certified in *WTCA QC* may take advantage of several different methods of marketing their commitment to quality, including use of the logo (shown above) on their marketing materials and ink stamp, as well as use of brochures that WTCA has created specifically for this purpose. As Keith Kinser of Kintec, LLC, described in his article, "[Why Use \*WTCA QC\*"](#) (*WOODWORDS*, August 1999), you can use your certification status and what it represents to create a special place for your company in your market. This can include press releases to local papers, which Kintec has also found to be effective promotional opportunities.

**Quality Mastery:** Webster's Dictionary defines the term mastery as "the position or authority of a master; dominion; command; supremacy; superiority." This, for me, sums up this benefit of becoming certified. Those companies who choose to invest in certification have greater command over their quality in that they have received specific training from WTCA staff in the inspection procedures and use of the program. As a result, these companies are much more apt to create a superior product.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO BECOMING CERTIFIED & MAINTAINING THAT CERTIFICATION?

Here is a brief description of the steps to become certified:

- Step 1: Become a member of WTCA.
- Step 2: Purchase *WTCA QC* (\$295).
- Step 3: Use the program for two months, doing inspections at the required frequency and entering data from those inspections into the software.
- Step 4: Have WTCA staff visit your plant for the training/certification inspection. The cost for this visit is paid for by the truss plant and includes expenses billed at their cost to WTCA and staff time.
- Step 5: Submit a datafile to WTCA, for verification of inspection frequency and minimum quality requirements.
- Step 6: Certify yourself when you feel able to maintain the requirements listed below, after receiving approval from WTCA staff.

TO MAINTAIN CERTIFICATION:

- Step 1: All errors found during in-plant inspections that cause a truss to not be within the tolerances outlined in the current ANSI/TPI standard must be repaired before leaving the yard.
- Step 2: A minimum of 75% of trusses inspected must be within tolerance after the initial inspection and before repairs are made.
- Step 3: Submit a datafile to WTCA quarterly, for verification of inspection frequency and minimum quality requirements.
- Step 4: Be inspected at least once quarterly by a third party inspector who is certified by WTCA to do *WTCA QC* inspections and uses the *WTCA QC* inspection program in your plant. This service is paid for by the manufacturer and is done independently of WTCA.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL THIS TAKE EVERY WEEK?

The two required inspections—Effective Teeth and Truss Assembly Layout—must be done twice and three times, respectively, per crew per week. Inspections average approximately 15 minutes each once the inspector is familiar with the program. Thus, if you have four crews working two shifts, this would be 4 crews x 2 shifts x 5 inspections x 15 minutes = 600 minutes, or 10 hours per week.

ISN'T THAT A LOT OF TIME?

"The *WTCA QC* program, along with being an in-depth monitoring tool for our production lines, has also provided an added benefit: We now incorporate the Effective Teeth inspection into our field repair engineering. Our field inspector will count teeth on a questionable truss, for review by engineering, which has resulted in fewer gusset repairs. Before, if there was a wane on a truss, we would always install a plywood gusset. Now, if engineering says there are enough teeth, we know a repair is not needed."—Ron

I appreciate this question, as it is the biggest concern people have about becoming certified, and a valid one at that. My response is that you get what you pay for. *WTCA QC* is still a young program and the certification program is even younger. Thus, we don't have an incredible amount of data to show potential users what the resulting cost/benefit analysis will be for them. Those companies who have already become or are working toward becoming certified were committed to quality when *WTCA QC* was only a glimmer in WTCA's eye (see the list of these companies below). We are now just beginning to learn about the breadth and depth of benefits that they experience in its use.

My favorite testimonial right now comes from [Scott Ward, as discussed in his article \(Why Use WTCA QC: Reason #5\)](#), where he estimates that when comparing a four-month period before and after he began using *WTCA QC*, Southern Components reduced their callbacks by 65-75%. Take a minute and do the math to figure out what the annual cost of using the program would be based on the numbers given in the previous section, then compare that with the money you could possibly save simply with reduced callbacks. Now add to that the time and money savings due to things being done right the first time, customers being more satisfied with your product and bringing you repeat business, your personnel having greater job satisfaction because they know what you mean specifically when you say "quality," etc. Of course all these factors can't easily be quantified with paper and pencil, yet hopefully you can appreciate the benefits.

At the risk of getting on my soapbox, it has been my experience in working with this project that there are companies who are committed to quality (i.e., willing to invest the time and money to see the long-term gains, seek to focus on small incremental improvements, etc.). We are not going to force *WTCA QC* on anyone. It is our hope that sometime in the future many will realize that this program can be an asset to their operations, not merely a painful cost. Further, those who are committed fall into two groups—those who have a handle on their quality, and those who are looking to do so. Those in the first group buy into *WTCA QC* readily—these are the folks that are listed below. Right now I focus my energy talking with those companies in the second group.

My job in selling this program would be effortless if I had the ability to instantly show people what I have seen over the past five years: the types of errors that are common between manufacturing facilities, the fact that individual facilities have their own individual challenges with quality, the jaw drops of everyone from the QC inspector to the company president when I show them that this perfectly good-looking truss doesn't pass the inspection (and thus is not in compliance with the current ANSI standard), the moments when I have seen light bulbs go off above the heads of inspectors I am training, the ways in which *WTCA QC* has helped people improve their quality, and more. If I could put all of that experience into a 5- or even 30-minute video, I'd have the easiest job in the world. Unfortunately, it's not so easy to capture these experiences and convey them to others unless they can see and feel the possibilities that *WTCA QC* can provide.

If you can see the possibilities of how this program can become another tool in your toolbox to improve the quality in your plant, please give me a call at 608/274-4849. I'll do my best to stay off my soapbox and put my passion and energy for this program into helping your operation become a world class example of a high quality truss plant. You can also find more information on our web site: [www.woodtruss.com](http://www.woodtruss.com).

#### CERTIFIED

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"*WTCA QC* has been a great addition to the work we were doing before in two ways. First, *WTCA QC* is a great organizational tool. We used to have mounds of paper with our previous QC system and had great difficulty finding specific information. Now we can instantly get information about a specific inspection or lumber order, or see trends in moisture content of lumber over time. Second, the Effective Teeth inspection really opened our eyes to effective teeth. We had nothing in place before to check this. Now we have a much better understanding of this issue, and it has helped us to create a higher quality product." — David Smith; Vice President of Operations; Shelter Systems Limited; Westminster, MD.

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"Everyone talks about worker accountability, and that is very important. But I think the biggest thing for our guys is the sense of pride. When they sign their name to that piece of paper it means something to them. If they are going to put their name on the product they want it to be something that they are proud of. And it shows in the quality of the truss that comes off the table. *WTCA QC* is one piece of our quality program that has helped us create that sense of pride." —Mark Hall, Plant Manager; Kintec LLC; Pewee Valley, KY.

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“Through the implementation of the *WTCA QC* program, we have lowered plating inconsistencies and positional errors. The plant has become more aware and attentive of the products being produced. *WTCA QC* has affected and improved the quality of our trusses.”—Jeff “Frank” Gragg; Purchasing Agent; Central Kansas Truss Co., Inc.; Valley Center, KS.

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“We use *WTCA QC* as a tool to educate our employees so that our quality will constantly improve. It has helped our QC inspectors become more knowledgeable, which helps them make better, quicker decisions at the assembly table.”—Rich Pearce; Production Manager; Richco Structures; Haven, WI.

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“[In our company] the awareness of what it takes to have quality in the manufacturing process has been sharply increased.”—Mary Pat Keller; Truss Components, Inc.; Valley Park, MO.