



## SAIW and SAIW Certification

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## Morris Maroga's message



Our economy is in difficulty at the moment. Industries and companies are restructuring and many skilled employees are being offered retrenchment packages. The slowdown in construction started affecting the fabrication industry some 18 months ago and many fabrication shops are still quiet.

Quiet times can become opportunities to progress, however. By becoming leaner and better at what we do, not only will we be more sustainable and more resistant to global economic variations, we can also become better able to compete for work in global markets.

Fabricators can use the current quiet to focus on improving productivity, product quality and their future capability. At the starting point of this is upskilling their people so that they are better able to deliver quality products and services when the economy finally turns around.

As the SAIW president, it fills me with pride when I see adverts from the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries that specify SAIW-qualified Welding Inspectors or NDT personnel. SAIW offers globally recognised training and qualifications, which means that SAIW graduates can work anywhere in the world.

We would of course prefer our people to use their world-class skills to make South Africa the fabrication destination of choice for those north of our borders and overseas. I therefore urge fabricators with spare capacity to take advantage of the opportunity to improve the qualifications of their people so that South African fabrication is seen as world-class as well as its SAIW-trained people.

World-class fabrication has to meet world class quality standards. I remember a time not too many years ago when Eskom and companies such as Sasol would do technical assessments on any fabricator tendering for work to ensure that the bidders could meet internally set quality requirements. We no longer have to do these assessments, because ISO 3834 certification has become the new benchmark of a good fabricator. Neither do companies need to be separately accredited for different clients. Instead, an ISO 3834 certificate accredits a company as complying to the global weld quality requirements that are needed.

For those who have not yet joined the SAIW Welding Fabricator's Certification scheme that certifies fabricators to ISO 3834, this is another downturn opportunity. Even small fabricators can take on this certification as the cost of becoming certified is not expensive at all. What has to happen though, is welding practices need to be aligned towards meeting the prescribed quality standards and the qualifications of personnel may need to be upgraded.

So I urge our local fabricators, from small to large, to use the opportunity of these lean times to send people for further training, to put in place the changes required for ISO 3834 and then to become Certified according to the SAIW Welding Fabricator's Certification scheme.

For us to progress, it is vital that all plant operators, fabricators and people who work for them act in the interests of the whole country, its industry and its economy, rather than simply acting in their own narrow interests. I believe our country is best served by using local fabricators as much as possible, as the Chinese do. We will always need to import some products, but this should be a last resort and we should all be striving to expand our local capability however we can.

Short term thinking doesn't help anyone and yields only short term gains, but if we succeed in putting the economy back on track, everyone will gain for the foreseeable future. Without skilled people, it is impossible to realise an African continent with thriving economies, peace and prosperity and there is no better time to upskill employees than now.

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