



**SHOP PAINTING CONTRACTOR  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

**SSPC QP3  
APPLICATION, INSTRUCTIONS, AND  
PROGRAM RULES**

## Table of Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
II.	GENERAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES .....	4
III.	APPLICATION FORM FOR THE SSPC QP3 SHOP PAINTING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM .....	5
IV.	REQUIRED INFORMATION .....	9
A.	EVALUATION ITEMS (SHOP PAINTING).....	10
1.	<i>References (Critical Item 1)</i> .....	10
B.	MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY.....	11
1.	<i>Company Policy</i> .....	11
V.	FEE SCHEDULE (EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 2013) .....	18
VI.	SUBMITTAL PROCEDURE.....	21
VII.	EVALUATION PROCESS .....	21
A.	AUDIT CANCELLATION POLICY .....	22
B.	CRITICAL ITEM PROVISION .....	22
C.	DETERMINATION OF STATUS .....	23
D.	APPEAL PROCEDURE .....	24
VIII.	SCORING .....	25
IX.	MAINTENANCE APPLICATIONS.....	26
X.	SPECIAL PROVISIONS .....	27
A.	MAJOR CHANGES IN A COMPANY’S ORGANIZATION .....	27
B.	JOINT VENTURES AND AUDITING.....	28
C.	SUSPENSION FOR NON-PAYMENT OF FEES.....	28
D.	FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE.....	29
E.	ADMINISTRATIVE SUSPENSION AND CHANGE OF COMPANY NAME .....	29

## Application Form, Instructions, and Program Rules / SSPC QP3

### I. Introduction

SSPC developed the shop painting contractor certification program to verify the capabilities of shop facilities to perform quality surface preparation and coating application. SSPC achieves this by independently auditing shops to determine whether they have the personnel, organization, quality procedures, knowledge and technical capability to produce quality surface preparation and protective coating application on steel, metal components, cementitious materials and other structural components or parts in a shop environment and in accordance with contract specifications and industry best practices. SSPC audits blast and paint shops according to the current edition of AISC SPE/SSPC QP3 420.10 Certification Standard for Shop Application of Complex Protective Coating Systems.

For blast and paint shops that have powder coating lines for coating of structural steel, piping or miscellaneous steel or metal components installed on industrial and marine structures such as marine vessels and wish to include the powder coating process under its QP3 Certification or for those shops that only apply powder coatings, SSPC audits your powder coatings process based on AISC SPE/SSPC QP3 420.10 and supplemental criteria that is beyond the scope of QP3/420.10. Supplemental criteria for powder coating includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Existence of Relevant **Powder Coating Institute (PCI)** publications in the shop's technical library;
- 2) Existence of specialized training in powder coating application techniques for the top powder coatings person(s);
- 3) Isolation of the powder coating process to avoid contamination from other processes;
- 4) Installation of specialized equipment, powder storage areas, ovens, etc. necessary for powder coating application in conformance with powder coating manufacturer's recommendations and customer requirements;
- 5) Existence and implementation of surface preparation, application and curing procedures specific to powder coatings applied;
- 6) Quality Control personnel shall have customized training in how to inspect powder coating applications and a minimum of 500 documented hours of **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** on powder coating inspection or Powder Coating Institute Inspection Certification.

Consult the QP3 audit checklist for information regarding audit criteria for QP3 at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-audit-checklists> and click on "Audit Checklist."

The SSPC QP3 Certification program does not involve inspection of the shop's work or training of its personnel, and is limited to coating and related operations conducted in

the shop. The program is not intended to guarantee the quality or safety performance of a specific shop. It is intended, rather, to assist facility owners, general contractors and others who contract for shop painting services in evaluating the qualifications of paint shops. While SSPC certification confirms a shop's capability to meet the requirements of SSPC QP3, owners, specifiers, fabrication shops and others who hire paint shops should also assess additional capabilities not covered by the QP3 program such as the shop's financial stability, ability to meet tight schedules and performance on previous projects.

This package contains information and materials needed to apply for SSPC QP3 Certification. You will find copies of this application and all other documents detailing program requirements, related procedures, clarifications, etc. on SSPC Online at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-for-contractors>. Call SSPC QP Certification at 877-281-7772 at extension 2235 or extension 2209 if you have any questions.

While every precaution is taken to ensure that all information furnished is accurate and complete, SSPC cannot assume responsibility nor incur any obligation resulting from the use or misuse of methods contained herein or of the program itself.

## II. General Program Procedures

You must follow this sequence of procedures to participate in the SSPC QP3 shop painting certification program:

1. Complete the application form found in **Section III: Application Form for the SSPC QP3 Shop Painting Certification Program**.
2. Gather and prepare the required information discussed at the conclusion of the application form in **Section III**.
3. Submit all items of information summarized beginning on page 9 **Section IV: Required Information** to SSPC along with the appropriate certification fee and audit deposit described in **Section V: Fee Schedule**.
4. SSPC staff will review your submittal within four working days after receipt. An audit will be scheduled at your shop if everything is in order. If not, SSPC will indicate what must be done or what additional information is required to complete the submittal.
5. All non-public information submitted is treated as confidential. The original submittal is filed at SSPC and the copy is given to the auditor assigned to conduct your evaluation.
6. The on-site evaluation will be conducted in conformance with SSPC QP3 by an SSPC auditor at your shop. It usually takes one – and sometimes part of a second – day to complete and must include observation by the SSPC auditor of surface preparation, coating application, curing and material handling and storage operations.

7. At the conclusion of the audit, the auditor will conduct an exit interview for the purpose of telling you whether any deficiencies were cited during the audit.
  - a. If your company has a qualifying score, it will be certified for one year. Your company's ability to maintain certification is confirmed through annual announced or unannounced evaluations, which your company must undergo at least once each year after initial certification.
  - b. If your company does not have a qualifying score, it will have up to 45 days after notification of audit results to develop a **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** and request re-evaluation at a later date. If no CAP is developed within the 45-day period, you must reapply for initial certification.
  - c. The program provides for an appeals procedure should you contest audit findings (see **Section VII: Evaluation Process, Part D: Appeal Procedure**).

### III. Application Form for the SSPC QP3 Shop Painting Certification Program

**NOTE:** *QP3 encompasses shop application of coatings, referred to as complex painting systems in the SSPC QP3/AISC 420.10 Certification Standard for Shop Application of Complex Protective Coatings Systems for steel items placed in service in the industrial, light industrial and marine markets, although the program can include application of coatings on non-ferrous, cementitious and other substrates.*

The QP3 program evaluates functions applicable to surface preparation, coating application, curing, handling, storage and preparation for delivery of new material or material which has previously been coated and blast-cleaned and is free of hazardous metals as defined in SSPC QP2. Removal of previously applied coatings that contain hazardous metals falls under the scope of SSPC QP2's *Standard Procedure for Evaluating the Qualifications of Painting Contractors (Removal of Hazardous Coatings from Industrial/Marine Structures)*.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** SSPC uses this application form to obtain information that will aid in evaluating and rating your company. To avoid delays in the evaluation process, you must answer all questions accurately and truthfully. Information must be either typed or printed legibly. Please send SSPC an original printed version of your completed application along with a copy of all required submittals and the correct non-refundable fee and audit deposit. SSPC will accept electronic submissions in lieu of hardcopy if that is more convenient for your company.

1. Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Officer and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Web Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (with Area Code): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax (with Area Code): \_\_\_\_\_ Federal Tax ID: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Type of Business:     Private Ownership     Sole Proprietorship  
                                  Partnership                     Corporation                     Other

3. Years your company has operated under the name listed in #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
*If your company has used its current name less than three years, list its previous names below.*

Previous Name: \_\_\_\_\_ From: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Previous Name: \_\_\_\_\_ From: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

4. Is the location listed in #1 the main place of business?     Yes     No

5. If you have other shop facilities under the same company name listed in #1, please identify these locations below:

---

---

**NOTE:** *The auditor must observe each facility operating under the name listed in #1 before the evaluation process can be considered complete. Additional fees will be assessed for time and travel expenses required to audit other shop painting facilities.*

6. Has your company undergone (within the last 18 months) or is it planning to undergo any significant changes (name change; change in ownership; Chapter 7, 11 or 13; purchase or takeover of another shop; executive management or key personnel changes, etc.)?

Yes     No

*If yes, please attach an explanation that meets the notification requirements described in **Section X: Special Provisions, Part A: Major Changes in a Company's Organization.***

7. Attach copies of any federal, state/provincial or local (municipal) worker protection, environmental protection or any other regulatory agency violation

citations (wage and hourly laws, tax laws, etc.) issued to any of your shop's painting operations during the previous 36 months. Provide resolution/settlement/notice of contest documentation if applicable as well as a brief summary of policy changes and actions your company has taken as a result of the citations.

8. List the names and headquarters locations of any industrial coating contractors your company is affiliated with.

**NOTE:** For purposes of this document, "**Affiliated Company**" is defined as, "A company, corporation, partnership, joint venture or other business entity operating under a different name than the certified company, which performs surface preparation or coating application or administrative and other support functions for the certified company; and in which an officer, director, owner, partner or stockholder of the certified company, a previously certified company disciplined by SSPC, or the certified company itself, exercises directly or indirectly – such as through an intermediary person or family member – any significant degree of ownership, management or control."

9. If your shop has suffered any work-related fatalities in the previous 36 months, you are required to report details to the SSPC Certification Program Manager. Submit the required copy of appropriate OSHA forms for fatalities that have occurred at your shop in the last 36 months.

- 9a. Is your company now, or has it in the past been associated in any way with a contracting company operating under another name that has been disciplined by SSPC under the **Disciplinary Action Criteria (DAC)**?

Yes       No      If yes, please explain:

---

---

- 9b. Are any of your company's officers, directors, owners, managing agents or managers now exercising (or have they previously exercised) direct or indirect control, management or ownership of another contracting company or shop, which has been disciplined by SSPC under the DAC?

**NOTE:** Refer to the **Disciplinary Action Criteria (DAC)** found on SSPC Online at <http://www.sspc.org/contractors-dac>.

Yes       No      If yes, please explain:

---

---

If your company has not had such an association with a shop previously disciplined under the DAC, please check this box:

**NOTE:** *Failure to answer truthfully or any instance of providing inaccurate information will lead to immediate revocation or denial of certification status.*

10. Has your company been disqualified or disbarred from any bidder's list in the past 24 months?

Yes       No

If yes, please provide the reason for the disqualification or disbarment and the name of the entity issuing the ban.

---

11. Please attach a copy of your most recent (12 months) OSHA accident and illness summary form, OSHA Form 300, if applicable.

12. Total production hours logged in previous calendar year: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of information: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Average number of workers associated with your painting operations you've employed or otherwise utilized over the preceding three years: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Indicate which category of shop certification you are applying for:  
Choose one from the definitions in SSPC QP3/AISC SPE 420.10, section 1.0

Check One:     Enclosed Shop     Covered Shop  
                   Open (Exposed) Shop

15. Please note below any safety or other restrictions required before entering shop production areas:

---

---

---

**NOTE:** *By my initialing and signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand:*

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ The QP3 Shop Painting Certification Program Application,  
Instructions and Program Rules

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ The QP3 Standard and Audit Checklist

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ The QP3 Disciplinary Action Criteria (DAC)

As the principal officer of the shop painting facility, I agree to abide by and be bound by the rules, regulations and procedures set forth herein. *(Must be initialed above and signed by the President, Chief Operations Officer or Chief Executive Officer).*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification Fee Submitted with this Application: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

For a detailed description of fees, please refer to **Section V: Fee Payment Schedule**.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Failure to report accurate, complete information will delay your certification evaluation. Omission or falsification of information or failure to answer truthfully will result in withholding, denial or revocation of certification status.*

## IV. Required Information

In order to rate and evaluate your company, the program uses specific criteria organized into 16 function areas outlined below. The Evaluation Items section below contains detailed information for each area.

**NOTE:** *Detailed written policies and procedures are needed for each item below.*

- References
- Management Responsibility
- Contract and Project Specification Review and Communication
- Coating System Communication

- Document and Data Control
- Control of Quality Records
- Purchasing Documents
- Material
- Process Control Procedures
- Inspection and Testing
- Verification of Accuracy of Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment
- Control of Nonconformities
- Corrective Action
- Handling, Storage and Delivery of Product and Materials
- Training
- Internal Audit

Many of these 16 function areas contain several subcategories focusing on your company's policies, personnel, procedures and resources.

All items must be submitted in writing with the initial application. They must be typed or printed legibly on separate sheets of paper and clearly identified. Documents such as organization charts or file documents that already exist are to be submitted and organized in this manner. All items are subject to verification and evaluation by the auditor during the shop visit. Records or files to be presented include but are not limited to: job files, inspection reports, production reports, training records, personnel performance reviews, equipment operating procedures and maintenance records.

#### A. Evaluation Items (Shop Painting)

Below is a list of the evaluation items the auditor will review and rate during your SSPC QP3 evaluation. **Submit a description and supporting documentation (examples) for all evaluation items with your initial application.** Critical audit evaluation items are identified as such in **bold type** and by Critical Item number. See **Section VII: Evaluation Process, B: Critical Item Provision** for more details about critical evaluation items.

##### 1. References (Critical Item 1)

The company shall have the reference documents and standards necessary to provide personnel with the requirements of the work. The following references shall be readily available to those who have coating program responsibilities.

Companies shall possess the current edition of these references as well as references consistent with the requirements of existing contracts:

- SSPC PA1
- SSPC PA2: Measurement of Dry Coating Thickness with Magnetic Gauges

- SSPC VIS1: Guide and Reference Photographs for Steel Surfaces Prepared by Dry Abrasive Blast Cleaning
- Product data sheets, technical bulletins and other recommendations for materials in use
- ASTM D 3276: Standard Guide for Painting Inspectors (Metal Substrates)
- Documents specified by contract

## B. Management Responsibility

### 1. Company Policy

#### a. Shop's Quality Goals

Submit copy of the company's quality policy and goals as they apply to coating and related operations. This policy shall express the shop's commitment to meeting contract requirements. The company shall ensure that the policy is communicated and understood by all personnel involved in the coating process in the organization. The shop shall document one specific, measurable goal related to coating application process quality and show how it evaluates its performance with regard to achieving this goal. The policy statement must be signed by the CEO, COO or President and dated.

#### b. Direction and Leadership (Critical Item 2)

Show that executive management reviews the **Quality Management System (QMS)** at planned intervals, but at least annually. Show that Management Reviews cover – at a minimum – the following areas:

- Results of internal and external QMS audits
- Opportunities to improve product quality
- Need for changes in the QMS
- Evaluation of customer feedback
- Training and qualification of personnel
- Channels of communication to address quality issues
- Effectiveness of means, methods and practices as they relate to coating operations
- Product nonconformance
- Results from previous management reviews

Where needed, show how Management Reviews result in implementation of changes to improve operations.

#### c. Resources (Building, Workspace and Associated Utilities) (Critical Item 3)

Provide a drawing of the facility showing locations where material is received, surface preparation, coating application, curing and final storage for pick-up takes place, as well as where coating material, blasting abrasives and other related products are stored. Show locations of equipment in the drawing.

Explain how the shop controls ambient conditions in the above-mentioned areas to prevent contamination of surfaces during coating and related operations.

**d. Personnel**

Submit a current organization chart that identifies personnel by name who are responsible for determining inspection requirements, oversight of inspection activities, acceptance criteria, disposition of nonconformities, surface preparation, coating mixing and application, curing and inspection of completed work. Also include the person named by Executive Management as the top individual at the shop with technical knowledge of the coating process.

**e. Process Equipment (Critical Item 4)**

Provide a list of operable equipment owned or controlled by your shop used for coating operations. Equipment list shall include but not be limited to:

- Blast cleaning equipment
- Dust collection
- Hand and power tools
- Compressors, line driers and oil separators
- Spray equipment and spray booths
- Power agitators
- Lifting equipment
- Provisions for loading and blocking

**f. Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment (Critical Item 5)**

Provide list of equipment used at your shop to perform inspections and tests. The list shall include equipment or other tools to measure:

- Surface profile
- Surface cleanliness achieved
- Surface temperature
- Ambient conditions (e.g., air temperature, relative humidity)
- Wind direction/speed, if applicable

- Coating material temperature
- Wet film thickness
- Dry film thickness
- Other criteria as specified by contract

**g. Organization Chart (Key QP3 Personnel)**

**h. Job Descriptions, Qualifications and Biographical Information**

Submit job descriptions for key personnel involved in management, purchasing, quality control, surface preparation, coating application and inspection. List each person's name, title, years of experience, training completed and professional certifications and registrations.

**i. Project List**

Submit a Project List representative samples of complex paint system projects performed during the past two years. Include project name and facility owner, size of area cleaned and coated, dates work performed, surface preparation requirements and coating material applied.

**j. Contracts and Project Specification Review (Critical Item 6)**

Procedures:

- Provide company procedure for contract and project specification review.
- Provide procedure for addressing conflicts between project specification and manufacturer's recommendations and changes received through clarification.

**k. Coating System Communication**

Procedures:

- Describe method used to communicate project requirements such as surface preparation, coating type, dry film thickness (DFT), step backs, masking, items or areas not to be coated, reduced DFT zones, etc.

**l. Documents and Data Control (Critical Item 7)**

Procedure review and approval:

- Describe how documents affecting coating quality are reviewed and approved by management and the frequency of review.

- Revision Control
  - Describe how company controls and labels revisions.
- Access
  - Describe how company ensures that applicable procedures and documents are made available to all personnel performing coating and related work.
- Obsolescence
  - Describe procedure for ensuring that obsolete documents are marked, segregated, destroyed or otherwise removed from the workplace to prevent inadvertent use.
- Transmittal
  - Describe the company's process for tracking the distribution of drawings, documents and specifications to owners, customers, subcontractors and suppliers.
- Customer Requirements
  - Describe the company's procedure for receipt and distribution of customer requirements or other communication affecting coating operations to affected persons both internally and externally.

**m. Control of Quality Records**

Submit procedures for:

- Storage
  - Describe how company stores records to protect them from damage, deterioration and loss.
- Retention
  - Describe record retention policies and times.

**Types of Quality Records**

Describe how the company maintains the following types of quality records:

- Contract document review
- Contract clarifications or **Requests for Information (RFI)**
- Training
- Internal audits

- **Certificates of Conformance (COC)** for materials used
- Qualification and performance of subcontractors
- Qualification and performance of suppliers

**Requests for Deviation (RFDs) and responses:**

- Surface preparation
- Application
- Nonconformities
- Waivers from the owner
- Corrective action
- Final inspection
- Management review

**n. Purchasing Procedures**

Purchasing Data

- Provide samples of purchasing documents for subcontractors, products, materials and services.

Evaluation of Subcontractors

- Describe process for evaluating and selecting subcontractors.

Qualification and Evaluation of Suppliers

- Describe process for evaluating and qualifying material suppliers.

**o. Materials (Critical Item 8)**

Container

- Describe how material containers are properly identified.

Storage

- Describe how materials are stored.

**Certificate of Conformance (COC) for Coating Requirements**

- Describe company's process to obtain and retain COC.

**p. Process Control Procedures (Critical Item 9)**

Surface Preparation

- Describe your company's standard procedures for performing surface preparation to meet contract requirements while not contaminating surfaces being coated and cured in other sections of the shop.

### Mixing and Application

- Describe your company's standard procedures for mixing and applying coatings in areas of the shop that are protected from air-blown dust, blast media or other debris that is detrimental to coating quality. Indicate how areas on the substrate not-to-be coated are protected.

### Application Records

- Describe records maintained by your shop that documents completed coating application process. Records to be maintained include:
  - Surface condition, cleanliness level and temperature immediately prior to application
  - Material temperature immediately prior to application
  - Description of material applied (e.g., name, number, color)
  - Shelf life expiration date
  - Batch numbers of all components, including thinners
  - Ambient conditions during application
  - Documentation of the mixing process
  - Thinner or reducer added
  - Induction time and pot life
  - Verification that application was conducted within pot life
  - Equipment used to apply material (spray pump, spray gun, tip size)
  - Time elapsed between coating applications
  - Start and finish times
  - Dry film thickness
  - Piece markings per contract requirements
  - Other contract requirements not mentioned above

### Equipment (not part of the critical item designation)

- Describe your company's implemented procedures for performing preventative maintenance on major equipment (such as blast machine, compressors, driers, moisture and oil separators, dust collectors, spray equipment and lift equipment) regardless of

whether the equipment is owned, leased, rented or otherwise procured.

**q. Inspections and Testing (Critical Item 10)**

- Provide company's procedures (including development of inspection plans) for inspection and testing to verify that work has been performed that meets contract requirements.

Inspectors

- Describe your process for selecting coating inspectors who are trained and qualified to perform required inspections.
- Show samples of inspection plans prepared and used for each project.
- Describe procedures for reviewing and signing off on inspection records by upper management or persons designated by upper management.

Records

- Show how the shop maintains inspection records that document:
  - Surface preparation achieved (condition of surface prior to coating, degree of cleaning, surface profile).
  - Dry film thickness as per SSPC PA2 or as specified.
  - Visible inspection of coating applied.
  - Verification of accuracy of dry film thickness gauge used (per PA2).

**r. Verification of Accuracy of Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment (Critical Item 11)**

- Describe company procedures for ensuring that equipment is in proper working order.

**s. Control of Nonconformities (Critical Item 12)**

- Describe company's process for identifying, documenting and disposing of nonconforming work and nonconforming material that is acceptable to the customer.

**t. Corrective Actions (Critical Item 13)**

- Describe shop's Corrective Action Program to address:
  - Recurring nonconformities.
  - Responses to corrective action requests issued by customers, owners, inspectors, internal QC or others.
  - **Root Cause Analysis (RCA)** of system failures.
  - Changes to **Quality Management System (QMS)** as a result of RCA.
  
- u. **Handling, Storage and Delivery of Product and Materials (Critical Item 14)**
  - Describe shop's procedures for handling, storing, loading and shipping of finished products that conform to contract requirements.
  
- v. **Training Craft-Workers and Inspectors (Critical Item 15)**
  - Describe shop's implemented program to train craft-workers who perform surface preparation (or operate machinery that does the surface preparation) and coating application.
  
- w. **Inspectors and Testing**
  - Describe shop's implemented program to train inspectors on topics covered in ASTM D 3276 that apply to the shop's operations.
  - Describe shop's process for qualifying inspectors (based on training completed and experience) to perform assigned inspection tasks.
  
- x. **Internal Audit (Critical Item 16)**
  - Describe shop's program to perform internal audits of the coating process (QMS) at least annually to ensure conformance with QP3 and customer requirements. Show that auditors are independent of the production process. Describe how the shop uses audit results to improve processes.

## V. Fee Schedule (Effective February 2013)

The QP3 Shop Painting Certification Program is a self-funding program. To achieve this, fees have been established as described here:

- **Initial Audit Administrative Fee:** Submitted by those applying for SSPC QP3 initial certification.

- **Annual Maintenance Administrative Fee:** Fee for shops that must repeat the application process due to an inability to satisfy program requirements in a timely manner (i.e., six months) prior to acceptance of application and submittal and scheduling.
- **Re-Evaluation Administrative Fee:** Fee for re-evaluation to verify implementation of Corrective Action Plans.
  - NOTE:** *Annual administrative fees are not refundable if a contractor's QP3 Certification is suspended, revoked or the shop withdraws from the QP3 program.*
- **Audit Deposit:** Monies submitted to cover the expense of performing the audit. Audits are performed at cost. If the audit deposit exceeds the cost of the audit (auditor's time, travel, expenses), SSPC will refund the difference. If audit expenses exceed audit costs, SSPC will bill your shop for the additional expense.

Companies applying for certification must submit the applicable **Administrative Fee** plus **Audit Deposit** to cover anticipated audit expenses with their application. SSPC will withhold your certification until receiving total payment.

**NOTE:** *The fees cover the cost of staff time to review and process your application package, the cost of the on-site evaluation and audit, and the overhead expenses required to operate the Contractor Certification Program.*

*Annual administrative fees are not refundable if a contractor's certification(s) are suspended or revoked.*

Determine your audit expense from the following:

QP3 <u>Only</u> Fee Schedule				QP3 + QP1 or QP2 <u>Combined</u> Fee Schedule		
	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member
<i>Administrative Fee</i>	\$1,350	\$1,600	\$2,150	\$500	\$600	\$800
<i>Audit Deposit</i>	\$2,600	\$2,600	\$2,600	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$1,700
<i>Certification Total with no Corrective Action</i>	<b>\$3,950</b>	<b>\$4,200</b>	<b>\$4,750</b>	<b>\$2,200</b>	<b>\$2,300</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>

QP3 <u>Only</u> Additional Fees (As Applicable)				QP3 + QP1 or QP2 <u>Combined</u> Additional Fees (As Applicable)		
	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member
<i>With Corrective Action Verification:</i>	+\$300	+\$550	+\$800	+\$300	+\$550	+\$800
<i>If Outside US/Mex/Canada</i>	+\$1,500	+\$1,500	+\$1,500	+\$1,500	+\$1,500	+\$1,500

**EXAMPLE #1:** *If your company is an SSPC Patron Member applying for initial QP3 Certification only, submit \$4,100 (\$1,600 Administrative Fee + \$2,500 Audit Deposit).*

**EXAMPLE #2:** *If your company is an SSPC Patron Member applying for initial QP3 + QP1 Certification together, submit \$2,300 (\$600 Administrative Fee + \$1,700 Audit Deposit).*

SSPC will return non-responsive and inactive applications submittals and fees to the applicant after six months of inactivity when no audit is conducted. SSPC will assess a \$750 USD administrative processing fee that will be deducted from the Administrative Fee and Audit Deposit initially submitted with the application.

For program members who withdraw from the QP program during a certification term, SSPC will retain the entire Administrative Fee submitted at the beginning of the certification period and return any unused Audit Deposit.

You must pay post-audit fees for QP3 deficiency audits or additional audit expenses when they are due. Failure to pay in a timely manner will result in a six-month suspension from the program and public notification of your suspension. If you do not pay the fees after the suspension period, you will be decertified and have to reapply for QP3 Certification. When reapplying, you will have to pay all applicable fees and all past due fees.

### **SSPC Policy**

As previously stated, SSPC performs QP3 audits at cost. If your audit cost is less than your submitted audit deposit, SSPC will refund the difference to you. If the audit cost is more than your audit deposit, SSPC will bill you for the additional expenses. Program fees are non-refundable regardless of the results of your evaluation. If you decide to withdraw your application prior to scheduling of the field evaluation, SSPC will withhold an administrative processing fee. After six months, SSPC will return non-responsive and inactive applications to the contractor, minus the non-refundable administrative processing fee.

You must pay post-audit fees for QP3 corrective action verification audits or additional audit expenses when they are due. Failure to pay in a timely manner will result in a six-month suspension from the program and public notification of your suspension. If you

do not pay the fees after the suspension period, you will be decertified and have to reapply to the QP3 program. When reapplying to the program, you will have to pay all applicable fees and all overdue fees.

## VI. Submittal Procedure

Help SSPC staff to process your application quickly and efficiently by following these instructions:

- Type or clearly print all entries on the application form.
- Be certain to answer all items on the form accurately and completely.
- Send hardcopy of original and one copy of the application package to SSPC. We suggest you keep a copy on hand for your use at the on-site audit. Electronic submissions are accepted in lieu of hardcopy.
- Clearly identify all items of information required to be submitted in the application package. See evaluation items above.
- Determine fee using the schedule in **Section V: Fee Schedule**. Make check payable to: SSPC.
- Mail or e-mail the application and all other required information to:  
SSPC: The Society for Protective Coatings  
Attn.: QP Certification Office  
800 Trumbull Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15205-4365

## VII. Evaluation Process

Evaluation of your shop is performed in conformity with the current version of AISC/SPE – SSPC QP3, 420.10: Certification Standard for Shop Application of Complex Protective Coating Systems.

The application package (e.g., application form, written submittal, certification fee) is received by SSPC. Upon acceptance of the application and submittal package by the SSPC Certification Program Manager, the application form and submittal is forwarded to the SSPC auditor who then schedules the audit.

When a date or timeframe has been selected, mutually agreed upon and confirmed in writing or verbally by you and the auditor, the auditor will visit your shop to perform the following:

- Confirm data submitted in the application package.
- Interview key management and selected shop personnel.

- Observe and rate company organization and operation using QP3 program rating procedures.
- Examine and rate equipment and facilities.
- Conduct exit interview.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the auditor will schedule an exit interview with your supervisory and management personnel to point out items (i.e., deficiencies) that were scored “Less than 2,” if there are any, as well as any corrective actions required. The applicant’s representative will be required to sign the exit interview form and confirm findings noted at the exit interview for the audit to be considered complete.

#### A. Audit Cancellation Policy

If you either cancel the audit or request a change in the date or timeframe after the audit date or timeframe has been selected, mutually agreed upon by both you and the auditor, and confirmed in writing or verbally, SSPC will bill your shop for unrecoverable expenses (e.g., purchase of a non-refundable discount airline ticket) incurred by SSPC as a result of rescheduling the audit.

#### B. Critical Item Provision

The QP3 critical item provision identifies 16 of the total evaluation items program auditors use to evaluate contractors for certification. SSPC has deemed these 16 items essential to the annual certification maintenance of a shop. The provision requires the shop to achieve scores of a minimum of “2” (on a scale of 1 to 3) on 13 out of 16 critical evaluation items or SSPC will withhold or suspend certification.

The QP3 program provides a 45-day period for applicants who have not attained an adequate score to:

1. Make corrections in the deficient areas;
2. Submit a Corrective Action Plan to change system procedures; and
3. Ask for a re-evaluation.

That same 45-day period is available to program members unable to achieve the required minimum score on all 16 critical evaluation items during annual on-site maintenance or follow-up evaluations.

For initial applicants, SSPC can withhold certification until:

1. Corrections are made;
2. Required procedures are put in place a minimum of six production months prior to the follow-up evaluation; and
3. The passing score (rating of “3”) is achieved during any follow-up on-site evaluation.

For program members unable to achieve the required score during an annual maintenance evaluation, which consists at a minimum of an evaluation of all 16 critical items, SSPC will provide the member 45 days to submit a Corrective Action Plan and request any required follow-up evaluation.

If a program member is deficient in no more than two critical items upon completion of the annual maintenance evaluation, SSPC will extend certification status until the follow-up evaluation is completed, pending acceptance by SSPC of a written Corrective Action Plan. If the program member is deficient in more than two critical items, SSPC can suspend certification status for up to six months, pending receipt and acceptance of written corrective actions and required verification through any required follow-up audit. If required corrective actions are not provided and verified after six months, decertification will result.

### **QP3 Critical Items**

The QP3 Critical Items are listed below:

- References
- Direction and Leadership – all aspects of the shop’s management review program
- Resources (Buildings, Workspace & Associated Utilities)
- Process Equipment
- Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment
- Contracts and Specification Review
- Documents and Data Control
- Coating Material
- Process Control Procedures
- Inspections and Testing
- Verification of Accuracy of Inspection, Measuring and Test Equipment
- Control of Nonconformities
- Corrective Actions
- Handling, Storage and Delivery of Product and Materials
- Training Craft-Workers and Inspectors
- Internal Audit

### **C. Determination of Status**

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, the SSPC Program Administrator will make one of two possible decisions concerning your certification status:

Confer Certification: Your shop achieved satisfactory ratings on all evaluation items.

Withhold Qualification: Your shop has not attained the scores adequate to achieve SSPC QP3 Certification. You then have 45 days after issuance of audit

results to submit an acceptable Corrective Action Plan to address deficiencies and request that SSPC re-evaluate to verify implementation of the corrective actions.

#### D. Appeal Procedure

During the audit exit interview, the auditor will document and explain all deficiencies cited during the audit. If you dispute any of the audit results, you may appeal using the steps of recourse listed below:

- You must notify the SSPC Certification Program Manager in writing within 10 working days of the exit interview, specifically identifying the deficiencies you are appealing, and substantively explaining why you dispute them – including providing supporting documentation for each deficiency being contested.
- SSPC will evaluate your written appeal and notify you in writing of the evaluation results within 30 calendar days of the appeal submission receipt by SSPC. SSPC appeal evaluations will result in either acceptance of your written appeal (vacating or reducing an audit deficiency) or denial of the appeal (sustaining the deficiency). For a denial of any appeal, the contractor has the option to accept the SSPC appeal resolution and submit a **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)**, which may or may not require a follow-up audit to verify CAP implementation. Finally, an appeal denial by SSPC could also result in suspension for up to one year.
- The contractor can continue the appeal process by requesting an informal conference in writing and within 10 business days of an appeal denied by SSPC. The informal conference will be held at SSPC headquarters in Pittsburgh, PA for shop to further explain its position.
- The final option for the shop wishing to continue with the appeal is to utilize the existing **Disciplinary Action Criteria (DAC)** Arbitration Panel Procedure.

**NOTE:** *Contractors who do not appeal audit findings can still appeal disciplinary action taken by SSPC as a result of failing an audit. Use the procedures above to appeal a suspension resulting from a failed audit.*

An annual internal audit will be required each year of certification. SSPC provides an internal audit form on its website, <http://www.sspc.org/qp-audit-checklists>, which you can use to record the results of your internal audit and keep on file for review by the auditor if requested. Customers will be given an opportunity to comment directly to SSPC at any time on your company's performance. All replies will be treated as confidential and will be used only as a component in determining certification reconfirmation.

Failure to pass the aforementioned annual or unannounced follow-up audits will be cause for suspension or revocation of your company's certification status. See **Section IX: Maintenance Applications** for specific rules governing maintenance of QP3 Certification status after achieving initial QP3 Certification.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Failure to cooperate with the program auditor or certification staff, or failure to provide access to data, personnel or on-site premises shall be sufficient cause for denial, suspension or revocation of your shop's certification status for up to six months.*

## VIII. Scoring

**The rating of "1"** is a major CAR or deficiency, and indicates:

- a) The required training, written program, practice or procedure is non-existent;
- b) The required training or written program is inadequate; or
- c) The required practice or procedure has not been in place for the minimum amount of time (e.g., less than 2/3 implemented based on sampling).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Typically, auditors will not issue major deficiencies for isolated breakdowns in a contractor's quality system. However, there are exceptions. For example, auditors will issue a rating of "1" when they observe one or more safety violations or safety hazards that could result in an injury or serious incident. An obvious example would be a person working without appropriate fall protection as required by the contractor's safety and health plan and/or governing regulations. Auditors will also issue a rating of "1" if they discover one or more unauthorized deviations from contract requirements or deviations from good painting practices found in the paint shop, shipyard or field job site.*

**The rating of "2"** is a minor CAR or deficiency, and indicates the training or written program is adequate but requires minor revision. Examples include a practice or procedure that is in place with isolated instances of non-conformance no more than 1/3 of the time based on sampling, lack of practice or documentation due to personnel turnover, non-performance by field personnel, personal hardship and natural disaster.

**The rating of "3"** indicates that a contractor – based on audit sampling – consistently adheres to specific training and written program requirements as well as required practices and procedures that consistently meet the letter of the standard. When there are no audit findings it means that all items evaluated during the audit were rated "3."

A **Corrective Action Report (CAR)** using the SSPC **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** form found on the SSPC website at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-cap> is required for each major deficiency (rating of “1”) found by the auditor. Remedial action for a major CAR requires the submission of a CAR followed by an on-site audit to confirm that the contractor has corrected the deficiency and implemented the CAP submitted to SSPC.

Remedial action for a minor CAR requires that the auditor confirm remediation at the next audit. Minor CARs that are not remediated by the contractor by the next audit turn into a major CAR or deficiency.

**NOTE:** *Initial audits require CAR submissions for all deficiencies cited – both major and minor.*

**CONCERNS:** *Occasionally the auditor will note a “Concern” on an audit report. A Concern is not a rating. It is simply a statement for the contractor to consider for its own business purposes. No response is required for a Concern.*

## IX. Maintenance Applications

The QP3 Certification term is one year. Renewal of QP3 Certification requires submittal of a maintenance application each year following granting of initial certification.

Maintenance applications are due to SSPC (postmarked) by December 15 of each calendar year. The annual audit must be completed by December 31 of each calendar year.

**NOTE:** *SSPC strongly advises each company be actively involved in scheduling their audit. Current applications and audit requirements are found on SSPC’s website at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-for-contractors>.*

SSPC will send notification approximately 45-90 days before the renewal deadlines as a reminder. Failure to receive a reminder from SSPC does not relieve your company of the responsibility to apply for renewal of certification when due. SSPC will assess a \$500 late application fee for any maintenance applications submitted after December 15. SSPC also reserves the right to reject any maintenance applications submitted after March 31 and require the contractor submitting the late application to reapply as an initial applicant.

**NOTE:** *You are responsible for ensuring that SSPC has your current mailing address, phone, fax and e-mail information.*

Shops that fail the annual maintenance evaluation will be given 45 days after notification of audit results to submit a Corrective Action Plan and request that SSPC re-evaluate. SSPC reserves the right to withhold certification from shops that fail a

maintenance or follow-up evaluation until a **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** is submitted and accepted by SSPC. SSPC may opt, in certain cases, to extend the company's certification status following acceptance of a CAP for a limited period subject to specified conditions.

Shops placed on suspension for failing a maintenance audit will be formally notified in writing (e.g., by letter or e-mail) of the suspension.

- The shop is given 45 days from notification to make corrective actions and be re-audited.
- The shop is asked to return original certificates.
- The shop is asked not to present itself as QP3 Certified during the suspension period.

During a suspension period the contractor's name will be removed from SSPC's online searchable database of certified contractors at <http://www.sspc.org>. Contractors will be formally notified in writing when a suspension is lifted, valid certificates will be reissued and the contractor's name will be added back to the SSPC website as being QP3 certified.

QP3 Certified shops that fail two consecutive certification maintenance/annual audits at any time while certified will be suspended from the program for up to 12 months following failure of the second audit. Audit failure is defined as three or more Critical Item deficiencies. Corrective action verification audits following a failed audit are not considered annual/maintenance audits.

## X. Special Provisions

### A. Major Changes in a Company's Organization

SSPC certified shops are required to notify the Program Manager within 30 days of any major organizational changes, including, but not limited to:

- Change in ownership
- Partnership/joint venture
- Change in executive management (e.g., president, CEO, general manager)
- Name change
- Declaration of bankruptcy
- Relocation of main or branch business offices or opening of new branch offices

The notification shall include:

- Specific details about changes
- Revised organizational and responsibility chart

- Effective dates of change
- Names of officers of company

SSPC will subsequently schedule a special audit at your expense within a year of notification. SSPC will also schedule another audit – at the shop’s expense – within six months after the special (first) audit to verify that the shop is in fact maintaining the standards of the program. If the shop does not pass the six-month audit, certification will be rescinded.

No transfer of certification status to a new company will be approved until the company provides SSPC with the information and passes the special (first) audit.

Failure to notify the certification coordinator of any major changes within the required time period may result in an automatic six-month suspension from the program.

A shop that has changed its name must certify in writing that it will assume responsibility for any disciplinary actions or violations of federal, state and local regulations issued under the original name. In addition, any violations of the SSPC QP3 program (e.g., written complaints from owners or critical faults) by the shop under its original name will be considered as part of the record of the shop under its new name.

A company may request that SSPC waive the requirement for a special (first) audit before approving the transfer. SSPC will evaluate each request and waive the requirement at its own discretion.

#### **B. Joint Ventures and Auditing**

When SSPC audits a project being done by one or more QP certified shops as a **Joint Venture (JV)**, the audit counts as an audit for all the QP certified companies involved in the JV. That is, if the audit is successful, all the JV QP companies audited share in the success. If the audit is not successful, the audit is unsuccessful for all QP shops involved. In addition, SSPC reserves the right to audit a non-JV project being done by one or more of the joint venture contractors.

#### **C. Suspension for Non-Payment of Fees**

Failure to pay all fees due SSPC in a timely manner can result in a six-month suspension and public notification of the suspension. SSPC will suspend the contractor’s QP3 if it fails to pay all outstanding balances within three business days of the final (second) invoice. For initial and annual applicants that pass the evaluation, certification will be withheld until all fees are paid. Finally, if the contractor chooses to contest or appeal any outstanding balance, the appeal

must be in writing and submitted to the Certification Program Manager within five business days of the final (second) invoice date. Failure to submit a timely written appeal of an outstanding invoice will also result in a six-month suspension mentioned.

#### D. **Formal Complaint Procedure**

Any authorized representative of an agency who hires a certified shop may file a formal complaint against a certified shop if this person has information that the shop does not practice certification procedures. The formal complaint procedure allows the shop to submit information to counter the complaint. An audit may be performed to investigate a complaint.

SSPC is committed to a fair and transparent Complaints and Appeals process regarding our certifications. If you would like to learn more about this process, or to communicate an issue to our Certification Body please contact [certification@sspc.org](mailto:certification@sspc.org) and describe your issue and/or request a phone call back. We will respond within two business days to your email communication. You may also call us at 877-281-7772 to speak to someone about your issue.

#### E. **Administrative Suspension and Change of Company Name**

Change of a company name, ownership or structure does not void a suspension issued by SSPC. Any company that is suspended for failing to meet QP audit standards, SSPC administrative policy or any other policy related to QP3 Certification is restricted from reapplying for certification as a newly formed, merged or renamed company. Recertification in any form is prohibited for the stated duration of the suspension. Once the suspension period has lapsed, any suspension history and records will be transferred to the new business.

Any representatives of the management, including but not limited to an officer, director, superintendent, quality control supervisor, safety director, general manager or stockholder, or any person who exercises directly or indirectly – including through an intermediary person – any degree of ownership of a new, existing or purchased company renders the new, existing or purchased company ineligible for certification while any suspension of the company the person was associated with is in effect. The intent is to prevent management or other key individuals associated with the suspended shop from forming or purchasing a new company or exercising any control over an existing affiliated company (such as through an intermediary person) to avoid the consequences of a QP3 suspension.

A suspended contractor may re-enter the program when the suspension period has lapsed and the conditions for reinstatement have been met. A newly formed, merged or renamed company must submit an application and follow all procedures for QP Certification.

**NOTE:** *For purposes of this document, “**Affiliated Company**” is defined as, “A company, corporation, partnership, joint venture or other business entity operating under a different name than the certified company, which performs surface preparation or coating application or administrative and other support functions for the certified company; and in which an officer, director, owner, partner or stockholder of the certified company, a previously certified company disciplined by SSPC, or the certified company itself, exercises directly or indirectly – such as through an intermediary person or family member – any significant degree of ownership, management or control.”*