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**AWS ACHIEVES MILESTONE OF NEARLY 22,400
ACTIVE CERTIFIED WELDING INSPECTORS**

30th Year Anniversary of CWI Program Marks its Growing Popularity Worldwide

Miami, FL, July 18, 2006 – The American Welding Society (AWS), the world’s largest organization dedicated to advancing the science, technology and application of welding, reached a milestone of nearly 22,400 active Certified Welding Inspectors (CWI), and the program continues to expand worldwide. This achievement reflects the growth of AWS’ distinguished CWI program, which has certified over 52,000 welding inspectors since its launch in 1976, and reinforces the Society’s role in providing organizations worldwide with the highest level of quality workmanship.

Welding inspectors play a critical role in the manufacturing process as they ensure that a weldment meets the criteria of applicable codes and standards. With virtually all construction and manufacturing companies requiring some form of welding, from the production of parts to their maintenance and repair, a career in welding inspection is expected to remain in strong demand. This is evidenced by the strength of AWS’ CWI program, which has experienced nearly 20% growth in the last five years alone. Additionally, high-tech manufacturing using advanced technology and newly developed materials is creating more uses for a highly educated welding workforce and expanding employment opportunities. According to the United States (U.S.) Department of Labor, employers report difficulty finding enough qualified welding professionals, creating even more value for people in this field.

Bob Wiswesser, chair of the AWS Certification Committee and one of the first to be certified by AWS, said, “I am extremely proud of my CWI qualification, which has helped me to accomplish my career goals in the welding industry. Being a CWI has not only been a catalyst for my growth financially and professionally, but it has also taken me to exciting and exotic regions of the world, such as Egypt and Israel. Most of these assignments required CWI as a minimum credential and involved welding inspection oversight on large power plant projects. Other jobs that presented both physical and intellectual challenges included my inspection of one of the second largest open-truss cantilever bridges in the world while being suspended 600 feet above the Delaware River. Becoming a CWI takes hard work and determination, but it can continue to pay off throughout your career and be a stepping stone to several more stimulating professions in the welding field, such as radiographic interpretation and non-destructive testing methods.”

AWS’ CWI program is recognized worldwide for its stringent certification standards, not only requiring applicants to have high skill levels, but also extensive time and experience in the field of welding. The program has been a large contributor to improved weld quality and reduced inspection costs. In fact, the program has become so popular within the U.S., that several countries beyond our borders have also adopted it, generating its considerable growth since going global in 1988. In the last five years alone, AWS’ international certifications have increased by 80% to more than 4,360 from approximately 2,420 in 2001. And the numbers continue to rise. This year, the society expects to

certify approximately 1,000 international CWI's – a would-be record – in over 25 countries across the globe, including India as well as China, which is estimated to be one of the world's largest welding products market. Additionally, AWS plans to expand its CWI operations into new regions, namely Peru and Vietnam, while increasing its operations in Nigeria and Thailand.

“It is encouraging that welders continue to be in high demand within the U.S. and worldwide,” said Walter Herrera, Director of International Business Development and Accreditation Services. “I often receive correspondence from people located in remote regions throughout the world who express aspirations of becoming a world-class welding professional through AWS’ premier certification programs. I have personally witnessed the impact AWS has had on the lives of these individuals, who have excelled in the program and are being presented with various exciting opportunities in the industry. We are proud that our program has contributed to a higher quality welding workforce across the globe and has helped provide a path towards a rewarding and lucrative career in the field of welding.”

AWS offers additional certification programs for welding supervisors, engineers, radiographic interpreters, educators, robotic arc welding operators and technicians, fabricators and more. For more information on AWS’ certification services and programs within and outside of the U.S., please visit the society’s website certification page at <http://www.aws.org/certification> or call the AWS certification department at 800-443-9353.

About AWS

The American Welding Society (AWS) was founded in 1919 as a multifaceted, nonprofit organization with a mission to advance the science, technology and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes, including: brazing, soldering, and thermal spraying. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, AWS serves nearly 50,000 members worldwide. AWS is led by a volunteer organization of officers and directors, and is composed of 22 Districts with more than 200 local Sections throughout the world. For more information, visit the society’s website at www.aws.org.

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