

5. Also, there is a need for the development of a rational performance based fire engineering approach for the design of RC structures. For facilitating such an approach in fire safety design, guidelines on fire scenarios, high temperature material properties, loading configurations and failure criteria should be laid out.

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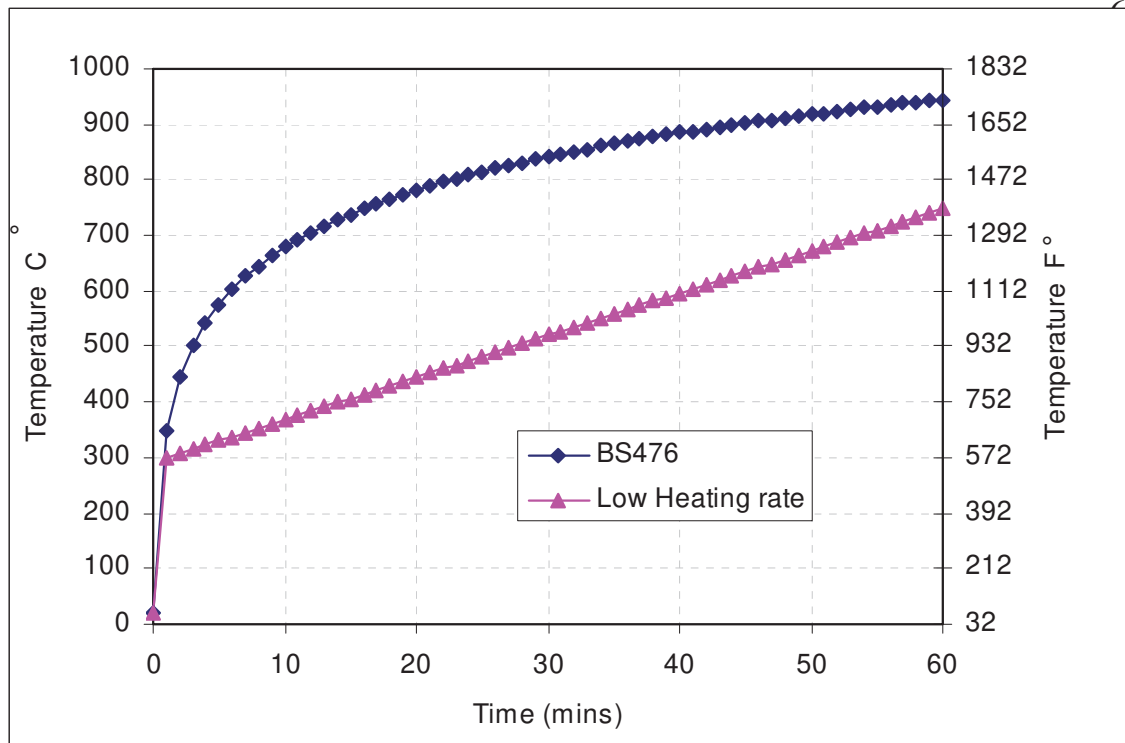


Figure 1 Heating rates used for fire tests on RC columns⁶.

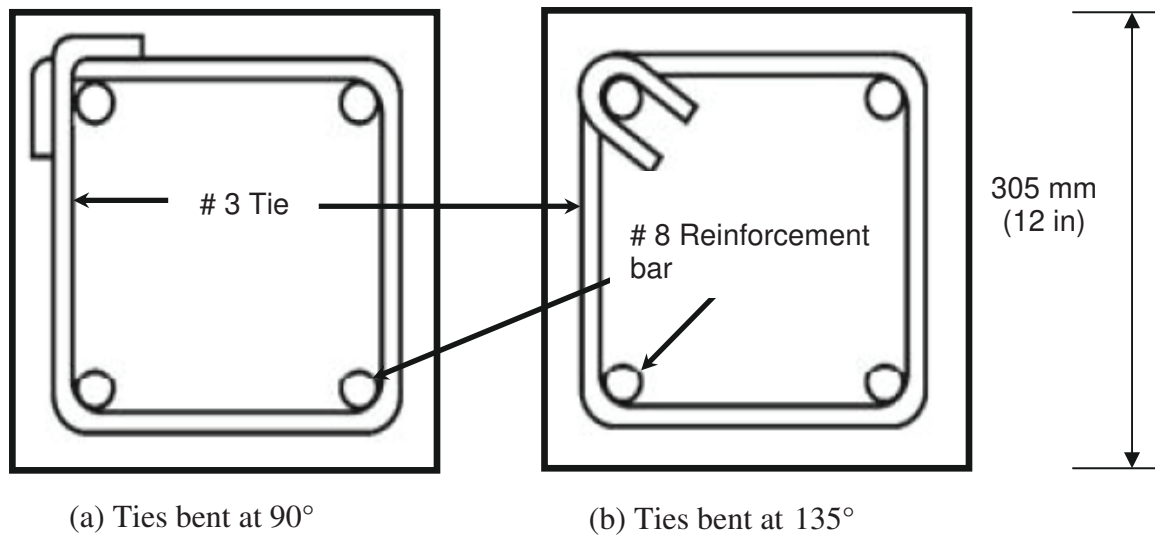


Figure 2 Typical layout of ties used in RC columns⁹.

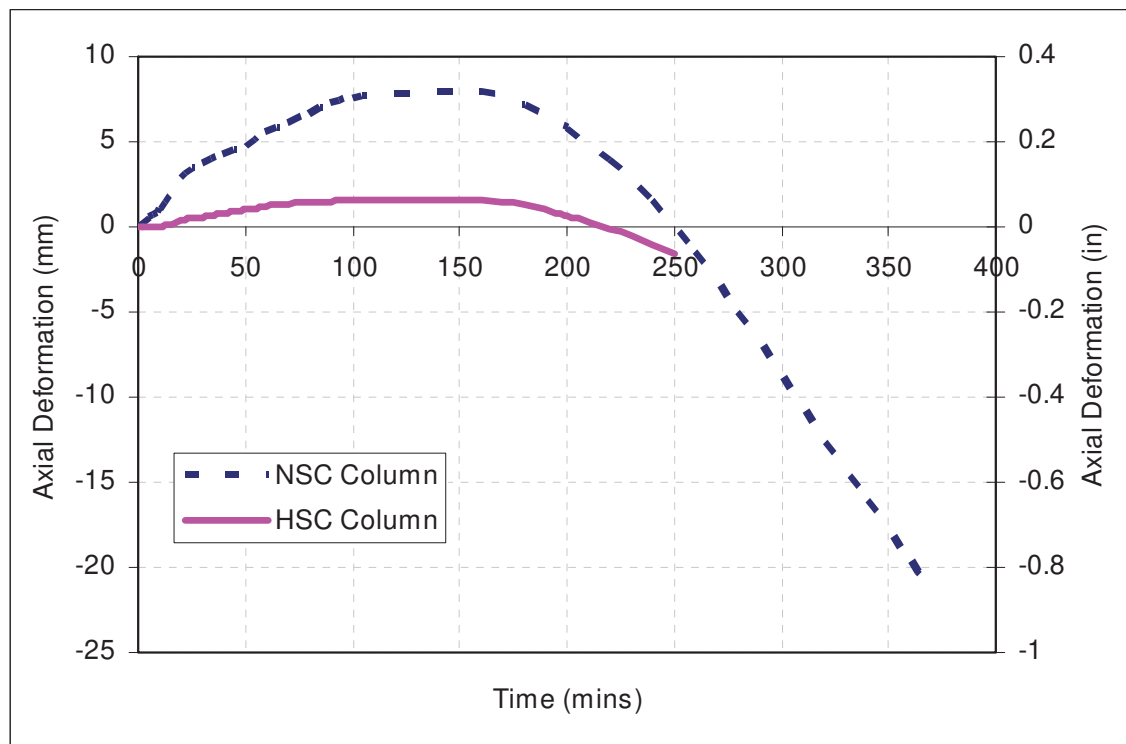


Figure 3 Axial deformation for the HSC and NSC columns⁹.

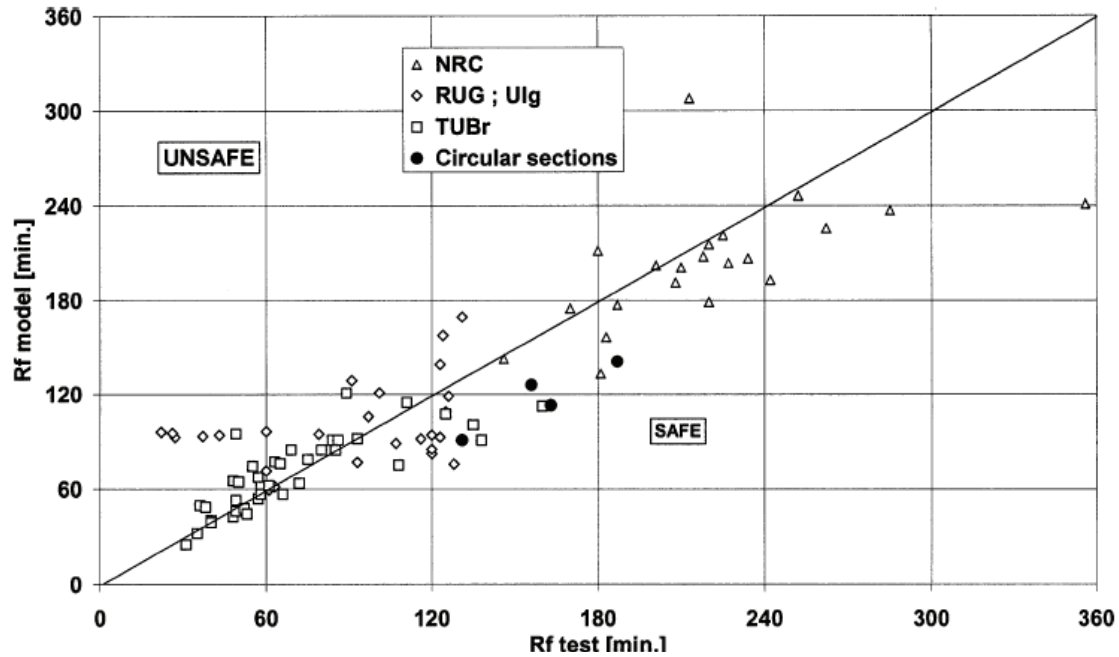


Figure 4 Comparison of fire resistance predictions from simplified equation and test data⁸.

Comparisons of Fire Resistance of RC Beams from Different Codes of Practice

by M.B. Dwaikat and V.K.R Kodur

Synopsis: The fire resistance of reinforced concrete beams, computed as per three codes, namely, ACI 216.1, Eurocode 2, and AS 3600, is compared with that predicted from finite element analysis. A macroscopic finite element model, capable of tracing the behavior of restrained reinforced concrete beams from pre-fire stage to collapse, is used in the analysis. The model accounts for high temperature material properties, fire-induced strains (thermal, transient, and creep strains in addition to mechanical strain) and restraint effects as a result of fire exposure. Since restraint has a significant effect on fire resistance of reinforced concrete beams, the comparison is carried out for four cases of reinforced concrete beams with different boundary conditions. The first case represents a simply supported beam, while the other three cases represent axially restrained, rotationally restrained, and axially and rotationally restrained beams, respectively. Through the results of the case studies, it is shown that there is a large variation in the fire resistance predictions from the three codes, with Eurocode 2 being the most conservative and ACI 216.1 being the least conservative. It is also shown that the degree of axial restraint, rotational restraint, and type of failure criteria have significant influence on the fire resistance of reinforced concrete beams.

Keywords: design codes; fire resistance; fire resistance standards; high temperature; reinforced concrete beams; restraint effect

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INTRODUCTION

Reinforced concrete (RC) structural systems are quite frequently used in high-rise buildings and other built infrastructure due to a number of advantages they provide over other materials. When used in buildings, the provision of appropriate fire safety measures for structural members is an important aspect of design since fire represents one of the most severe environmental conditions to which structures may be subjected in their life time. The fire resistance of RC members is generally established using prescriptive approaches which are based on either standard fire resistance tests or empirical calculation methods.

The current provisions for fire resistance evaluation in codes of practice are mostly prescriptive. While the Eurocode specifications¹ provide some options for performance based fire resistance design, the specifications in American standards are highly prescriptive². In addition, there are major variations in the fire resistance specifications among different codes of practice. As an illustration, a simply supported beam with width of 300 mm (11.8 in) and concrete cover thickness of 40 mm (1.6 in) has a fire resistance of about 210 minutes based on ACI 216.1 Specifications². However, Eurocode 2¹ provisions predict a fire resistance of 120 minutes for this beam. Furthermore, the degree of axial restraint for reinforced concrete beams is not clearly addressed in codes for fire safety design.

RC beams can develop significant restraint forces under fire exposure. The degree of restraint is dependent on the support conditions and will determine the fire behavior and resistance of RC beams. The effect of axial restraint on the fire resistance of RC beams depends on the vertical location (along the sectional height) of the restraint force.

Generally, the axial restraint force in an RC beam is expected to improve the fire resistance of the RC beam through the arch action associated with axial restraint, which increases the strength and the stiffness of the beam under fire exposure³. However, axial restraint forces may lead to spalling of concrete or buckling of the beam (particularly for slender beams) which in turn might reduce the fire resistance of RC beams. Rotational restraint, under fire conditions, is also expected to improve the fire response of an RC beam through the moment redistribution between span (positive moment) and support (negative moment) sections within the length of the beam. Thus, it is essential to account for the fire induced restraint effects for evaluating realistic response of RC beams. At present, design codes, such as ACI 216.1², do not fully account for the fire induced restraint effects in RC beams.

There have been only limited studies on evaluating the fire performance of RC beams. Further, much of the current knowledge on the fire behavior of RC beams is based on standard fire resistance tests under standard fire exposure. Also, the failure is often based on thermal criterion (critical temperature in reinforcing bars) alone, without any due consideration to strength or deflection criterion. There have been limited research studies on evaluating the fire performance of RC beams under realistic (design) fire scenarios. Thus, there is no reliable experimental data, mathematical models or design specifications for predicting the fire resistance of RC beams under design fire scenarios. Additionally, the current approach of determining fire resistance of RC beams, which is generally specified by codes of practice, does not account for a number of factors such as realistic load levels, degree of restraint and actual failure criteria.

This paper presents a comparison of the fire resistance predictions of RC beams from three codes of practice; namely, ACI 216.1², Eurocode 2¹, and AS 3600⁴, with those obtained from the analysis using a macroscopic finite element model³. The comparison is illustrated for four RC beams with different support conditions. The first beam is simply supported, while the remaining three beams are axially restrained, rotationally restrained, and both axially and rotationally restrained, respectively.

CODES OF PRACTICE

In the USA, concrete structures are to be designed in accordance with the American Concrete Institute (ACI-318) standard⁵. While ACI 318 does not contain any fire provisions, it refers to ACI 216.1 standard which gives specifications for fire resistance design of concrete and masonry structures. This standard provides the minimum width and concrete cover thickness required for achieving the required fire resistance rating for RC beams. These requirements differ for restrained and unrestrained support conditions of RC beams as can be seen in [Table 1](#).