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Steel Design Guide

Vertical Bracing Connections— Analysis and Design



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Vertical Bracing Connections— Analysis and Design

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF STEEL CONSTRUCTION

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Preface

This Design Guide provides guidance for the design of braced frame bracing connections based on structural principles and adhering to the 2010 AISC *Specification for Structural Steel Buildings* and the 14th Edition AISC *Steel Construction Manual*. The content expands on the discussion provided in Part 13 of the *Steel Construction Manual*. The design examples are intended to provide a complete design of the selected bracing connection types, including all limit state checks. Both load and resistance factor design and allowable stress design methods are employed in the design examples.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1	5.3	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN FLANGE: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 2	84
1.1 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE.	1	5.4	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN FLANGE WITH GUSSET CONNECTED TO BEAM ONLY: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 3	98
1.2 DESIGN PHILOSOPHY	1	5.5	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN WEB: GENERAL UNIFORM FORCE METHOD . . .	118
CHAPTER 2 COMMON BRACING SYSTEMS. . . .	3	5.6	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN WEB: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 1	147
2.1 ANALYSIS CONSIDERATIONS	3	5.7	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN WEB: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 2	163
2.2 CHEVRON BRACED FRAMES (CENTER TYPE)	3	5.8	CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN WEB WITH GUSSET CONNECTED TO BEAM ONLY: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 3	178
CHAPTER 3 BRACE-TO-GUSSET CONNECTION ARRANGEMENTS.	9	5.9	CHEVRON BRACE CONNECTION	189
3.1 SMALL WIDE-FLANGE BRACES.	9	5.10	NONORTHOGONAL BRACING CONNECTION	205
3.2 LARGE WIDE-FLANGE BRACES.	9	5.11	TRUSS CONNECTION.	237
3.3 ANGLE AND WT-BRACES.	11	5.12	BRACE-TO-COLUMN BASE PLATE CONNECTION	268
3.4 CHANNEL BRACES	11	5.12.1	Strong-Axis Case	268
3.5 FLAT BAR BRACES	11	5.12.2	Weak-Axis Case	284
3.6 HSS BRACES	11			
CHAPTER 4 DISTRIBUTION OF FORCES	17	CHAPTER 6 DESIGN OF BRACING CONNECTIONS FOR SEISMIC RESISTANCE.	291	
4.1 OVERVIEW OF COMMON METHODS. . . .	17	6.1	COMPARISON BETWEEN HIGH-SEISMIC DUCTILE DESIGN AND ORDINARY LOW- SEISMIC DESIGN	291
4.1.1 Corner Connections.	17		Example 6.1a High-Seismic Design in Accordance with the AISC <i>Specification</i> and the AISC <i>Seismic Provisions</i>	292
4.1.2 Central or Chevron Connections	21		Example 6.1b Bracing Connections for Systems not Specifically Detailed for Seismic Resistance ($R=3$)	321
4.1.3 Comparison of Designs—Uniform Force Method vs. Parallel Force Method	22			
4.2 THE UNIFORM FORCE METHOD	24			
4.2.1 The Uniform Force Method— General Case	24			
4.2.2 Nonconcentric Brace Force— Special Case 1	29			
4.2.3 Reduced Vertical Brace Shear Force in Beam-to-Column Connection— Special Case 2	31			
4.2.4 No Gusset-to-Column Connection— Special Case 3	32			
4.2.5 Nonorthogonal Corner Connections	33			
4.2.6 Effect of Frame Distortion	34			
4.3 BRACING CONNECTIONS TO COLUMN BASE PLATES	37			
CHAPTER 5 DESIGN EXAMPLES.	43	APPENDIX A. DERIVATION AND GENERALIZATION OF THE UNIFORM FORCE METHOD	347	
5.1 CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN FLANGE: GENERAL UNIFORM FORCE METHOD	43	A.1	GENERAL METHOD.	347
5.2 CORNER CONNECTION-TO-COLUMN FLANGE: UNIFORM FORCE METHOD SPECIAL CASE 1	78	A.1.1	Beam Control Point.	347
		A.1.2	Gusset Control Point	348
		A.1.3	Determination of Forces.	349
		A.1.4	Accounting for the Beam Reaction . . .	350

Example A.1 Vertical Brace-to-Column Web Connection Using an Extended Single Plate	351
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APPENDIX B. USE OF THE DIRECTIONAL STRENGTH INCREASE FOR FILLET WELDS.....	371
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APPENDIX C. BUCKLING OF GUSSET PLATES	374
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C.1 BUCKLING AS A STRENGTH LIMIT STATE— THE LINE OF ACTION METHOD	374
C.2 BUCKLING AS A HIGH-CYCLE FATIGUE LIMIT STATE—GUSSET PLATE EDGE BUCKLING	374
C.3 BUCKLING AS A LOW-CYCLE FATIGUE LIMIT STATE—GUSSET PLATE FREE EDGE BUCKLING	377

C.4 AN APPROACH TO GUSSET PLATE FREE EDGE BUCKLING USING STATICALLY ADMISSIBLE FORCES (THE ADMISSIBLE FORCE MAINTENANCE METHOD)	380
C.5 APPLICATION OF THE FREE EDGE APPROACH TO EXAMPLE 6.1a	382

APPENDIX D. TRANSFER FORCES.....	383
---	------------

D.1 THE EFFECT OF CONNECTION CONFIGURATION ON THE TRANSFER FORCE.....	383
D.2 PRESENTATION OF TRANSFER FORCES IN DESIGN DOCUMENTS	384
D.3 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	386
D.4 EFFECTS OF MODELING ASSUMPTIONS ON TRANSFER FORCES	387

REFERENCES.....	390
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

This Design Guide illustrates a method for the design of braced frame bracing connections based on structural principles, and presents the design basis and complete design examples illustrating the design of:

1. All orthogonal and nonorthogonal connections involving a brace, a beam and a column (corner type)
2. Connections involving a beam or column and one or two braces, such as chevron or K-bracing, and eccentric braces (center type)
3. Connections of braces to columns at column base plates (base type)
4. Both nonseismic and seismic situations are covered

1.2 DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

All structural design, except for that which is based directly on physical testing, is based either explicitly or implicitly on the principle known as the lower bound theorem of limit analysis. This theorem is important because it allows structural engineers to be confident that 1) their assumptions about the internal force field will not over-predict the strength of an indeterminate structure, and 2) different methodologies for determining an admissible force field, while they may vary significantly in their predictions of the available strength, are nonetheless all valid. This theorem, which was first proven in the form given in the following in the 1950s (Baker et al., 1956), states that:

- Given: An admissible internal force field (i.e., a distribution of internal forces in equilibrium with the applied load)
- Given: Satisfaction of all applicable limit states
- Then: The external load in equilibrium with the internal force field is less than, or at most equal to, the connection capacity.

The lower bound theorem is applicable to ductile limit states, and most connection limit states have some ductility. For instance, bolts in shear undergo significant shear deformation, on the order of $\frac{3}{8}$ in. for a $\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-diameter bolt, before fracture. Limit states such as block shear and net shear can accommodate significant distortion of the material before fracture. Plate or column buckling, while generally conceived as a nonductile limit state, is in a sense a ductile limit state; when a plate or column buckles, it does not become incapable of supporting any load, but rather will continue

to support the buckling load as long as any excess load can be distributed to other components of the structural system. This phenomenon can be observed in the laboratory when a displacement-type testing machine is used. If a force-type machine is used, the load will increase continuously, and kinking and complete collapse will occur.

Actually all structural design relies on the validity of the lower bound theorem. For instance, if a building is modeled by a frame analysis computer program, a certain distribution of column loads will result. This distribution is dependent on thousands of assumptions. Shear connections are assumed not to carry any moment at all, and moment connections are assumed to maintain the angle between members. Neither assumption is true. Therefore, the column design loads at the footings will sometimes be drastically different from the actual loads, if these loads were measured. Some columns will be designed for loads smaller than the true load, and some will be designed for larger loads. Because of the lower bound theorem, this is not a concern.

Ductility can also be provided to an otherwise nonductile system by support flexibility. For instance, transversely loaded fillet welds are known to have limited ductility. If a plate is fillet welded near the center of a column or beam web and subjected to a load transverse to the web, the flexibility of the web under transverse load will tend to mitigate the low ductility of the fillet weld and will allow redistribution to occur. This same effect can be achieved with transversely loaded fillet welds to rigid supports by using a fillet weld larger than that required for the given loads. The larger fillet weld allows the given applied loads to redistribute within the length of the weld without local fracture.

The term “admissible force field” perhaps needs some further explanation. Bracing connections are inherently statically indeterminate. Therefore, there will be many possible force distributions within the connection. All of those force distributions that satisfy equilibrium are said to be “admissible” or “statically admissible.” There are theoretically an infinite number of possible admissible force fields for any statically indeterminate structure. There will also be an infinite number of internal force fields that do not satisfy equilibrium; these are said to be “inadmissible.” If such a force field is used, the lower bound theorem is not valid and any design obtained with this inadmissible force field cannot be said to be safe; i.e., the failure load may be less than the applied load. When an admissible force field is used, the calculated failure load will be less than, or at most equal to, the load at which failure occurs; therefore, a safe design is achieved.

