

## The Most Common Errors in Seismic Design ...And How to Properly Avoid Them

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### Abstract

The paper identifies the most common errors that structural engineers make when performing seismic design and calculations. The paper demonstrates the proper application of Codes and Standards so as to avoid errors and misapplications. The paper initially focuses on low seismic risk design categories (and the surprisingly numerous seismic provisions which apply therein) and then advances to the requirements unique to high seismic risk design categories only.

### Introduction

This paper is based upon IBC 2012, ASCE 7-10, AISC 360-10, ASCE 318-10, ACI 318-11 (including Chapter 21 and Appendix D) and other Standards. A few of the topics/common errors that are addressed include: Amplified seismic force Omega o, Cd deflection amplification, Modal analysis triggers, Rho redundancy factor, 0.7 E for Allowable Stress Design, Ev Vertical seismic effect, Vertical distribution of base shear, Orthogonal effects on corner columns, Diaphragm forces, Accidental torsion, Foundation ties, Unique calculations and detailing for Special Steel Systems, Concrete detailing and splice lengths when subject to high seismic, Wood frame hold-downs, Masonry wall anchors, and Wind governed buildings.

### Seismic Design and Errors

This paper is written in checklist format. It is intended that an engineer could read the list so as to review and verify adequate knowledge of seismic design and common errors, as well as on a per project basis when checking a project by the engineer or by others. The basis of this paper is ASCE 7-10, and IBC 2012. Referenced sections are highlighted in brackets thus: [ASCE 7 Section Number].

#### 1. Seismic Design Category A

[11.4.1] [11.7] [1.4]

[1.4 General Structural Integrity]

When in Seismic Design Category A, you should not use any of the provisions of Chapter 12. Instead, use the General Structural Integrity provisions of Section 1.4. Note that the General Structural Integrity provisions have some loads which may often be erroneously unaccounted for. The forces required include 1% dead load, 5% of dead plus live load for beam connections, and 20% of wall weight for wall connections. Non-Structural Components in Seismic Design Category A are exempt from Seismic Design requirements, as stated in Section 11.7.

#### 2. Importance Factor

[11.5.1] [Table 1.5-2] [Table 1.5-1] [IBC Table 1604.5]

The Importance factor is based upon Risk Category and the associated Life Safety, Hazard and Essential nature of the structure. Both the ASCE 7 and IBC tables should be reviewed. A typical building can sometimes evolve into an  $I_p$  equal to 1.25 or 1.5 when occupancy or use expands. Examples include relatively small churches (occupancy greater than 300), or a building where hazardous materials are stored. It should be noted that for building design  $I_p = 1.0, 1.25, \text{ or } 1.5$  but for non-structural components  $I_p = 1.0, \text{ or } 1.5$  only [13.1.3] such that  $I_p$  may not equal  $I_e$ , and in some instances  $I_p$  may be less than  $I_e$ .

#### 3. Continuous Load Path

[12.1.3] ASCE 7 has very specific provisions for many elements such collectors, connections, diaphragms, walls, etc. However, in addition to the specifics, the engineer is required by Section 12.1.3 to provide a continuous load path for all inertial forces from their origin to the foundation. Such load path shall conform to the relative stiffness and strength of the elements which exist in the structure.

#### 4. R-Factor

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**Marco Cascella**



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## **Table of Contents Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T**

1. Understanding the eBook Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T

- Personalized Recommendations
  - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T User Reviews and Ratings
  - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T Free and Paid eBooks
    - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T Public Domain eBooks
    - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T eBook Subscription Services
    - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T Budget-Friendly Options
  6. Navigating Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T eBook Formats
    - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
    - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T Compatibility with Devices
    - Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T Enhanced eBook Features
  7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
    - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Highlighting and Note-Taking Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Interactive Elements Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  8. Staying Engaged with Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Joining Online Reading Communities
    - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
    - Following Authors and Publishers Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Benefits of a Digital Library
    - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
    - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
    - Minimizing Distractions
    - Managing Screen Time
  11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Setting Reading Goals Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
    - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
  12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T

- Fact-Checking eBook Content of Common Errors In Seismic Design How To Avoid Them T
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
- Integration of Multimedia Elements
  - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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