

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_e 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_e = 1.0, 1.25, or 1.5 but for non-structural components I_p = 1.0, 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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