

Zeitschrift: IABSE reports = Rapports AIPC = IVBH Berichte
Band: 47 (1983)

Artikel: Causes of some steel structures failures
Autor: Turi, Franjo
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-36650>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 01.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Causes of Some Steel Structure Failures

Origine de la ruine de quelques constructions métalliques

Ursachen des Versagens einiger Stahlkonstruktionen

Franjo TURČIĆ
Senior Lecturer
University of Zagreb
Zagreb, Yugoslavia



Franjo Turčić, born 1939, got his civil engineering and M.Sc. degrees at the University of Zagreb, Yugoslavia. For twenty years he has been involved in different phases of the building process: design and calculation, construction, quality assurance, now doing research and teaching at Zagreb University.

SUMMARY

This paper contains some short reports about several steel structure failures that happened on the territory of Croatia in Yugoslavia between 1967 and 1982. These failures are considered from the quality assurance's standpoint. Also, some personal opinions about the role of quality assurance within the building process are given.

RESUME

L'article traite de quelques cas de ruine de constructions métalliques qui ont eu lieu entre 1967 et 1982 sur le territoire de la Croatie, en Yougoslavie. Ces écroulements ont été analysés au point de vue de l'assurance de la qualité. L'exposé est suivi de quelques considérations de l'auteur sur le rôle de l'assurance de la qualité dans le processus de la construction.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel enthält knappe Berichte über das Versagen einiger Stahlkonstruktionen, die in Kroatien (Jugoslawien) von 1967 bis 1982 vorgekommen sind. Diese Versagensfälle werden hier vom Standpunkt der Qualitätssicherung analysiert. Einige Überlegungen über die Bedeutung der Qualitätssicherung im Bauwesen werden angefügt.



1. CAUSES OF SOME STEEL STRUCTURE FAILURES

Series No.	Structure discription	Failure	Place	Year	Load in moment of failure
------------	-----------------------	---------	-------	------	---------------------------

1.	Sugar Silo D-45 m, H-30 m	Collapse during erection, H-22 m	Vrbas	1979	Wind cca 30 m/sec.
----	------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------	------	--------------------

Insufficient stability of the cylindrical shell without wind girder and any erection assurance, with a big unstiffened opening on mantle (6x18 m) on the wind-side.

2.	Corn Silo D-8,28 m, H-32m (6 cells)	Collapse of one cell in use during lateral unloading (after 3 years of limited use)	Daruvar	1980	Cell filled with wheat
----	---	---	---------	------	------------------------

The cause of the failure was not officially determined, but there were three obvious defects of structure: insufficient stability of cylindrical shell, increased initial geometrical imperfections, shortage of loadbearing capacity of longitudinal bolted connections (The hole diameter greater than bolt diameter by 2 mm, thread length equal to bolt length).

3.	Cement Silo (Capacity 10 MN)	Collapse in use (after 2 years of use)	Split	1981	Silo filled (70%)
----	---------------------------------	--	-------	------	-------------------

The official report says that there were several different design defects and also possibility of a "shake down" effect in the place where the shell is supported.

4.	Water tank, 2200 m ³ (on a water-tower above a restaurant). The tank was designed as two ventricle inside two concentric cylindrical shells, with free upper edge.	Collapse of inner empty cylinder in use	Vukovar	1970	The inner ventricle was empty, and the outer was full of water
----	---	---	---------	------	--

Insufficient stability of cylindrical shell under outside pressure because of: increased initial geometrical imperfections, residual welding stresses and poor design (inadequate edge conditions).

5.	Corn Silo (capacity 100 MN)	Collapse of one cell in use	Podravska Slatina	-	Cell was filled
----	--------------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------	---	-----------------

Insufficient stability of cylindrical shell because of: inadequate appreciation of loading conditions, inadequate appreciation of edge conditions of vertical stiffeners, poor design of stiffener splices without continuity on the level of horizontal shell splices.

6.	Tanks D-32 m H- 8 m	Collapse of 5 tanks during erection	Obrovac	1974	Strong wind
----	------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------	------	-------------

Insufficient assurance during erection.

7. Single story industrial building with steel roof trusses. Collapse in use Gerovo 1972 Snow 2-3 kN/m²
Area 840 m², Span 20 m.

Poor workmanship of butt welds in a lower chord tension member.

8. Single story industrial building with steel roof trusses. Collapse in use Virovitica - Snow cca 1.8 kN/m²
Area 2000 m², Span 24 m.

Poor workmanship of butt welds in lower chord tension member.

9. Single story industrial building with steel roof trusses. Collapse in use Virovitica - Snow cca 1.8 kN/m²
Area 2000 m²,
Span 20 m.

Load above the standard (0.75 kN/m²). Also inadequate treatment of supposed static system.

10. Single story warehouse with steel roof trusses. Collapse in use Skradin 1976 Snow cca 1.0 kN/m²
Area 600 m²,
Span 10 m.

Serious mistake in erection. The tie rods of main roof girders were connected with bolts M12 instead of M14, as it was designed. The bolt holes were made by burning.

11. Roadway bridge with trusses above floor. Collapse in use Karlovac 1981 Special transport

Special cargo hitched on a truss member. Precaution measures were not strict enough.

12. Roadway bridge with trusses above floor and lateral bracing between upper chords. Collapse in use after a special cargo hitched on a member of bracing. Ličko Lešće 1980 Special transport

Precaution measures were not strict enough.

13. Lamp posts. Collapse in use Zagreb - Wind

Underestimation of wind effects. Neglected influence of the dynamics. Difference between workshop drawings and original drawings.

14. Steam generator for nuclear power plant (NPP). Overturned in transport. Between Zagreb and Rijeka - -

Transportation procedure was not prepared professionally enough.

15. Stator of turbine for NPP. Overturned during transport. Krško - -

Underestimation of influence. Precaution measures were not strict enough.



16. River dam (water supply for NPP)	Collapse of all seven gates	Krško	-	High water wave
Grossly inadequate execution of operational procedure, and poor design.				
17. Steam generator (NPP)	Excessive vibrations of U-tubes	Krško	-	Prestarting operations
Inadequate appreciation of real behaviour of structure.				
18. Reactor make up water storage tank (NPP)	Rupture during filling	Krško	-	Pressure too high
Inadequate execution of filling procedure.				
19. Auxiliary feedwater system (NPP)	Deformation of pipes	Krško	-	Pre-starting operations
Poor design.				
20. Condensate pump (NPP)	Erosion on rotor and stator	Krško	-	Pre-starting operations
Poor workmanship.				

Note:

Failures described under 14 to 20 happened either during building phase or pre-starting operations, between 1977 to 1982. During all that time quality assurance was implemented against USA Model of QA for NPP.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN THE BUILDING PROCESS

2.1. Experience gained from the failures described

Most of the described failures occurred also because of gross human errors, that happened in different phases of building process. Most of them could have been discovered with a little additional checking, or in some cases without any additional checking, if there existed a more efficient QA system. Referred are only the cases of collapses or failures that have caused unforeseen costs and delays (e.g. the causes in NPP Krško), but not very many causes where gross errors have been noticed on time, either in planning phase or in construction phase, after which corrective actions have been taken.

Phase	Design	Construction	Design and construction	Use	Design and use	Total
Description case No.	3,5,13,17,19	1,6,7,8,10,14,12,20	2,4	11,12,18	10,16	
Number of cases	5	8	2	3	2	20
%	25	40	10	15	10	

Table 1 Phase of building process in which gross error has occurred

Possibilities of discovery	C a s e	%
a) Discovery probable with additional checking		
in phase of:		
Planning:	3,5,9,13,14,15,16,17,19	45
Construction	4,8,10,20	20
Use	11,12	10
b) Discovery probable without any additional checking	1,2,6,7,17	25

Table 2 Possibilities of Error Discovery

Described cases of failures refer to the structures that could be classified as "middle or low level of technology".

Gross human errors occurred because jobs were entrusted to the people with insufficient knowledge or negligent attitude to the job. That was possible because of absence of effective QA.

Most countries already have some kind of a more or less effective "classical" QA system within the industry and within the building process. The question is, are there good reasons for some changes, particularly in construction? I think the answer is yes, both in technically developed countries as well in those which are not.

It would be a mistake if a country, through its technical regulations, implemented a QA system completely against Appendix B to 10CFR 50 /USA/ in the construction field, because this system as a whole, as a society game, is necessary and tolerable for the components of highest technology, e.g. nuclear industry, but the same system would be an inadequate and unnecessary handicap in civil engineering. Within the building process, a QA system against a new concept would be useful and necessary, in the form of regulations and guidances, but this should be an appropriate and simplified level of QA programme. However, in the internal policy, rules and organization of a construction firm, it is reasonable and useful to implement and accept all the principles and concepts of the 18 criteria, Appendix B, which has already been done by many world known firms and manufacturers outside nuclear industry, for competition and economic reasons.

However, everyone should be aware that efficiency of the QA system would essentially oscillate in different countries depending on their national system of contract and legal liability, motivation and technical level. The danger in implementation of QA lies in formalism and bureaucracy of the process. It could be expected that in some countries firms taking part in building process will accept QA principles and establish quite perfect QA manuals, procedures and organization, but only formally. Actually they will not implement it truly against known principles, and for example quality assurance will not have sufficient authority and will not be independent from production, etc.

IABSE, because of its international respectability should prepare a document on QA. This document could be a model for a national standard on QA. It shall contain only principles and aims. Good examples are standards: BS 5750 Part 1,2 and 3 CSA Z 299.1 to Z 299.4. These are standards for general industrial use, with three or four basic levels of quality programs, including guidelines for selection of appropriate level of quality program in each individual case.

Leere Seite
Blank page
Page vide