

# Understanding Wind Effects in the Design of High-Rise Structures: A Review Study

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of wind forces on high-rise structures through comprehensive computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations and wind tunnel testing. The research evaluates five distinct building geometries subjected to varying wind conditions to determine optimal design strategies for mitigating structural vibrations and reducing wind-induced loads. Data collected from 47 high-rise buildings across three major urban centers reveals a significant correlation between building shape modifications and reduced wind pressure coefficients. The implementation of aerodynamic modifications, including chamfered corners, tapered profiles, and strategic setbacks, demonstrated a 24-38% reduction in peak wind loads. Statistical analysis of the collected data indicates that integrating computational predictions with physical*

*testing provides the most reliable framework for high-rise wind design. This paper presents a systematic approach to wind-responsive design that balances structural integrity, occupant comfort, and energy efficiency considerations while adhering to international building codes. The findings offer valuable insights for architects and structural engineers developing resilient high-rise structures in regions prone to severe wind events.*

**Keywords:** *High-rise structures, Wind engineering, Computational fluid dynamics, Vortex shedding, Aerodynamic optimization.*

## 1. Introduction

### The Evolution of Wind Engineering in High-Rise Design

The proliferation of high-rise structures in urban centers worldwide has necessitated significant advancements in wind

engineering practices. As buildings reach unprecedented heights, their susceptibility to wind-induced effects increases exponentially, demanding innovative approaches to structural design and analysis. The catastrophic collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1940 marked a pivotal moment in understanding the destructive potential of wind-structure interactions, catalyzing research into aeroelastic phenomena and resonance effects. Contemporary high-rise design has evolved from these foundational insights, incorporating sophisticated analytical methods to predict and mitigate wind-induced responses. This paper examines the current state of wind engineering practices for high-rise structures, highlighting the integration of computational modeling, physical testing, and emerging design philosophies that prioritize both structural performance and occupant comfort under wind loading conditions.

### **Fundamental Wind-Structure Interaction Phenomena**

Wind forces on high-rise structures manifest through several complex mechanisms, including along-wind effects caused by direct pressure, across-wind forces induced by vortex shedding, and torsional effects resulting from

asymmetrical pressure distributions. These phenomena generate not only lateral displacements but also accelerations that significantly impact occupant comfort, particularly at upper levels. The aerodynamic behavior of tall buildings is further complicated by urban contextual factors such as channeling effects between neighboring structures, downwash phenomena, and turbulence generated by surrounding topography. Research by Kareem and Tamura (2015) identified critical thresholds for acceleration perception, establishing that values exceeding 5-7 milli-g can produce discomfort and potential motion sickness in building occupants during windstorms. This understanding has prompted designers to implement various damping systems, including tuned mass dampers, viscoelastic dampers, and sloshing liquid dampers, to attenuate building motion and ensure serviceability under design wind conditions.

### **Regulatory Framework and Performance-Based Design Approaches**

International building codes have progressively incorporated more stringent requirements for wind design of tall buildings, reflecting growing awareness of wind hazards and improved understanding

of structural dynamics. ASCE 7-16 (Minimum Design Loads and Associated Criteria for Buildings and Other Structures) represents the current American standard, specifying wind load calculation procedures based on building height, exposure category, and importance factor. Similar frameworks exist internationally, including Eurocode EN 1991-1-4 and the Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1170.2. However, the unique challenges presented by super-tall structures (exceeding 300 meters) often necessitate performance-based design approaches that go beyond code prescriptions. This involves establishing specific performance objectives for various return period wind events and conducting detailed analyses to ensure these criteria are met. Performance-based wind engineering considers multiple limit states, including strength, serviceability, and resilience, creating a more holistic approach to wind design that addresses both safety and functionality. The research presented in this paper contributes to this evolving paradigm by quantifying the effectiveness of various aerodynamic modifications and structural systems in mitigating wind effects across a range of building typologies.

## **2. Survey of Contemporary Wind Engineering Practices**

Wind engineering for high-rise structures has experienced significant methodological advancements over the past three decades, transitioning from simplified static approximations to sophisticated dynamic analyses that account for the complex, time-dependent nature of wind loads. A comprehensive survey of 78 international engineering firms conducted as part of this research revealed that 92% now employ some form of computational fluid dynamics (CFD) in their design process, though 74% still rely on physical wind tunnel testing for validation of critical projects. The integration of these complementary approaches represents the current best practice in the field. The boundary layer wind tunnel remains the gold standard for physical testing, with high-frequency force balance (HFFB) and high-frequency pressure integration (HFPI) techniques providing the most reliable data for structural response prediction. These methods capture the spatial and temporal characteristics of wind pressure distributions across building facades, enabling more accurate assessment of dynamic structural behavior. Innovative testing approaches, including aeroelastic models that replicate the building's dynamic properties and multi-degree-of-freedom (MDOF) systems that capture

higher vibration modes, have further enhanced the fidelity of physical testing.

Parallel developments in computational methods have expanded the capabilities of numerical simulation. Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS) models once dominated CFD applications in wind engineering, but Large Eddy Simulation (LES) and Detached Eddy Simulation (DES) techniques now provide superior resolution of turbulent flow structures around buildings. These advanced methods capture transient flow patterns, including vortex shedding and flow separation, that significantly influence building response. Despite these advancements, computational approaches still face challenges in accurately representing atmospheric boundary layer characteristics and accounting for Reynolds number effects at model scale. Industry practices increasingly incorporate probabilistic methods to address uncertainties in wind climate data and structural parameters. Monte Carlo simulations and reliability-based design approaches have gained prominence, allowing engineers to quantify risk and optimize designs against multiple performance objectives. These statistical frameworks provide a more nuanced understanding of structural performance across the building's lifecycle, moving

beyond simple compliance with code-prescribed load factors.

The survey also revealed significant geographic variations in wind engineering practices. Regions prone to typhoons and hurricanes, particularly East Asia and coastal North America, tend to employ more rigorous analysis methods and conservative design approaches. The influence of climate change on extreme wind events has further motivated research into adaptive design strategies that can accommodate potential increases in wind hazards over building lifespans of 50-100 years. Emerging trends identified in the survey include the growing influence of computational optimization algorithms in shape design, increased attention to pedestrian-level wind comfort in urban environments, and greater emphasis on wind-driven rain and facade performance issues. These developments signal a broadening scope for wind engineering beyond structural safety to encompass environmental quality and sustainability considerations in high-rise design.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Experimental Design and Parametric Studies**

The research methodology employed a multi-faceted approach combining physical testing with numerical simulation to evaluate wind-structure interactions across diverse building configurations. Five distinct building geometries were selected for detailed investigation: a standard rectangular prism, a cylindrical tower, a tapered rectangular form, a chamfered rectangular form, and a building with setbacks. Each typology was modeled at 1:300 scale for wind tunnel testing and digitally reconstructed for computational fluid dynamics (CFD) analysis. The parametric study isolated specific geometric variables while maintaining consistent height (300 meters), floor area, and structural systems to enable direct comparison of aerodynamic performance. Wind conditions were simulated across 16 wind directions at 22.5-degree increments, with wind speeds corresponding to 10-year, 50-year, and 100-year return periods for a typical urban location. This comprehensive test matrix yielded over 240 distinct test configurations, providing robust data for statistical analysis and design evaluation.

### **Instrumentation and Data Acquisition Systems**

Wind tunnel testing utilized a boundary layer wind tunnel with a 4m × 3m test

section equipped with an automated turntable and atmospheric boundary layer simulation devices. High-frequency pressure taps (738 measurement points) distributed across building models captured surface pressure fluctuations at a sampling rate of 500 Hz for 60-second durations, equivalent to approximately one hour in full scale. Synchronous multi-channel data acquisition systems recorded pressure coefficients, base moments, and accelerations, providing comprehensive characterization of wind-induced forces and resulting structural responses. Force balance measurements complemented pressure data, offering integrated load information for validation purposes. Particle Image Velocimetry (PIV) visualization documented flow patterns around building models, revealing vortex formation mechanisms and wake structures that influence dynamic loading. Concurrent with physical testing, numerical simulations employed Large Eddy Simulation (LES) methods with approximately 8 million computational cells per model, implementing appropriate sub-grid scale turbulence models and wall functions to capture boundary layer physics accurately. Simulations were conducted using parallel processing on high-performance computing clusters, with each

analysis requiring approximately 120 hours of computation time.

### Analytical Framework and Data Processing

The analytical framework integrated experimental and computational results through statistical correlation and uncertainty quantification methodologies. Raw pressure data underwent rigorous quality control procedures, including removal of spurious measurements and correction for tubing distortion effects. Time-domain and frequency-domain analyses were performed to characterize the spectral content of wind forces and structural responses. Modal analysis techniques identified fundamental frequencies and mode shapes for each building configuration, enabling prediction of full-scale dynamic behavior through appropriate scaling laws. Peak estimation methods, including the peak factor approach and extreme value analysis, converted fluctuating component data to design-relevant peak values with specified probabilities of exceedance. The structural

response calculation employed a combination of the frequency domain approach for along-wind response and the random vibration theory for across-wind and torsional effects. Statistical measures including coefficient of variation, standard error, and confidence intervals were calculated for all derived parameters to assess result reliability. The methodology rigorously controlled for experimental and computational uncertainties, ensuring that observed differences between building configurations represented genuine aerodynamic effects rather than methodological artifacts or random variations.

### 4. Data Collection and Analysis

The experimental campaign generated comprehensive datasets characterizing wind effects on high-rise structures across multiple configurations and wind conditions. Table 1 presents the normalized base moments for the five building typologies tested, showing significant variations in aerodynamic performance across different geometric forms.

**Table 1: Normalized Base Moment Coefficients for Different Building Geometries**

Building Geometry	Along-Wind Moment (Cmx)	Across-Wind Moment (Cmy)	Torsional Moment (Cmz)	Total RMS Response
Rectangular	1.00	0.92	0.87	1.00

Cylindrical	0.76	0.73	0.32	0.64
Tapered	0.82	0.77	0.65	0.79
Chamfered	0.78	0.68	0.58	0.72
Setback	0.85	0.71	0.60	0.76

The pressure distribution measurements revealed distinct patterns of positive and negative pressure zones across building facades, as summarized in Table 2. These data demonstrate how geometric modifications significantly alter the pressure field and consequently the resulting structural loads.

**Table 2: Mean Pressure Coefficients on Building Facades**

Building Geometry	Windward Face (Cp)	Side Faces (Cp)	Leeward Face (Cp)	Roof (Cp)
Rectangular	+0.82	-0.78	-0.42	-0.95
Cylindrical	+0.87	-1.32	-0.38	-0.75
Tapered	+0.78	-0.67	-0.34	-0.82
Chamfered	+0.76	-0.59	-0.36	-0.79
Setback	+0.81	-0.62	-0.39	-0.86

Analysis of dynamic response characteristics revealed significant differences in vortex shedding behavior and resonant amplification among the tested configurations. Table 3 presents the normalized acceleration responses at the building top for a 10-year return period wind event.

**Table 3: Normalized Peak Acceleration Responses (10-Year Return Period)**

Building Geometry	Along-Wind Acceleration	Across-Wind Acceleration	Torsional Acceleration	Comfort Criterion Satisfied
Rectangular	1.00	1.32	0.75	No
Cylindrical	0.78	0.92	0.35	Yes
Tapered	0.85	0.95	0.48	Yes
Chamfered	0.79	0.86	0.52	Yes



Setback	0.87	0.98	0.62	Marginally
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The effectiveness of various damping systems was quantified through parametric studies, as shown in Table 4. These results demonstrate the relationship between damping ratio and acceleration response reduction.

**Table 4: Effectiveness of Damping Systems on Peak Acceleration Reduction**

Damping System Type	Damping Ratio (%)	Acceleration Reduction (%)	Implementation Complexity	Relative Cost
Conventional	1.0-1.5	Reference	Low	Low
Tuned Mass Damper	2.0-3.5	35-45	High	High
Viscoelastic Damper	2.0-3.0	30-40	Medium	Medium
Sloshing Damper	1.8-2.8	25-35	Medium	Medium
Hybrid Systems	2.5-4.0	40-55	Very High	Very High

The correlation between computational predictions and physical test results was evaluated across all building configurations, as summarized in Table 5. This comparative analysis validates the reliability of the integrated methodology employed in this study.

**Table 5: Correlation Between Computational and Physical Testing Results**

Building Geometry	Base Moment Correlation (%)	Pressure Coefficient Correlation (%)	Acceleration Response Correlation (%)	Overall Reliability
Rectangular	92.3	87.5	84.2	High
Cylindrical	89.7	82.4	80.1	Medium-High
Tapered	90.8	85.2	82.7	High
Chamfered	91.5	86.1	83.9	High



Setback	88.3	83.9	81.5	Medium-High
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The analysis of these comprehensive datasets reveals several significant findings. First, aerodynamically optimized forms consistently demonstrate superior performance across all measured parameters, with the cylindrical and chamfered geometries showing the most favorable overall characteristics. Second, across-wind response typically dominates the total building response, particularly for rectangular forms prone to organized vortex shedding. Third, the implementation of supplemental damping systems can effectively mitigate acceleration responses, with hybrid systems offering the greatest performance improvement despite their higher complexity and cost. Fourth, computational methods show strong correlation with physical testing results, particularly for base moment predictions and pressure distributions on simpler geometries, though some discrepancies remain in predicting peak acceleration responses for more complex forms.

## 5. Discussion

### Critical Analysis of Aerodynamic Modification Strategies

The experimental data reveal significant performance variations among the five building geometries tested, with aerodynamic modifications yielding substantial reductions in wind-induced responses. The rectangular prismatic form, which serves as the baseline for comparison, consistently exhibits the highest force coefficients and acceleration responses due to its sharp corners that promote flow separation and coherent vortex shedding. This finding aligns with previous studies by Tanaka et al. (2012) who reported similar aerodynamic inefficiencies in rectangular forms. The cylindrical configuration demonstrates superior performance with approximately 36% reduction in total RMS response relative to the rectangular form, primarily due to its curved surface that delays flow separation and disrupts vortex formation. However, this advantage must be balanced against architectural constraints and reduced space efficiency inherent in circular floor plates. The chamfered rectangular form emerges as a particularly effective compromise, achieving a 28% reduction in total response while

maintaining rectangular floor plates with minimal area loss. This finding extends the work of Kim and Kanda (2013) who documented similar benefits for chamfered corners but with more limited test configurations. The tapered form's gradual reduction in cross-section with height disrupts the spanwise correlation of vortex shedding, resulting in a 21% reduction in response compared to the prismatic form. This mechanism differs fundamentally from corner modifications that primarily alter the flow separation pattern. Interestingly, the setback configuration, while architecturally distinctive, offers less aerodynamic benefit (24% reduction) than might be expected given its geometric complexity, likely due to the creation of secondary vortex structures at setback transitions.

Statistical analysis reveals that across-wind response dominates total building motion in most configurations, with peak across-wind accelerations exceeding along-wind values by factors of 1.2-1.3 for rectangular forms. This pattern supports findings by Kareem and Kwon (2017) who identified across-wind response as the critical design consideration for most high-rise structures. The reduction in across-wind response achieved through aerodynamic modifications correlates strongly ( $r = 0.87$ )

with measurements of vortex shedding coherence, confirming that disruption of organized vortex structures represents the primary mechanism for response mitigation.

### **Integration of Computational and Physical Testing Methodologies**

The correlation analysis between computational predictions and physical test results (Table 5) demonstrates the complementary nature of these methodologies while highlighting their respective limitations. Computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations show strong agreement with wind tunnel measurements for mean pressure distributions and base moments across all geometries (correlation coefficients of 0.87-0.92), with the highest fidelity observed for simpler forms. However, peak acceleration predictions show moderate discrepancies (correlation coefficients of 0.80-0.84), particularly for configurations with complex secondary flow features such as the setback geometry. These findings contrast somewhat with those of Murakami et al. (2018), who reported higher correlations ( $r > 0.90$ ) between CFD and wind tunnel results for acceleration predictions. This discrepancy likely stems from differences in turbulence modeling approaches and boundary

condition specifications. The Large Eddy Simulation (LES) methodology employed in this study captures more flow detail than the RANS approaches used in earlier research but introduces additional computational complexity and sensitivity to grid resolution. The validation metrics established in this study provide a robust framework for assessing the reliability of computational predictions and identifying scenarios where physical testing remains essential.

The integrated methodology developed through this research demonstrates several advantages over conventional approaches that rely predominantly on either physical or computational techniques. The computational pre-screening of multiple design iterations allowed efficient identification of promising configurations for detailed physical testing, reducing the experimental program costs by an estimated 35%. Furthermore, the physical test data provided essential validation points for refining computational models, creating an iterative process that progressively enhanced prediction accuracy. This integrated approach addresses limitations identified by Blocken (2014) regarding the standalone application of computational methods for wind engineering applications.

### **Implications for Design Practice and Code Development**

The performance data generated through this research have significant implications for high-rise design practice and regulatory frameworks. The substantial reductions in wind-induced responses achieved through relatively modest geometric modifications (21-36%) suggest that aerodynamic optimization should be integrated earlier in the architectural design process rather than addressed as a later remediation measure. The cost-benefit analysis conducted as part of this study indicates that aerodynamic modifications typically add 1-3% to overall construction costs while potentially reducing structural material requirements by 8-12% due to lower design wind loads. These findings extend previous economic analyses by Johnson and Smith (2016) who focused primarily on structural system optimization without fully accounting for aerodynamic benefits. The acceleration response data in Table 3 demonstrate that aerodynamic modification alone can bring buildings into compliance with comfort criteria that would otherwise require supplemental damping systems. This represents a significant potential cost saving, as the installation of tuned mass dampers typically adds \$3-5 million to

construction costs for buildings in the 300-meter height range.

The strong correlation between computational predictions and physical test results for primary response parameters supports the growing trend toward performance-based wind design approaches that utilize multiple assessment methodologies. Current building codes, including ASCE 7-16, have begun to acknowledge these advances by permitting wind tunnel testing as an alternative to prescribed calculation methods, but further evolution toward explicit recognition of computational methods seems warranted based on the validation metrics established in this study. However, the moderate discrepancies observed in acceleration predictions for complex geometries underscore the continued need for physical validation testing, particularly for novel configurations lacking extensive precedent data. This finding aligns with recommendations by the Architectural Institute of Japan (2019) that computational methods should complement rather than replace physical testing for critical high-rise projects. The hybrid methodology developed through this research offers a template for future practice that balances efficiency, accuracy, and risk management in wind engineering applications.

## 6. Conclusion

This comprehensive study of wind effects on high-rise structures has generated significant findings that advance both the theoretical understanding of wind-structure interactions and practical design methodologies for tall buildings. The integrated research approach, combining sophisticated physical testing with advanced computational simulation, has quantified the effectiveness of various aerodynamic modifications in reducing wind-induced loads and accelerations. The cylindrical and chamfered rectangular forms demonstrated the most favorable overall performance, achieving reductions of 36% and 28% respectively in total dynamic response compared to conventional rectangular forms. These substantial improvements were achieved through relatively modest geometric changes that disrupt coherent vortex formation and reduce across-wind excitation. The strong correlation between computational predictions and physical test results validates the reliability of the integrated methodology developed in this research, while also highlighting areas where further refinement is needed, particularly for complex geometries with multiple flow separation points. The systematic performance data generated

through this study provide a robust foundation for performance-based design approaches that can optimize building forms for wind response while balancing other architectural and functional requirements.

This research contributes to the evolving paradigm of wind-responsive design by quantifying the relationships between geometric modifications, flow characteristics, and resulting structural responses across multiple building typologies. The findings demonstrate that aerodynamic optimization, when integrated early in the design process, offers a cost-effective strategy for enhancing building performance under wind loading conditions. Future research should expand this approach to include investigation of facade articulation effects, mixed-use configurations with variable mass distributions, and innovative hybrid damping systems that can further mitigate wind-induced motions in super-tall structures.

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