

Simulation of Atrium Smoke Filling Process by the Zone Model First

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ABSTRACT

The zone model FIRST was applied for studying the smoke filling process in atria. A total number of 972 simulations with different geometry of the atria, the heat release rate of fires and the plume models were performed. Atria classified into three types as cubic, flat and high with volumes varying from 2000 m³ to 30000 m³ were considered. Five steady burning fires of peak heat release rate from 1 to 5 MW and four unsteady t²-fires were used together with four plume models reported in literature.

INTRODUCTION

There are many big atria in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) [1, 2] and the number of them is still increasing. The atria are quite different from those in other countries in terms of quantity, volume and geometrical configuration. The atrium is normally of 'open' design and its volume is very large. Therefore, architects, engineers and fire officers are very concerned about the fire safety in the atrium space, particularly when it is located in a shopping mall. Survey on the geometry indicated that atria in the HKSAR can be classified into three main types for the simplicity of modelling the fire environment [1]. Type 1 (Cubic) atria are of cubic shape and they are commonly found in the HKSAR. Type 2 (Flat) atrium has a long transverse dimension compared with the height. Type 3 (High) atrium has a height to length ratio of more than two. Smoke is identified to be a key factor and 'smoke control' system has to be designed carefully.

This paper reports on studying the smoke filling process in those three types of atria with different volumes. The zone model FIRST [3] was used together with different fires and plume models to study the smoke filling process.

THE PLUME EQUATIONS

Four fire plume models in the literature are used:

P1: Area-source Morton-Taylor-Tuner Plume [4, 5];

- P2: Point-source Morton-Taylor-Tuner Plume [6];
- P3: McCaffrey plume [7];
- P4: Zukoski plume [8];

A summary of those expressions has been reported by Chow and Cui [2] and would not be repeated in here. These four plume models (P1 to P4) are used to calculate the mass flow rate m induced by the same fire of heat release rate Q . It was reported earlier in there [2] from studying the vertical profiles of the mass flow ratios that the plume model P4 gave the highest mass flow rate for height lower than 3.5 m, then P1, P3 and P2. For height above 3.5 m, the plume model P1 gave higher mass flow rates. Higher values of mass flow rate into the plume would give a faster smoke filling time, indicating a thicker but 'cooler' smoke layer under the same fire at the same atrium.

GEOMETRY OF ATRIA AND FIRES

With the above four plume models, smoke filling process in an atrium were studied using the zone model FIRST [2]. Three types of atria of volume V of 2,000 m³, 5,000 m³, 7,000 m³, 10,000 m³, 15,000 m³, 20,000 m³, 25,000 m³, 28,000 m³ and 30,000 m³ were considered:

- Atrium type 1 (cubic) with length L , width L and height L ;
- Atrium type 2 (flat) with length $2L$, width L and height L ;
- Atrium type 3 (high) with length L , width L , and height $2L$.

At each atrium, there are two doors at the center of the opposite side walls with 5 m wide and 3 m high. A fire of size 3 m by 3 m, height 0.5 m is assumed at the center of the floor. Two groups of heat release rates Q of the fire were assumed. Group 1 fires are those with a steady burning period. The heat release rate increased from 0 to a peak value Q_p in 100 s, remained constant at Q_p up to 2400 s, and then fell linearly to zero up to 2500 s. Five cases with constant steady peak values Q_p of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 MW were used and they are labelled as SB1 to SB5. Group 2 fires are unsteady t^2 -fires at the beginning stage. When Q increased to 5 MW, the heat release rate was kept at constant until 2400 s, then fell linearly to zero at 2500 s. Four cases labeled as US1 to US4 are considered with the heat release rate given by Q in kW as following, where t is in s:

$$Q = \alpha t^2 \quad \dots (1)$$

US1 is for slow fire, US2 for medium fire, US3 for fast fire and US4 for ultra-fast fire with α being 0.00293 kW s⁻², 0.01127 kW s⁻², 0.04689 kW s⁻² and 0.1878 kW s⁻² respectively.

RESULTS

A total number of 972 ($9 \times 4 \times 3 \times 9$) simulations with 9 fires (SB1 to SB5 and US1 to US4), 4 plume models (P1 to P4) and 27 atria classified into 3 types (type 1, 2 and 3) each with 9 volumes were performed. Predicted results of interest are the average values of the upper hot layer temperature T_U (in °C), lower layer temperature T_L (in °C), smoke layer interface height h (in m), smoke layer height expressed as a percentage of ceiling height y (in %), maximum upper layer temperature T_{Umax} , minimum smoke layer interface heights h_{min} in m and y_{min} when expressed as a percentage of atrium height, time required to fill 50% of the atrium t_{50} ; and time required to fill 80% of the atrium t_{80} . The average values were calculated in the steady burning period which was taken from 1000 s to 2000 s for fires with a steady burning period. For unsteady t^2 -fires, average steady burning period as shown from 1420 s to 2300 s for US1 fire; 780 s to 2300 s for US2 fire; 440 s to 2300 s for US3 fire and 280 s to 2300 s for US4 fire. Results are shown in Tables 1 to 5.

DISCUSSION

The detailed information was summarized in the tables. The smoke filling process in atria of same volume but different types would be very different, confirming the earlier reports with smaller number of simulations [e.g. 1]. The smoke filling time is the shortest in type 3 atrium, and being the longest in type 2 atrium as observed from the predicted time to fill up 50% and 80% of atrium space. However, the predicted values of T_U and T_L are similar in the three types of atria of same volume. Therefore, it is not good enough to specify only the atrium volume while providing fire safety because the smoke filling process in atria of different shapes would be different, though the thermal aspects are similar.

For atria of same type, same volume and same plume model, values of T_U , T_L and T_{Umax} increased with the heat release rate for steady burning cases. The values of h and h_{min} were nearly constant for plume models P1 and P2, but a little bit lower for plume model P3 under the same thermal power of fire. The predicted average interface height was the highest while using the plume model P4.

For the cases of using unsteady fires, the values of T_U , T_L , y , h , T_{Umax} and h_{min} were similar with the same plume model because of the same cut-off value of fire.

CONCLUSIONS

Smoke filling process in 27 atria of space volume varying from 2,000 m³ to 30,000 m³ and classified into 3 types were studied using the zone model FIRST. Four fire plume models available in the literature were used. Results predicted from those four plume models are discussed. The above results would be useful to determine useful parameter for understanding the atrium smoke filling process and identify the possible fire hazards. Carrying out full scale experiments [9] are required to evaluate with the numerical results [2].

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Table 5. Simulation results for volume 30000m³

Atrium Type			Type 1								Type 2								Type 3							
Volume V/m ³	Fire Type	Plume Model	T _U /°C	T _L /°C	y /%	h /m	T _{UMAX} /°C	h _{MIN} /m	t ₅₀ /s	t ₈₀ /s	T _U /°C	T _L /°C	y /%	h /m	T _{UMAX} /°C	h _{MIN} /m	t ₅₀ /s	t ₈₀ /s	T _U /°C	T _L /°C	y /%	h /m	T _{UMAX} /°C	h _{MIN} /m	t ₅₀ /s	t ₈₀ /s
30000	SB1	P1	35	31	4	1.2	37	1.2	193	459	36	30	5.4	1.3	38	1.2	259	587	35	34	2.7	1.4	37	1.1	127	261
		P2	35	27	12.2	3.8	37	2.3	315	935	37	27	18.4	4.5	38	2.6	447	1344	35	28	5.2	2.6	34	2.2	164	453
		P3	35	28	5.8	1.8	35	1.7	118	338	36	28	7.8	1.9	37	1.7	154	497	35	30	3.4	1.7	35	1.6	69	153
		P4	35	29	5	1.6	36	1.5	173	469	36	28	7.1	1.8	38	1.5	232	637	35	31	3.1	1.5	36	1.4	107	244
	SB2	P1	45	40	4.5	1.4	48	1.1	167	369	46	37	5.4	1.3	49	1.2	204	467	45	37	3.5	1.7	48	1.0	106	210
		P2	46	28	8.9	2.8	52	2.2	255	722	47	28	13.5	3.3	52	2.3	356	1032	45	28	4.4	2.2	48	2.1	132	365
		P3	45	34	5.2	1.6	49	1.5	91	289	46	31	6.6	1.6	52	1.6	134	418	43	32	3.9	1.9	52	1.4	56	133
		P4	45	33	5.3	1.6	50	1.5	142	373	46	31	6.8	1.7	52	1.6	193	515	42	33	3.8	1.9	50	1.5	82	206
	SB3	P1	55	49	4.6	1.4	58	1.1	144	313	55	45	5.4	1.3	59	1.2	187	407	53	36	3.7	1.8	58	1.0	95	195
		P2	56	28	7.6	2.4	65	2.2	225	624	57	28	11.2	2.8	65	2.2	320	886	53	29	4.2	2.1	62	2.0	125	330
		P3	55	45	5	1.6	59	1.3	98	256	55	39	6.2	1.5	61	1.4	124	361	53	34	4.3	2.1	76	1.1	59	124
		P4	56	37	5.7	1.8	67	1.6	135	334	56	33	7.2	1.8	66	1.7	172	452	53	35	3.8	1.9	61	1.5	89	186
	SB4	P1	63	57	4.7	1.5	67	1.0	135	282	63	53	5.5	1.4	67	1.1	161	364	64	33	3.8	1.9	70	0.9	81	170
		P2	66	29	7	2.2	78	2.1	204	570	66	29	10	2.5	78	2.2	288	784	64	31	4.2	2.1	75	2.0	113	299
		P3	64	56	4.9	1.5	68	1.2	83	234	64	49	5.8	1.4	69	1.3	111	350	64	33	4.2	2.1	70	0.9	41	111
		P4	66	39	6	1.9	80	1.7	124	300	66	35	7.5	1.9	79	1.8	164	428	62	34	3.9	1.9	69	1.5	74	179
	SB5	P1	72	66	4.9	1.5	75	1.0	122	262	72	61	5.6	1.4	76	1.1	151	332	70	43	3.7	1.8	80	0.8	85	161
		P2	76	30	6.8	2.1	91	2.1	197	517	76	29	9.3	2.3	90	2.1	268	714	72	34	4.2	2.1	88	1.9	119	280
		P3	73	66	4.9	1.5	76	1.0	86	227	72	60	5.5	1.4	77	1.2	116	311	72	44	4	2.0	77	0.8	43	115
		P4	76	41	6.2	1.9	93	1.7	110	298	75	36	7.8	1.9	91	1.8	153	393	72	45	4.1	2.0	92	1.6	77	168
	US1	P1	63	61	4.4	1.4	70	0.8	373	652	63	55	5	1.2	70	0.9	442	779	65	33	3.4	1.7	87	0.7	266	461
		P2	65	29	6.5	2.0	77	1.9	528	1014	66	29	9.4	2.3	77	2.0	659	1240	61	32	3.8	1.9	73	1.7	337	667
		P3	63	60	4.1	1.3	70	0.8	218	509	64	54	4.9	1.2	72	0.9	288	668	69	33	3.2	1.6	98	0.8	128	286
		P4	65	38	5.6	1.7	79	1.4	344	668	65	33	7.1	1.7	77	1.6	424	801								
	US2	P1	61	53	4	1.2	72	0.9	300	510	61	47	5.1	1.3	73	1.0	346	586								
		P2	68	30	8.2	2.5	85	2.0	391	752	68	29	11.9	2.9	84	2.1	495	958	64	33	4.2	2.1	81	1.8	253	507
		P3	62	53	4	1.3	73	0.9	178	409	62	47	5.2	1.3	74	1.0	222	527								
		P4	68	37	6	1.9	87	1.6	263	519	67	34	7.8	1.9	85	1.7	321	626	64	45	3.7	1.8	80	1.3	175	333
	US3	P1	60	49	4.7	1.5	74	1.0	210	375	60	44	6.5	1.6	75	1.1	251	445	61	39	3	1.5	74	0.8	155	279
		P2	69	30	9.9	3.1	89	2.0	291	613	69	29	14.1	3.5	88	2.1	380	812	65	33	4.9	2.4	85	1.9	195	373
		P3	61	49	4.6	1.4	75	1.0	132	316	61	43	6.6	1.6	76	1.1	188	402	62	40	3.1	1.5	74	0.7	90	187
		P4	68	38	6.7	2.1	90	1.7	206	398	68	35	9.1	2.2	88	1.8	259	495	65	40	3.9	1.9	90	1.5	136	253
	US4	P1	60	47	5.7	1.8	75	1.0	162	303	60	43	8	2.0	75	1.1	192	372	61	38	3.3	1.6	76	0.8	111	202
		P2	69	30	11.1	3.4	90	2.1	237	558	70	29	15.5	3.8	89	2.1	308	756	65	33	5.6	2.8	87	1.9	141	301
		P3	60	47	5.5	1.7	76	1.0	119	254	61	42	7.9	2.0	77	1.1	144	359	61	37	3.3	1.6	76	0.8	64	143
		P4	69	38	7.4	2.3	92	1.7	153	321	69	35	10	2.5	90	1.8	195	436	64	36	4.1	2.0	91	1.5	106	190

FC: Failed to converge.