

GFRP Bars in Compression Members

Q. *Can glass fiber-reinforced polymer (GFRP) bars be used in compression members?*

A. According to the North American design codes and standards currently in effect, GFRP bars are allowed for use in members subjected to pure axial loads or the combination of axial compression and flexural load. They have also been used in many projects over the past decade, including bridge columns in Canada, as shown in Fig. 1. However, there is a disparity in statements across different design codes and guide specifications concerning the contribution of GFRP bars to the capacity of members subjected to pure axial loads or the combination of axial compression and flexural load. This discrepancy is primarily attributed to the limited research studies on the long-term behavior of GFRP bars under compression.

In this regard, “AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Guide Specifications for GFRP-Reinforced Concrete”¹ and CSA S806:12 (R2021)² adopt a conservative stance, choosing to disregard the compressive strength of GFRP reinforcements in design calculations. ACI CODE-440.11-22, Section 22.2.3.3,

takes a more moderate approach, specifying that “The area of GFRP reinforcement in compression shall be treated as having the same strength and stiffness as the concrete in the surrounding compression zone.”³ CSA S6-19⁴ adopts a different perspective by acknowledging the contribution of GFRP bars up to a strain of 0.002. It states: “Longitudinal FRP reinforcement may be used in members subjected to combined flexure and axial load. However, the compressive strength of FRP reinforcement shall be limited to a stress corresponding to a strain of 0.002 in the calculation of the factored axial and flexural resistance of reinforced concrete members.”⁴ It is interesting to note that this compression strain limit is equivalent to the yield strain of conventional carbon-steel reinforcement. Further, it should be acknowledged that the initial guidance for transverse shear reinforcement tensile strain limits for flexural members in ACI 440.4R-04⁵ are based on the limits in CAN/CSA-S6-00⁶ at the time. The transverse shear reinforcement tensile strain limits were subsequently increased to 0.004 in ACI 440.1R-06⁷ and CSA S6:19, and to 0.005 for CSA S806:12(R2021) and ACI CODE-440.11-22, in recognition that strain limit based on yielding of conventional carbon-steel reinforcement was

too conservative.^{8,9} Mistretta et al.⁹ have summarized the historical evolution of formulations for the shear strength of FRP-reinforced concrete in various international standards.

The effect of compression strain limits beyond 0.002 for longitudinal reinforcement may still be safely within the pseudo-elastic range of most concrete; however, 0.002 is a rational conservative limit until additional research can determine a more representative upper bound strain limit. Recognizing that transverse reinforcement in columns can function as shear reinforcement as well as provide confinement of the longitudinal reinforcement under high compressive strains, it is necessary to adhere to the



Fig. 1: Use of GFRP bars in bridge columns in Canada

relevant code and design specifications provisions on the maximum spacing of the transverse reinforcement to avoid premature column compression failure resulting from excessive dilation of the concrete and/or potential buckling of the longitudinal reinforcement. Available experimental studies indicate that GFRP bars enhance the strength of reinforced concrete members subjected to axial compression loads. The contribution of GFRP bars to the axial capacity of columns, prior to cover spalling, typically falls within the range of 5 to 10%, as reported by Guérin et al.¹⁰

Limited existing data on the stiffness and strength of bare GFRP bars under pure compression suggest that the compression strength ranges from 50 to 100% of the tensile strength.¹¹⁻¹⁵ Additionally, the compression modulus of elasticity has been observed to range between 75 and 120% of the tensile modulus of elasticity.¹¹⁻¹⁵ Moreover, Mirdarsoltany et al.¹⁵ concluded that excluding the compressive strength of GFRP bars from design procedures for compressive members, such as columns, is a conservative practice.

In summary, GFRP bars can be used in compression members. However, structural engineers should exercise engineering judgment when deciding on the compressive strain limit for the contribution of GFRP bars, with additional considerations for confinement stirrup area and spacing.

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Barras de PRFV en elementos a compresión

P ¿Pueden utilizarse barras de polímero reforzado con fibra de vidrio (PRFV) en elementos a compresión?

R De acuerdo con los códigos y estándares de diseño norteamericanos actualmente en vigor, se permite el uso de barras de PRFV en elementos sometidos a cargas puramente axiales o a una combinación de compresión axial y flexión. También se han utilizado en muchos proyectos durante la última década, incluidos las pilas de puentes en Canadá, como se muestra en la Fig. 1. Sin embargo, existe una discrepancia en las declaraciones de los diferentes códigos de diseño y especificaciones de las guías con respecto a la contribución de las barras de PRFV a la capacidad de los miembros sometidos a cargas axiales o a la combinación de compresión axial y carga de flexión. Esta discrepancia se atribuye principalmente a los limitados estudios de investigación sobre el comportamiento a largo plazo de las barras de PRFV a compresión.

Respecto a esto, "las especificaciones de la guía de diseño de puentes para concreto reforzado con PRFV AASHTO LRFD"¹ y CSA S806:12 (R2021)² adoptan una postura conservadora, optando por no tener en cuenta la resistencia a compresión de los refuerzos de PRFV en los cálculos de diseño. El código 440.11-22, Sección 22.2.3.3, de la ACI adopta un enfoque más moderado, especificando que "El área de refuerzo de PRFV en compresión se tratará como si tuviera la misma resistencia y rigidez que el concreto en la zona de compresión circundante"³. CSA S6-19⁴

adopta una perspectiva diferente al reconocer la contribución de las barras de PRFV hasta una deformación de 0,002. Establece lo siguiente: "El refuerzo longitudinal de FRP puede utilizarse en elementos sometidos a una carga combinada de flexión y axial. Sin embargo, la resistencia a compresión de la armadura FRP se limitará a una tensión correspondiente a una deformación de 0,002 en el cálculo de la resistencia axial y a flexión ponderada de los elementos de concreto reforzado"⁴. Es interesante observar que este límite de deformación a compresión es equivalente a la deformación donde cede la armadura convencional de acero. Además, debe reconocerse que la orientación inicial para los límites de deformación por tensión de la armadura transversal de cortante para elementos de flexión en ACI 440.4R-04⁵ se basa en los límites de CAN/CSA-S6-00⁶ en ese momento. Los límites de deformación por tensión de la armadura transversal se aumentaron posteriormente a 0,004 en ACI 440.1R-06⁷ y CSA S6:19, y a 0,005 en CSA S806:12(R2021) y ACI CODE-440.11-22, en reconocimiento de que el límite de deformación basado en la fluencia de la armadura convencional de acero era demasiado conservador^{8,9}. Mistretta et al.⁹ han resumido la evolución histórica de las formulaciones para la resistencia a cortante del concreto reforzado con FRP en varios estándares internacionales.

El efecto de los límites de deformación a compresión más allá de 0,002 para la armadura longitudinal todavía puede estar con seguridad dentro del rango pseudoelástico de la mayoría del concreto; sin embargo, 0,002 es un límite conservador racional hasta que investigaciones adicionales puedan determinar un límite superior



Fig. 1 Uso de barras PRFV en pías de puentes en Canadá.

de deformación más representativo. Teniendo en cuenta que la armadura transversal de columnas puede funcionar como armadura de cizallamiento y como confinamiento de la armadura longitudinal bajo grandes esfuerzos de compresión, es necesario respetar las disposiciones de los códigos y especificaciones de diseño pertinentes sobre la separación máxima de la armadura transversal para evitar el fallo prematuro de la columna por compresión debido a la dilatación excesiva del concreto y/o al pandeo potencial de la armadura longitudinal. Los estudios experimentales disponibles indican que las barras de PRFV mejoran la resistencia de los elementos de concreto armado sometidos a cargas de compresión axial. La contribución de las barras de PRFV a la capacidad axial de las columnas, antes del desprendimiento del recubrimiento, suele situarse entre el 5% y el 10%, según Guérin et al¹⁰.

Los limitados datos existentes sobre la rigidez y la resistencia de las barras desnudas de PRFV bajo compresión pura sugieren que la resistencia a la compresión fluctúa entre el 50 y el 100% de la resistencia en tensión¹¹⁻¹⁵. Además, se ha observado que el módulo de elasticidad a la compresión fluctúa entre el 75 y el 120% del módulo de elasticidad en tensión¹¹⁻¹⁵. Por otra parte, Mirdarsoltany et al.¹⁵ concluyeron que excluir la resistencia a la compresión de las barras de PRFV de los procedimientos de diseño para miembros a compresión, como las columnas, es una práctica conservadora.

En resumen, las barras de PRFV pueden utilizarse en elementos a compresión. Sin embargo, los ingenieros de estructuras deben aplicar su criterio técnico a la hora de decidir el límite de deformación por compresión para la contribución de las barras de PRFV, con consideraciones adicionales para el área y el espaciado de los estribos de confinamiento.

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*Traductora:
Nicole Mejía Borrero*



*Revisor Técnico:
José M. Mejía Borrero*