Damage Assessment of final linings in metro tunnels

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ABSTRACT: A crucial element of a tunnel lining design in metro tunnels is the time and the way till the final lining will begin to spall due to the high temperatures, which may be developed during a fire. Although the structural elements of the tunnel lining are considered inflamable, in a real fire situation the concrete lining can be spalled largely, sometimes perhaps entirely, with very serious consequences on cost and safety of people. The spalling rate of concrete as well as the spalling depth are two main values that cannot be measured since it is affected by a series of factors including apart from the compressive and tensile strength, also the following: a) permeability of concrete, b) age of concrete. As a result a lot of research has taken place in order to calculate the spalling of the concrete using numerical models, which however is not validated sufficiently by the test results.

So the target of the specific research is to investigate experimentally the rate and the depth of spalling for several types of concrete under high temperatures. On this purpose specimen of all types of concrete that can be found in metro tunnels were manufactured and exposed at a special furnace which has the ability to simulate all kind of fire scenarios and at the same time monitor the spalling depth and time through a high temperature camera. The temperature of the exposure was selected after modelling of the fire for 25 MW fire in a metro tunnel. The modelling of the fire simulated the distribution of the fire along the tunnel in case of fire and representative values of the temperature for 10, 20 50 and 100m away from the fire was selected.

1 INTRODUCTION

A number of serious metro tunnel fire incidents have been reported worldwide that have led to injuries and life losses, heavy damage in the concrete lining, excess material damage, and significant time periods of tunnel restoration during which the tunnels were unavailable for traffic. Fires in tunnels can seriously damage their concrete lining rendering it to collapse. The damage is caused particularly by the spontaneous release of great amounts of heat and aggressive fire gases, resulting to spalling of concrete. Spalling is described as the breaking of layers or pieces of concrete from the surface of a structural element when it is exposed to the high and rapidly rising temperatures experienced in fires. The most severe spalling phenomenon is the so called explosive spalling, be described as a violent showering of hot pieces of concrete, which beyond to the detrimental effect on concrete lining can additionally cause very serious problems to the firefighting service personnel rendering their work substantially more difficult and dangerous (Jönsson and Herrera, 2010).
The spalling phenomena are expected at several temperatures depending on the strength of the concrete. The American Society for Testing and Materials (2001) mentions that explosive spall-

ing can be expected at temperatures between 300°C and 450°C, while it is generally accepted that concrete exposed at temperatures higher than 380°C is considered as damaged and should be removed and repaired (Khoury, 2000). This temperature is near to the calcium hydroxide dehydration temperature (400°C) which is a process that causes a significant reduction in the mechanical strength of the concrete (Fletcher, 2007). The latter is considered to be significantly reduced at exposure temperatures higher than 300°C (Sakkas, 2013).

The spalling rate of concrete as well as the spalling depth and time are two main values for the numerical analysis, which are very difficult to assume or calculate. The reason is that spalling is affected by a series of factors including apart from the compressive and tensile strength, also the following: a) permeability of concrete, b) age of concrete, c) accurate mix of concrete, d) size of aggregates, e) pore pressure, f) existing cracking on the concrete, g) reinforcement of the concrete and h) size and shape of the exposed specimen (Boström and Jansson,2004). A lot of research has taken place in order to calculate the spalling of the concrete using numerical models, which however is not validated sufficiently by the test results. First of all, the spalling theory is not yet clear. Others support that spalling is attributed to the pre-existing cracking, others to the moisture content and others to the thermal stresses. In the last years, scientists have concluded that spalling is a combination of thermal stresses and pore pressure. According to the opinion of various international experts, the current numerical modelling capabilities for predicting the possibility of concrete spalling under a temperature scenario at the intrados of the tunnel lining, is very limited. Recently, some thermo-poro-mechanical constitutive models have been appeared in the literature, but all these require extensive validation procedures before applied in practice. Also, no constitutive model has been published in the literature which is able to account all the factors leading to concrete spalling (Akhtaruzzuman and Sullivan , 1970). A numerical procedure that can be followed in order to estimate the spalling vulnerability of a specific concrete has been suggested by Kodur (Kodur, 2008). According to this, the model is based on pore pressure calculations in concrete, and spalling is considered to occur by comparing the computed pore-pressures with the temperature dependent tensile strength of concrete. A similar (and perhaps a little more advanced) procedure has been used by the Hatch Mot McDonald engineers by using FLAC3D (Franssen et al, 2007). Both Kodur and HMD engineers validated their models with the experiments of Phan (2008). However even these models worked great in specific types of concrete but in other types seemed to overestimate the spalling vulnerability of concrete. Also, the models that have been developed for the calculation of the spalling show great weakness at concrete with high moisture content and low permeability because the moisture migration due to pressure gradients leads to a completely saturated state of the concrete pores and as a result the required thermodynamic laws do not apply any more. Also, according to other studies the calculation of the spalling is a very complicated issue, since is not very easy to simulate the behavior of concrete under fire conditions.

On the other hand an essential issue on the design of the evacuation of a metro tunnel is the spalling time. It is one of the main values which define the available time of the passengers to evacuate safely the tunnel. As a result and in order to measure the spalling values and design the evacuation of a metro tunnel it is proposed to test the concrete at several temperatures for the spalling depth and time.

2 EXPERIMANTAL

2.1 *Types of concrete*

In total, three different types of concrete were investigated, which were found to be the most usually used in metro tunnels. More specific these types of concrete were C20/25, C30/37, C35/45 with latter two to be the most usual. The syntheses of these three types of concrete are described below :

    i)   Category C20/25

After a test mix, it was found that the composition for the concrete required consists of 40% gravel, 10% fine grain gravel, 50% sand by weight of dry materials with 320 kg/m³ cement CEM II / AM (WL) 42.5R and additive superplasticizer at a rate of 0.63 kg per 100 kg of cement. The W/C ratio was equal to 0.60. The compressive strength of the 15 cm cubic edge sample made from this mixture was found to be 42.8 MPa at 28 days of age.

ii) Category C30 / 37

After a test mix, it was found that the required concrete composition consisted of 40.4% gravel, 10.4% fine grain gravel, 49.2% sand by weight of dry materials with 350 kg/m³ cement CEM II / AM (WL) 42.5R and an additional superplasticizer at a rate of 0.6 kg per 100 kg of cement. The W/C ratio was equal to 0,51. The compressive strength of the 15 cm cubic edge sample made from this mixture was found to be 46.7 MPa at 28 days of age.

iii) Category C35 / 45

After a test mix, it was found that the composition for the concrete required consists of 40.4% gravel, 10.4% fine grain gravel, 49.2% sand by weight of dry materials with 380 kg/m³ of CEM II / AM cement) 42.5R and an additional superplasticizer at a rate of 0.6 kg per 100 kg of cement. The W/C ratio was equal to 0.48. The compressive strength of the 15 cm cubic edge sample made from this mixture was found to be 53.5 MPa at 28 days of age.

2.2 *Temperature of investigation*

The temperature and time of exposure was selected by modelling a 25 MW fire in a single and double tube metro tunnel. The tunnel length is 762 m, which is the maximum limit of tunnel length without cross passage obligation. The evolution of the fire is based on the FIT project – fire curve which is the worst case. The power of fire was selected to be ignited in the middle of the metro tunnel. The modelling of the fire simulation the distribution of the fire along the tunnel in case of fire and representative values of the temperature for 10, 20 50 and 100m away from the fire was selected.

2.3 *Equipment of the tests*

The tests were performed in the laboratory by using a test furnace which was designed according to European Federation of National Associations representing producers and applicators of specialist building products for Concrete (EFNARC) guidelines. The furnace has the ability to simulate the temperature-time curves employed in several international standards. For this test a 30 cm x 1 cm x 5 cm specimen was prepared. The test was performed 28 days after the production of the specimens.

3 RESULTS

3.1 *Mechanical Properties*

In order to ensure the compressive strength of the produced specimens three specimens of each synthesis was developed. According to table 2, the measurements indicate that the concrete has achieved the desired compressive strength 28 days after the production.

3.2 *Fire tests*

Initially the most severe fire test was conducted for each concrete type. The most severe scenatio referred to 10m distance from the fire ignition in a single tube tunnel. The temperature increased at 600 °C at 22 min and remains at that temperature for 30 min.
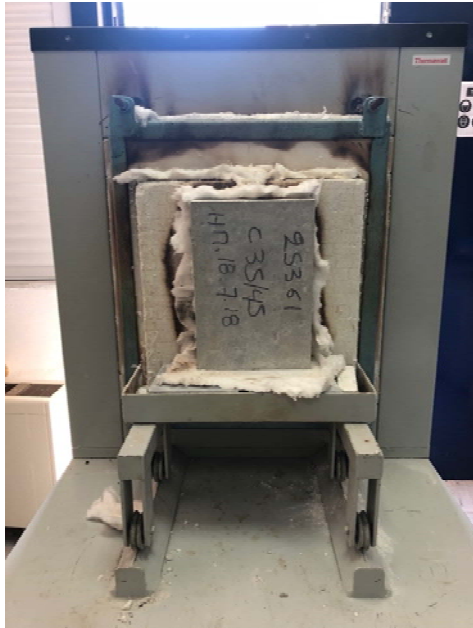
Figure 1 : Set up of fire test

In the C20/25 concrete and C30/37 no spalling occurred. This was attributed to the fact that it was very low time for the concrete to be fully thermally treated. This can be easily understood from figure 3 where the temperature of the back surface of the specimen was measured during the test. As it can be easily observed the temperature did not exceed the temperature of 50 °C, meaning that the concrete created a gradient of 55°C/cm, which is attributed to the low thermal conductivity value of the concrete. As a result the concrete was not treated uniformly at the whole specimen and this avoided the spalling phenomena.

In order to find the temperature that the specific type of concretes udergoes spalling phenomena , specimens from C20/25 and C30/37 were subjected to higher temperatures. More specific three more tests were conducted, at temperatures of 700 °C, 800°C and 900°C. From the testing of the specific concrete types it was realized that the C30/37 spalled at the temperature of 800 °C while the C20/25 concrete type spalled at the temperature of 900 °C . The type of spalling was similar to the C35/45 with a sudden explosion at 25 min after the beginning of the test for the C30/37 and 18min for the C20/25. This is something that it was expected mainly according to Khoury (Khoury,2000) who mentions that one of the most crucial parameters for the occurrence of spalling is the high compressive strength. Concrete with high compressive strength is more dense and as a result the entrapped water does not find the suitable void to be evaporated and explodes making the explosive spalling.
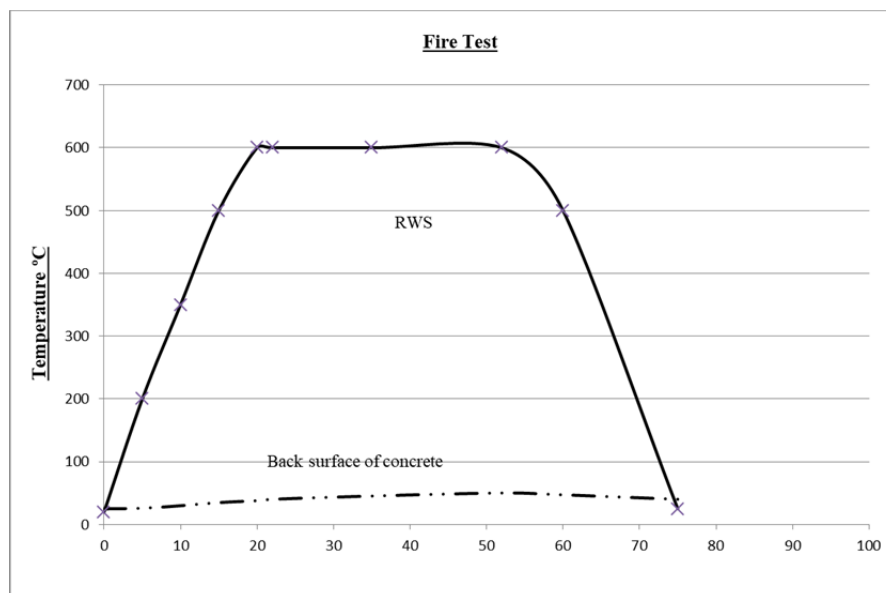

Figure 2 : Fire curve and back surface temperature

In the case of the C35/45 spalling phenomena occurred 22 min after the beginning of the test , while the temperature was at 600 °C. The spalling that occurred was typically explosive spalling with a piece of 10 cm to be removed from the surface of the concrete specimen at a depth of 1 cm.

The same type of concrete was then subjected to another fire curve referring to a distance from the fire ignition (20m). As it can be observed in figure 4 the concrete did not undergo spalling phenomena.

Figure 3 : Concrete C35/45 before and after the fire test

This result is very crucial for the design of the evacuation. Based on these results the engineer should also take into account the spalling of the concrete by proposing two solutions: a) to evacuate in less than 20 minutes to ensure that all the users will evacuate the tunnel b) Oblige users close to the fireplace to walk through the train and reach the point where the temperature is lower (20 m) and therefore there is no risk of spalling the concrete with the corresponding wound users.

In general, in order to avoid spalling phenomena at the concrete various methods of passive fire protection have been developed which however have not yet been applied to metro tunnels. At this point it should also be mentioned that apart from the concrete steel rebars necessitate protection because at temperature over 600 °C loose part of their load bearing capacity. Therefore, steel and concrete are both fire sensitive construction elements requiring passive protection against fire in order to be capable of withstanding of fire for an appropriate period of time without loss of stability (Fletcher, I. 2007). Passive fire protection methods are generally divided in two categories: external (insulation) and internal (concrete design). The former are more advantageous being applied in new as well as in existing tunnels and consist of the cladding of the concrete by a fire resistant material which creates a protective external insulation envelope. These methods are a) cementious fire protection material applied either sprayed or as a board which, due to its low thermal conductivity, keeps the temperature of the concrete below the requirements and b) adding during the production of the concrete, polypropene fibers which during the thermal exposure melt thus creating passage to the evaporated water to be removed from the concrete without acting explosively.

Figure 4: C35/45 before and after the fire test at 400°C

4. CONCLUSIONS

From this study two main conclusions we excluded:

a) Concrete with the smallest strength did not show signs of spalling, which is also comes in accordance with the references. For this reason various methods and materials have been developed to prevent spalling, but this has not yet been applied to metro tunnels. This is a) coating the concrete with a fire protection material which, due to its low thermal conductivity, keeps the temperature of the concrete low and b) adding during the production of the concrete, polypropene fibers which during the thermal exposure melt thus creating passage to the evaporated water to be removed from the concrete without acting explosively.

b) In the case of concrete C35 / 45 it appeared that the design of the evacuation should also take into account the spalling of the concrete by proposing two solutions: a) to evacuate in less than 20 minutes to ensure that all the users will evacuate the tunnel b) Oblige users close to the fireplace to walk through the train and reach the point where the temperature is lower (20 m) and therefore there is no risk of spalling the concrete with the corresponding wound users.

c) Concrete types C20/25 and C30/37 appeared spalling phenomena under higher temperatures. More specific the C30/37 spalled at the temperature of 800 °C while the C20/25 concrete type spalled at the temperature of 900 °C . The type of spalling was similar to the C35/45 with a sudden explosion at 25 min after the beginning of the test for the C30/37 and 18 for the C20/25

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