

# Prediction of Soil Liquefaction by Using UBC3D-PLM Model in PLAXIS

A. Daftari, W. Kudla

**Abstract**—Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which the strength and stiffness of a soil is reduced by earthquake shaking or other rapid cyclic loading. Liquefaction and related phenomena have been responsible for huge amounts of damage in historical earthquakes around the world.

Modeling of soil behavior is the main step in soil liquefaction prediction process. Nowadays, several constitutive models for sand have been presented. Nevertheless, only some of them can satisfy this mechanism. One of the most useful models in this term is UBCSAND model. In this research, the capability of this model is considered by using PLAXIS software. The real data of superstition hills earthquake 1987 in the Imperial Valley was used. The results of the simulation have shown resembling trend of the UBC3D-PLM model.

**Keywords**—Liquefaction, Plaxis, Pore-Water pressure, UBC3D-PLM.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**D**URING an earthquake, when the ground is subjected to strong shaking, certain types of soils liquefy, often leading to ground failures. Ground failure associated with liquefaction of soils are potentially very damaging as forcefully demonstrated by many disastrous earthquakes of the past [1].

The mechanism of liquefaction has been well recognized. The cyclic shearing of saturated granular soils causes a progressive buildup of pore water pressure which eventually approaches a value equal to the initial confining pressures, thereby softening the soil causing large strain. Such a state has been termed as 'liquefaction'.

The determination of liquefaction potential of soils induced by earthquake is a major concern and an essential criterion in the design process of the civil engineering structures.

The main reason of most of the structure damages during the earthquake is accepted to be liquefaction. In recent strong earthquakes such as Alaska (1964), USA (1987), Japan (1995), Turkey (1999), Taiwan (1999), Iran (2004) and China (2008), many buildings, highway, embankments and other engineering structures have been damaged or destroyed as result of liquefaction.

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Researchers have presented several constitutive models for sand such as: FINN, UBCSAND, UBC3D-PLM, HYPOPLASTICITY, NORSAND, HYPERBOLIC and BOUNDING SURFACE models. Most of these models have been defined base on complicated mathematic formulations. Although, these complex model have could not satisfy the liquefaction process [2].

A constitutive model of a soil describes its stress-strain behavior. The stress-strain behavior of a soil depends on many factors such as the type of soil, stress-strain history, mode of deposition, anisotropy, and stress level dependency of stiffness [3], [4]. A constitutive model may become very complicated if all the above mentioned aspects are included [4].

This type of complex constitutive model may require many input parameter values that are difficult to evaluate from basic soil tests [4]. While selecting a constitutive model, it is necessary that the constitutive model chosen is able to simulate the important features of material behavior of a soil [4]-[6]. Elasto-plastic constitutive equations are generally nonlinear. Numerical integration is performed to implement a constitutive model in a nonlinear finite element program. Many algorithms are presented in the literature to integrate constitutive equations [7]-[16]. It is to be noted that the performance of a nonlinear finite element analysis depends on the accuracy and efficiency of the integration algorithm used. The finite element program PLAXIS was utilized in this study. The UBCSAND model was used in the numerical analyses presented in this study. UBCSAND is a nonlinear elastic-plastic model that is capable of capturing seismic liquefaction behavior of sands and silty sands [17]. The UBCSAND model has been used to assess seismic liquefaction of embankment dams [18]-[21]. The UBCSAND model, with some modifications, has been implemented as a user defined soil model in the finite element program PLAXIS [22]. The PLAXIS version of the UBCSAND model has been utilized in dynamic analyses presented in this study.

## II. UBCSAND MODEL

UBCSAND is an effective stress elastic-plastic model which is capable of simulating the liquefaction behavior of sands and silty sands under seismic loading [17]. The name UBCSAND implies that this model was developed at the University of British Columbia for prediction of liquefaction behavior of sand. An earlier version of the UBCSAND model was used in a case study of dynamic analyses of Mochikoshi tailings dam, in Japan, and the results of these analyses were consistent with the observed failure pattern of the dam induced

due to seismic liquefaction [23]-[26]. The UBCSAND model, with some modifications, has been implemented as a user defined soil model in the finite element program PLAXIS [17],[22]. The PLAXIS version of the UBCSAND model is utilized in this study. The material parameters required for the UBCSAND model are [22]:

- Constant volume friction angle  $\phi_{cv}$
- Peak friction angle  $\phi_p$
- Cohesion  $c$
- Elastic Shear Modulus  $K_G^e$
- Plastic Shear Modulus  $K_G^p$
- Elastic Bulk Modulus  $K_B^e$
- Elastic Shear Modulus Index  $n_e$
- Elastic Bulk Modulus Index  $m_e$
- Plastic Shear Modulus Index  $n_p$
- Failure Ratio  $R_f$
- Atmospheric pressure  $P_A$
- Tension Cut-off  $\sigma_t$
- Densification Factor  $fac_{hard}$
- SPT value  $N_{60}$
- Post Liquefaction Factor  $fac_{post}$

The constant volume friction angle, the peak friction angle, and cohesion were evaluated from direct shear tests on material. The elastic shear modulus number, the plastic shear modulus number, and the failure ratio were obtained by curve fitting with the direct shear test results too. The elastic bulk modulus number was related to the elastic shear modulus number using the Poisson's ratio. The elastic shear modulus index, elastic bulk modulus index, and plastic shear modulus index were assigned as 0.5, 0.5 and 0.5, respectively. Appropriate values of the densification factor, and the post liquefaction factor were taken as 1, and 0.2, respectively. In Table I the input parameters for the UBC3D-PLM model are presented [22].

TABLE I  
INPUT PARAMETERS FOR THE UBC3D[22]

Parameters	Symbol	Unit	Method	Default
Constant volume friction angle	$\phi_{cv}$	(°)	CD TxC or DSS	-
Peak friction angle	$\phi_p$	(°)	CD TxC or DSS	-
Cohesion	$c$	kPa	CD TxC or DSS	0
Elastic Shear Modulus	$K_G^e$	-	Curve Fit	-
Plastic Shear Modulus	$K_G^p$	-	Curve Fit	-
Elastic Bulk Modulus	$K_B^e$	-	Curve Fit	-
Elastic Shear Modulus Index	$n_e$	-	Curve Fit	0.5
Elastic Bulk Modulus Index	$m_e$	-	Curve Fit	0.5
Plastic Shear Modulus Index	$n_p$	-	Curve Fit	0.5
Failure Ratio	$R_f$	-	Curve Fit	0.9
Atmospheric pressure	$P_A$	KPa	Standard Value	100
Tension Cut-off	$\sigma_t$	KPa	0	0
Densification Factor	$fac_{hard}$	-	Curve Fit	1
SPT value	$N_{60}$	-	In-Situ Testing	-
Post Liquefaction Factor	$fac_{post}$	-	Curve Fit	0.2-1

### III. SUPERSTITION HILLS EARTHQUAKE 1987

The Wildlife site consisted of 2.5m of lean clay/silt underlain by 1m of sandy silt above 3.3m of loose, silty sand. The silty sand was, in turn, underlain by highly plastic clay within which a down-hole instrument was placed at a depth of 7.5m. A series of piezometers was installed in the silty sand. The Wildlife array was subjected to strong shaking in 1987 from the Elmore Ranch and Superstition Hills earthquakes. The Elmore Ranch earthquake of November 23, 1987 was a M6.2 event epicentered 23km west of the WLA and did not produce surficial evidence of liquefaction. The Superstition Hills earthquake, a M6.6 event that occurred, produced sand boils, ground fissures, and permanent lateral displacements at the site. The WLA piezometers recorded pore pressure signals, and that have been the subject of some controversy over the years (Figs. 1 and 2) [27]-[31].

The acceleration records from the Superstition Hill earthquake at the Wildlife Site were downloaded directly from the PEER Strong Motion Database. After that, acceleration data have been imported in Sigmosignal Software. After data analyze the data for velocity and displacement with their diagrams have been produced [2].

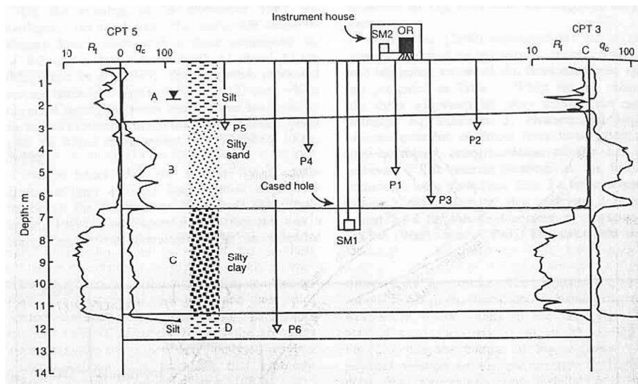


Fig. 1 Down-hole arrays at the Wildlife Site [2]

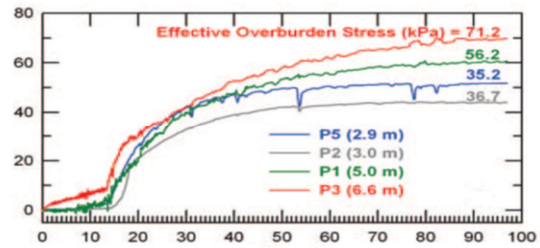


Fig. 2 Recorded pore-pressures at the Wildlife Site [23]

#### IV. VALIDATION OF THE UBC3D-PLM FOR WILDLIFE SITE IN A FINITE ELEMENT MODEL

As mentioned before, UBC3D-PLM model have some special parameters. Table II will present the data of wildlife site, for using in this modeling. After calculation the result of pore-pressure generation in 4 piezometers illustrated (See Figs. 3 to 7).

TABLE II  
UBC-PLM PARAMETERS IN WILDLIFE

Parameters	Unit	I	II	III	IV	V
Depth	m	0 – 1.2	1.2 – 2.5	2.5 – 3.5	3.5 – 6.8	> 6.8
Young modulus	kN/m <sup>2</sup>	4.71e4	4.41e4	7.28e4	7.28e4	9.45e4
Poisson 's ratio	-	0.25	0.25	0.3	0.3	0.322
Unit weight phreatic level	kN/m <sup>3</sup>	16.0	19.4	19.7	19.7	20.0
Unit weight below phreatic level	kN/m <sup>3</sup>	16.0	21.6	21.8	21.8	22.0
Void ratio	-	0.6799	0.7955	0.7400	0.7400	0.6878
Constant volume friction angle	(°)	21.3	20	22	22	35
Peak friction angle	(°)	21.9	20.625	22.765	23.065	36
Cohesion	kPa	2.00	2.00	0	0	0
Elastic Shear Modulus	-	788.2	798.9	854.6	954.1	934.3
Plastic Shear Modulus	-	185.1	193.6	250	424.7	380.3
Elastic Bulk Modulus	-	551.7	559.3	598.2	667.9	654
Elastic Shear Modulus Index	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Elastic Bulk Modulus Index	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Plastic Shear Modulus Index	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Failure Ratio	-	0.841	0.836	0.811	0.771	0.779
Atmospheric pressure	KPa	100	100	100	100	100
Tension Cut-off	KPa	0	0	0	0	0
Densification Factor	-	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
SPT value	-	6	6.25	7.65	10.65	10
Post Liquefaction Factor	-	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Permeability	m/s	5.0*10 <sup>-7</sup>	5.0*10 <sup>-7</sup>	5.0*10 <sup>-7</sup>	2.0*10 <sup>-6</sup>	1.0*10 <sup>-8</sup>
Tangent stiffness for oedometer	KPa	56520	52920	98000	98000	136138
Cohesion	kPa	2.00	2.00	1.0*10 <sup>-4</sup>	1.0*10 <sup>-4</sup>	1.0*10 <sup>-4</sup>
Constant volume friction angle	(°)	21.3	20	22	22	35
Dilatancy angle	(°)	21.3	20.0	19.0	18.0	5.0

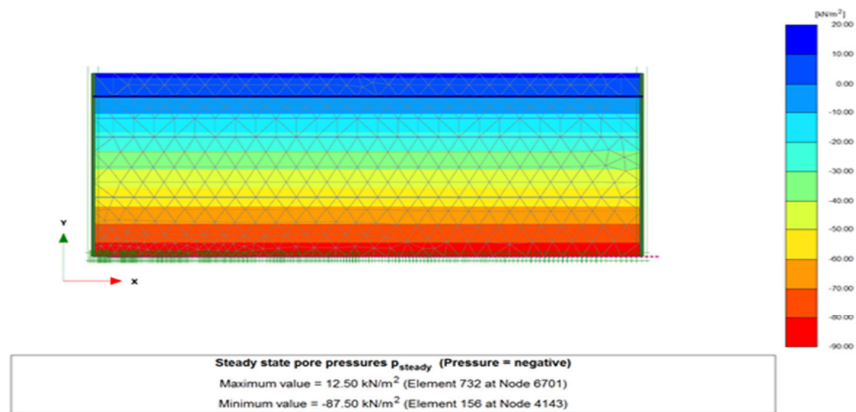


Fig. 3 Steady pore pressures in wildlife site before earthquake

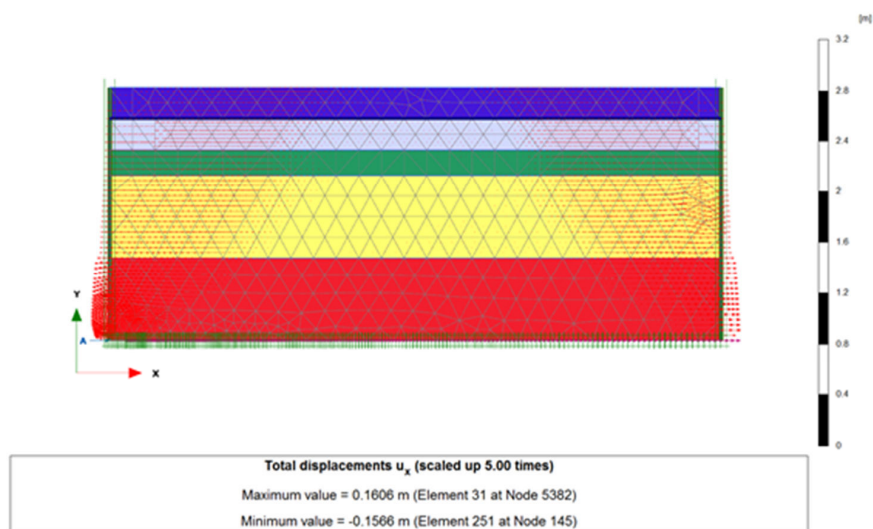


Fig. 4 Total displacement in X-Axis after earthquake

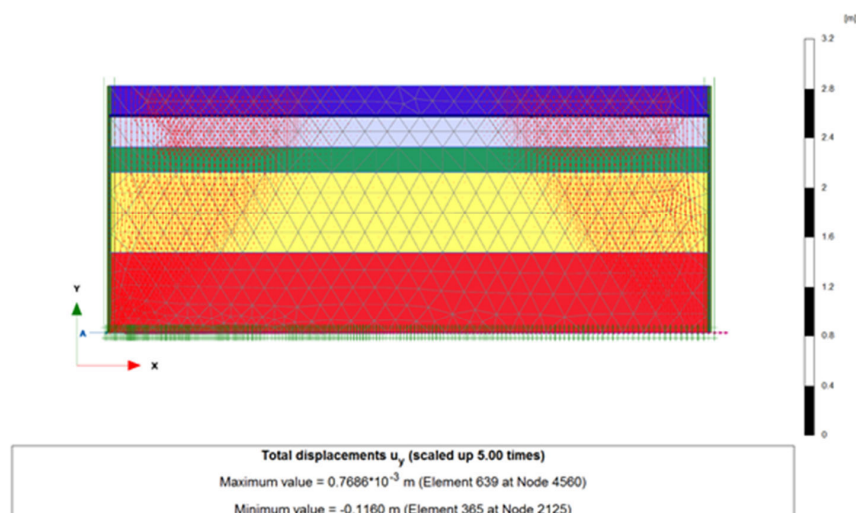


Fig. 5 Total displacement in Y-Axis after earthquake

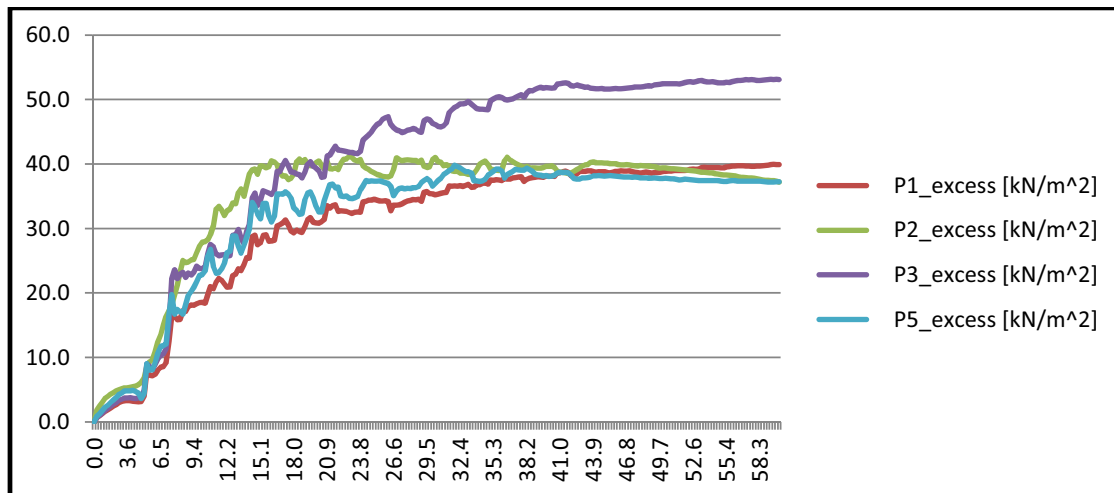


Fig. 6 Calculated pore-pressures at the Wildlife Site

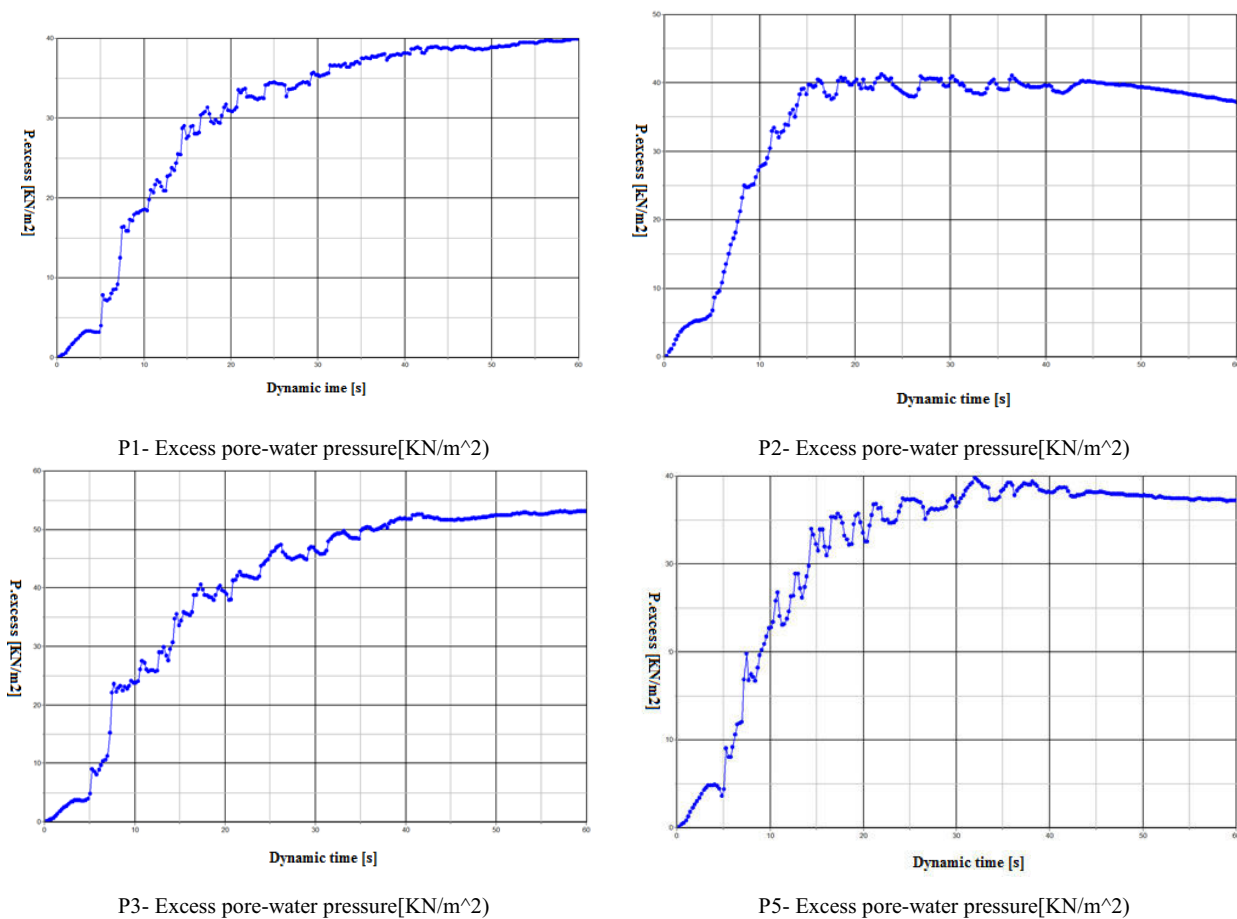


Fig. 7 Results of excess pore-water pressure in wildlife site liquefaction modeling

## V. CONCLUSION

In this report, after very short presentation of UBCSAND model in liquefaction calculation, the situation and parameters

of wildlife site have been introduced. In this site six pore-water pressure transducers, or piezometers, were installed. Five of them are in the liquefiable layer, that is, within the

silty sand unit. Piezometer P4 failed to function during the 1987 events. Based on numerical results of Superstition hills earthquake 1987 in the wildlife site the following conclusion can be obtained:

- The model builds the main mechanisms (increasing the excess pore-water pressure) of liquefaction.
- Results show that UBC3D-PLM model can calculate excess pore pressure during earthquake loading by using Densification Factor and Post Liquefaction Factor.
- Results of the simulations show similar trends between UBC3D-PLM model and reality.
- Compare between calculated and measured diagrams of pore-water pressure show very good presentation of liquefaction procedure.
- it is flexible and easy to use (most of the material properties are related to SPT)

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