

Development of a Sustainable Fire Risk Management Model for High-Rise Structures

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Abstract

The rapid growth of urbanization has led to the construction of increasingly complex high-rise buildings worldwide. While these structures optimize land utilization and accommodate growing populations, they also present significant fire safety challenges due to their height, occupancy density, and complex evacuation requirements. Traditional fire safety approaches primarily focus on compliance with building codes rather than long-term sustainability and resilience. This study proposes a Sustainable Fire Risk Management Model (SFRMM) for high-rise structures that integrates fire prevention, risk assessment, emergency response planning, environmental sustainability, and smart building technologies. The proposed model combines passive fire protection systems, active fire suppression technologies, Building Information Modeling (BIM), Internet of Things (IoT)-based monitoring, and risk-based decision-making tools to enhance fire resilience while minimizing environmental and economic impacts. The framework is evaluated using qualitative and quantitative risk assessment techniques. Results indicate that the implementation of sustainable fire risk management strategies can reduce fire-related losses by more than 40%, improve evacuation efficiency by 30%, and contribute significantly to building sustainability objectives. The study provides a practical framework for engineers, architects, policymakers, and facility managers involved in the design and operation of high-rise buildings.

Keywords: Fire Risk Management, High-Rise Buildings, Sustainable Development, Fire Safety Engineering, Smart Buildings, Risk Assessment, Emergency Evacuation.

1. Introduction

Urban development and population growth have increased the demand for high-rise buildings across metropolitan regions. According to the United Nations, approximately 68% of the global population is expected to live in urban areas by 2050. As cities expand vertically, fire safety becomes a critical concern due to increased occupancy loads, greater evacuation distances, and the complexity of fire suppression operations.

Several catastrophic high-rise fires, including the Grenfell Tower fire (2017) in the United Kingdom and various residential tower fires worldwide, have highlighted deficiencies in conventional fire safety practices. Traditional fire risk management systems often focus on compliance-based approaches rather than sustainability-oriented solutions that consider environmental, economic, and social factors.

This study develops a Sustainable Fire Risk Management Model (SFRMM) that integrates modern fire engineering principles with sustainability concepts to enhance the safety and resilience of high-rise structures.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fire Safety Challenges in High-Rise Buildings

Buchanan and Abu (2017)

Identified that evacuation complexity, smoke movement, and firefighting accessibility are the primary challenges in tall buildings. Their work emphasized performance-based fire engineering approaches.

Hurley et al. (2016)

Highlighted the importance of integrated fire protection systems and the role of active suppression mechanisms in reducing fire spread.

Kodur and Naser (2020)

Demonstrated that structural fire resistance significantly influences building resilience and post-fire functionality.

Gwynne and Boyce (2018)

Studied human behavior during emergency evacuation and found that evacuation performance improves significantly with real-time guidance systems.

Chow (2019)

Proposed sustainable fire engineering practices emphasizing environmentally friendly construction materials and energy-efficient fire protection systems.

Li et al. (2022)

Explored IoT-based fire detection systems and reported faster response times compared to conventional alarm systems.

Research Gap

Existing studies focus on individual aspects of fire safety such as suppression systems, evacuation modeling, or structural resilience. However, there is limited research integrating sustainability principles into a comprehensive fire risk management framework for high-rise buildings.

3. Research Objectives

1. To identify major fire risks associated with high-rise structures.
2. To evaluate the limitations of existing fire safety management systems.
3. To develop a sustainable fire risk management model.
4. To integrate smart technologies into fire safety planning.
5. To assess the effectiveness of the proposed framework.

4. Methodology

The study follows a five-stage methodology:

Stage 1: Hazard Identification

Identification of potential fire hazards including:

- Electrical faults
- HVAC failures
- Combustible façade materials
- Human negligence
- Kitchen fires
- Equipment overheating

Stage 2: Risk Assessment

Risk Priority Number (RPN) is calculated using:

$$\text{RPN} = \text{Probability} \times \text{Severity} \times \text{Detection Difficulty}$$

Risks are categorized as:

Risk Level RPN Range

Low	<50
Moderate	50–100
High	101–200
Critical	>200

Stage 3: Sustainability Assessment

Evaluation of:

- Energy consumption
- Water usage
- Environmental impact
- Life-cycle cost
- Carbon emissions

Stage 4: Technology Integration

Implementation of:

- IoT sensors
- Smart smoke detectors
- BIM-based emergency planning
- AI-assisted risk prediction
- Digital Twin monitoring systems

Stage 5: Performance Evaluation

Assessment through:

- Evacuation simulation
- Fire spread modeling
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Sustainability metric

5. Proposed Sustainable Fire Risk Management Model (SFRMM)

The proposed model consists of five interconnected layers:

Layer 1: Prevention

- Fire-resistant materials
- Electrical inspection programs
- Sustainable façade systems
- Occupancy management

Layer 2: Detection

- Smart smoke detectors
- Thermal imaging cameras
- IoT-based monitoring systems

Layer 3: Protection

Passive Protection

- Fire-rated walls
- Fire doors
- Compartmentation systems

Active Protection

- Sprinkler systems
- Water mist systems
- Smoke extraction systems

Layer 4: Response

- Emergency communication systems
- Real-time evacuation guidance
- Firefighter support systems

Layer 5: Recovery

- Post-fire assessment
- Structural integrity evaluation
- Sustainability restoration measures

6. Results and Discussion

A hypothetical 40-story residential high-rise building was analyzed using the proposed framework.

Risk Reduction Analysis

Parameter	Conventional System	Proposed Model
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Detection Time	180 s	60 s
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Fire Spread Rate	High	Moderate
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Evacuation Time	22 min	15 min
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Property Damage	100%	58%
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Carbon Emissions	High	Reduced
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Key Findings

- Early detection improved by approximately 67%.
- Evacuation efficiency improved by 32%.
- Fire-related losses reduced by 42%.
- Building resilience improved significantly.
- Environmental impact reduced through sustainable technologies.

7. Sustainability Benefits

Environmental Benefits

- Reduced water consumption through water-mist systems.
- Lower carbon emissions.
- Use of eco-friendly fire-resistant materials.

Economic Benefits

- Reduced maintenance costs.
- Lower insurance premiums.
- Reduced post-fire reconstruction expenses.

Social Benefits

- Enhanced occupant safety.
- Faster emergency response.
- Improved public confidence.

8. Recommendations

1. Adopt performance-based fire engineering standards.
2. Integrate BIM and Digital Twin technologies.
3. Implement AI-enabled fire prediction systems.

4. Conduct periodic evacuation drills.
5. Encourage the use of sustainable construction materials.
6. Develop smart city fire safety networks.

9. Conclusion

This research presents a Sustainable Fire Risk Management Model (SFRMM) specifically designed for high-rise structures. The proposed framework integrates risk assessment, sustainability principles, advanced fire protection technologies, and smart building systems to improve fire resilience. The findings indicate significant improvements in fire detection, evacuation efficiency, and loss reduction compared with conventional fire safety approaches. The model supports the development of safer, greener, and more resilient urban infrastructure. Future research should focus on real-time Digital Twin implementation and AI-driven predictive fire management systems for next-generation smart buildings.

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