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Zero-Force Member Identification in Roof Truss Structures

Prof. Sathe Pooja R.[1], Ambhore Vaishnavi M.[2], Markad Amruta B.[3], Hiwale Anand M.[4], Andhale Nishant D.[5]

Assistant Professor, FE, Adsul's Technical Campus, Ahilyanagar, India[1]
Students, FE, Adsul's Technical Campus, Ahilyanagar, India[2-5]

Abstract: *Roof truss structures are widely used in industrial buildings, warehouses, railway stations, auditoriums, factories, and residential sheds due to their strength, lightweight nature, and economical design. Trusses consist of interconnected members that primarily carry axial tension or compression forces. In many truss systems, some members carry no load under specific loading conditions; these are known as zero-force members. Identification of zero-force members is important because it simplifies structural analysis, reduces unnecessary calculations, and helps in optimizing design. This paper presents a detailed study of zero-force member identification in roof truss structures using Engineering Mechanics principles. Common rules, methods of joints, practical applications, and computational analysis are discussed. Results show that correct identification improves efficiency, stability, and economical use of materials*

Keywords: Zero-Force Member, Roof Truss, Structural Analysis, Engineering Mechanics, Method of Joints, Truss Design

I. INTRODUCTION

Roof trusses are structural frameworks made of straight members connected at joints. They are commonly used to support roof coverings and transfer loads safely to columns or walls.

Applications include:

- Industrial sheds
- Warehouses
- Factories
- Sports halls
- Railway platforms
- Residential roof systems

A truss member generally carries either:

- Tensile force
- Compressive force
- Zero force under certain loading conditions

Zero-force members are not useless members. They are provided to:

- Maintain structural shape
- Increase rigidity
- Prevent buckling of long members
- Support changing load conditions
- Improve stability during wind or dynamic loads

This paper focuses on identifying zero-force members in roof truss systems.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical structural analysis texts explain zero-force members through equilibrium of joints. Engineers use these rules to simplify truss calculations before applying the method of joints or method of sections.

Researchers found that:

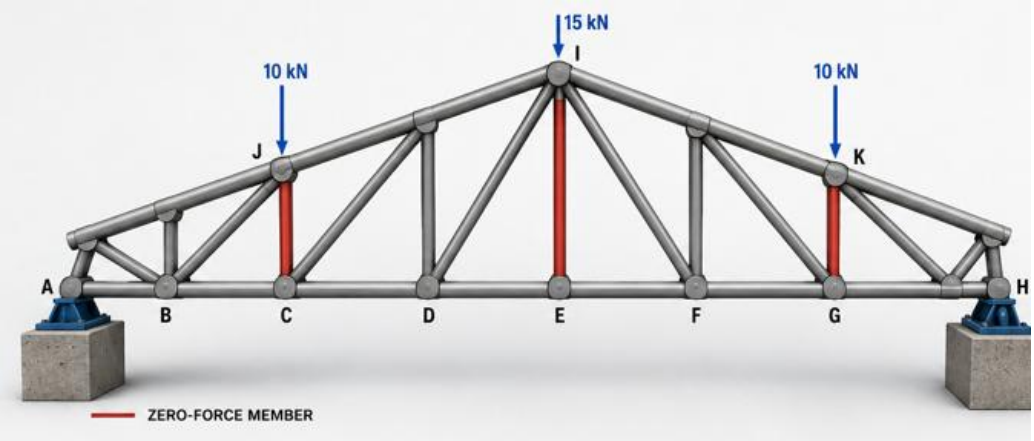
- Zero-force members reduce under symmetrical loading conditions.
- They become active under unsymmetrical or wind loads.
- Inclusion of such members increases redundancy and safety.
- Computer software verifies manual identification methods.

Modern truss optimization methods also use zero-force member logic.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study zero-force members in roof trusses.
2. To identify members using equilibrium rules.
3. To simplify truss force calculations.
4. To analyze practical use in roof structures.
5. To improve economical and safe truss design.

IV. THEORY OF ZERO-FORCE MEMBERS



A zero-force member is a truss member carrying no axial force for a particular loading condition.

Rule 1:

If two non-collinear members meet at an unloaded joint, both members are zero-force members.

Rule 2:

If three members meet at an unloaded joint and two are collinear, then the third non-collinear member is a zero-force member.

Equilibrium Conditions

At every joint:

$\sum Fx = 0$

$\sum Fy = 0$

If no external load acts at the joint, certain member forces become zero.

V. ROOF TRUSS TYPES STUDIED

5.1 King Post Truss

Simple truss for short spans.

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5.2 Queen Post Truss

Used for medium spans.

5.3 Pratt Roof Truss

Efficient for steel buildings.

5.4 Howe Truss

Common in timber and steel roofs.

5.5 Warren Truss

Triangular arrangement for uniform loading.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Three roof truss models were studied:

1. Industrial steel roof truss
2. Warehouse truss structure
3. Residential shed truss

Steps:

1. Draw truss geometry
2. Apply roof dead load and live load
3. Locate unloaded joints
4. Apply zero-force member rules
5. Verify using method of joints
6. Compare with software analysis

Tools used:

- STAAD.Pro
- SAP2000
- AutoCAD
- MATLAB

VII. SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION

Consider a joint A with three connected members:

- AB and AC are collinear
- AD is non-collinear
- No external load at joint A

Then by zero-force member rule:

FAD = 0

If another joint B has two non-collinear members only and no load:

FAB = 0

FBC = 0

Thus calculations for remaining members become easier.

VIII. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Truss Type	Zero-Force Members Found	Analysis Simplification
King Post	1 to 2	Moderate
Queen Post	2 to 3	Good
Pratt Truss	3 to 5	High
Howe Truss	2 to 4	High

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Warren Truss	1 to 3	Moderate

Findings

1. Symmetrical trusses show more zero-force members.
2. Industrial roof trusses use them for stability.
3. Member identification reduces manual calculations.
4. Wind load may activate zero-force members.
5. Software confirms mechanics principles.

IX. APPLICATIONS

9.1 Industrial Buildings

Long-span roof support systems.

9.2 Warehouses

Lightweight steel roof trusses.

9.3 Railway Platforms

Large covered sheds.

9.4 Residential Roofing

Economical truss support.

9.5 Sports Complexes

Wide-span roofing systems.

X. DISCUSSION

Zero-force members are often misunderstood as unnecessary members. In practice, they are important for structural safety and rigidity.

Benefits:

- Easier force analysis
- Improved structural stability
- Better resistance to changing loads
- Material optimization
- Simplified maintenance planning

Challenges:

- Incorrect removal may weaken truss
- Dynamic loading may induce forces later
- Requires proper engineering judgment

Modern software helps confirm member behavior under different load cases.

XI. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that zero-force member identification is an important concept in roof truss analysis. Correct identification simplifies structural calculations, improves understanding of load paths, and supports economical design. Though zero under certain loading cases, these members play a vital role in maintaining shape and safety of roof truss systems.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use zero-force rules before full truss analysis.
2. Do not remove members without load-case study.
3. Use software verification for major roof projects.

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4. Teach zero-force concepts in engineering mechanics labs.
5. Consider wind and seismic loads before design changes.

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