

# **Flexural Behavior of lapped connections in multi-span cold-formed Z-purlins**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** Study the flexural behavior of the lapped connections in multi span cold-formed steel Z sections systems.

**Study design:** The effect of overlap length of the lapped connections was investigated in order to achieve the optimum overlap length/depth ratio. Different bolts arrangements were studied to connect lap splice. Also, a new method using epoxy was supposed and studied to connect lap splice. The effect of web stiffening and flange stiffening of the lapped connection were also investigated in this study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The R.C. and Materials laboratory, Benha Faculty of Engineering, Benha University, Egypt, between February 2013 and May 2015.

**Methodology:** Seventeen full scale specimens with lapped connections were prepared and experimentally tested taking into account the variables of this study.

**Results:** The experimental results included ultimate load, vertical deflection at mid-span and mode of failure.

**Conclusion:** As expected, the length of lapped connection clearly improved the flexural behavior of the tested specimens. The bolts arrangement at lap splice was very important in increasing the strength and stiffness of lapped connection. The experimental results showed that using epoxy was a practical and good method to connect lap splice. Both web stiffening and flange stiffening delayed the local buckling of lapped connection. However, the flange stiffening produced a more improvement of local buckling resistance.

**Keywords:** *[Purlins, Overlaps, Cold-formed, Connection]*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Cold-formed sections have been used in car bodies, high way barriers and in secondary structural elements including roof and wall systems. Cold formed sections are fabricated from steel sheets, strips or plates, where their thickness is typically between 0.5 and 6 mm. In the last 20 years cold formed sections have also become popular for primary structures, particularly in domestic, agricultural, light commercial and light industrial applications. In last decades, many researchers studied the structural behavior of cold-formed steel beams concerning with the instability phenomena; such as local distortion, lateral-torsional buckling, and their interactions.

In single storey industrial buildings, and low to medium rise offices and warehouses, cold-formed steel sections are widely used as secondary structural members such as purlins, in order to support roof cladding. Four different types of purlin systems may be found in modern roofs with different degrees of continuity: single span, double span, multi-span with sleeves, and multi-span with overlaps.

As its effective stacking and easy connection, multi-span cold-formed steel Z purlin systems with lapped connections over the internal supports are the most popular purlin systems used

in practice. Lapping configuration is the most important parameter affects on load capacity of Z purlin systems. Weak technical data for designer engineers to assess the structural behavior of this type of connections, force the researches to develop and study a full scale samples to study its structural behavior.

Recent developments of using lapped connections in multi-span cold formed steel Z purlins have been increasing lately.

An experimental study of the behavior of lapped connections between cold-formed steel Z sections was presented by Chung K.F. et al (2004). A total of 26 one point load tests on lapped connections between Z sections with various lap lengths, test spans and a practical configuration for generic lapped connections were carried out. The strength and the deformation characteristics of these connections were monitored. Among all tests, section failure at the end of lap under combined bending and shear was observed to be critical in the connected Z sections. This study concluded that the moment resistance and the flexural rigidity of lapped connections did not depend only on the lap length to section depth ratio, but also on the lap length to test span ratio. The assumption that lapped sections always doubles the moment resistance and flexural rigidity of those of connected sections was not always correct. Also, it was observed that 'full strength laps' and 'full stiffness laps' may be obtained in lapped connections provided that the lap length to section depth ratios are equal to or larger than 2.0 and 4.0, respectively.

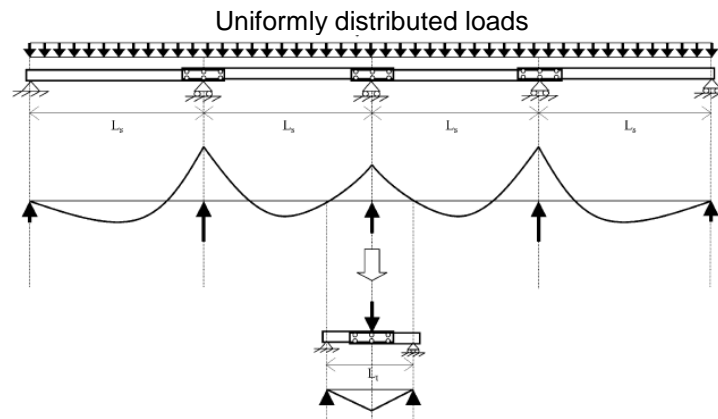
Zhang L. et al [2007] presented an experimental investigation on the structural behavior of lapped connections over the internal supports in multi span cold-formed steel Z purlin systems. The tests of resistance moment and effective flexural rigidity were prepared on two typical connection configurations, i.e. web bolts plus self-drilling screws at both flanges or at the top flange only. This study concluded that the edge sections of lapped connection are the most critical sections of lapped connection. The load-carrying resistance of tested lapped connections is dominated by the bending moment. The resistance moment of internal support section is almost twice that of edge sections of lapped connections, which imply only the edge sections, are necessary for strength checking in practical applications. The self-drilling screws at the bottom flange have slight effect on the resistance moment of lapped connections but do not have notable influence on the flexural rigidity of lapped connections. The length of lapped connection has significant effect on its effective flexural rigidity.

Dubina D. et al [2010], assumed that purlins were semi-continuous at the junction between the single and lapped sections, and proposed to take into account the web crippling action at the edge of the lapped zone in interaction with the bending moment. In author's opinion, this type of interaction is a new approach compared with the traditional interaction bending moment and shear force. Based on this assumption, relevant design formulae were proposed for both strength and stability checking, accounting for different types of overall and local stress interactions. For validation, numerical and experimental tests results obtained from review were used for the comparison with results obtained based on these assumptions. This study concluded that the lap edge single section was found to be the most critical point for design in the case of multi-span lapped bolted connection Z-purlins, and the interaction of bending moment with web crippling is the relevant criterion. Also, the study confirmed that the lateral torsional buckling should be checked for cold-formed steel purlins which are laterally unrestrained.

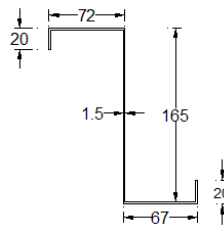
This article aims to study the behavior of lapped cold-formed steel Z sections. Mode of failure, ultimate load, and the vertical deflection at mid-span are observed and recorded to examine the flexural behavior of lapped connections in multi span cold-formed steel Z purlin systems.

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

As mentioned from previous works, and according to our main target to increase the ultimate load carried by lapped splice, the following four parameters were supposed. The length of the lap splice, the arrangement of bolts at lap splice, using epoxy resin to connect the lap splice and the stiffness of lap splice were investigated experimentally to reveal their effects on the behavior of the tested specimens. Seventeen full scale steel specimens with lapped connections were prepared and experimentally tested. Carrying out prolonged and expensive full-scale testing, in order to examine the behavior of lapped connection, is not needed. It is sufficient to test lapped connections of reduced section lengths. The distance between points of zero moment, which represents the lap connections, is considered as a test specimen, as shown in figure 1. Points of zero moment were nearly at a distance of quarter span length from each support. Assuming the practical full span of the purlin equal to 4800 mm, so, the effective length of the tested specimen was taken equal to 2400 mm which equal to half span length. Z shape cold formed steel section with plate thickness equal to 1.5 mm was used. Figure 2 shows the details of Z section used for all tested specimens of this study. Bolts of 12 mm diameter (M12) and 8.8 grade are used for all specimens.



**Fig. 1. Multi-span purlin systems with overlaps**



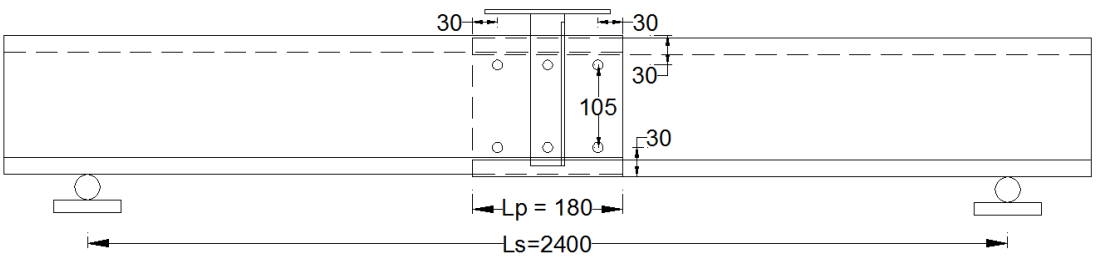
**Fig. 2. Details of cold formed Z section (all dimensions in mm)**

The four mentioned parameters correspond to the test series A, B, C and D, respectively, as presented in table 1 which summarized the experimental program of this study. To study the effect of lap splice length, five specimens (A180, A240, A300, A600 and A900) were prepared with 180, 240, 300, 600 and 900 mm lap lengths. Figures 3 (a-e) show the details of these specimens. To study the effect of bolts arrangement, three specimens (B300-1, B300-2 & B300-3) were prepared with 300 mm lap length and three different bolts arrangements, as shown in figures 3 (f-h). To study the new technique which proposed to

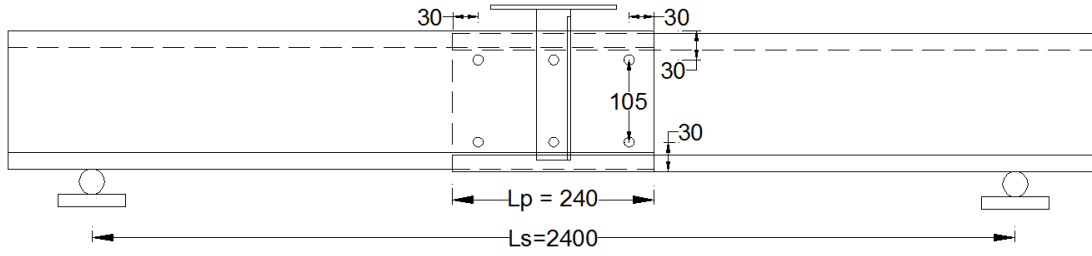
connect the lap splice by using epoxy resin, four specimens (C180, C240, C300 & C600) were prepared with 180, 240, 300 and 600 mm lap lengths, as shown in figures 3 (i-l). To study the effect of lap splice web stiffening, four specimens of 240 mm lap splice length were prepared by various web stiffening schemes. The web stiffness of the lap splice was improved by extending the web of spliced Z section members on both sides of the lap splice by 120, 240, 360 & 480 mm, which correspond to the specimens D240-1, D240-2, D240-3 & D240-4, respectively, as shown in figures 3 (m-p). To study the effect of lap splice flange stiffening one specimen with 300 mm lap splice length was prepared. The flange stiffness was improved by using four equal angles of 40x4 mm size (specimens D300-5), as shown in figure 3 (q).

**Table 1. Experimental Program**

Test series	Specimen	Lap length Lp [mm]	Parameter study
A	A180	180	Length of lap splice
	A240	240	
	A300	300	
	A600	600	
	A900	900	
B	B300-1	300	Arrangement of bolts
	B300-2		
	B300-3		
C	C180	180	Using epoxy to connect the lap splice
	C240	240	
	C300	300	
	C600	600	
D	D240-1	240	Stiffness of lap splice, by gradually changing section stiffness, as shown in Fig.3 (m-p).
	D240-2		
	D240-3		
	D240-4		
	D300-5	300	Stiffness of lap splice, by applying four angles at flanges, as shown in Fig.3 (q).

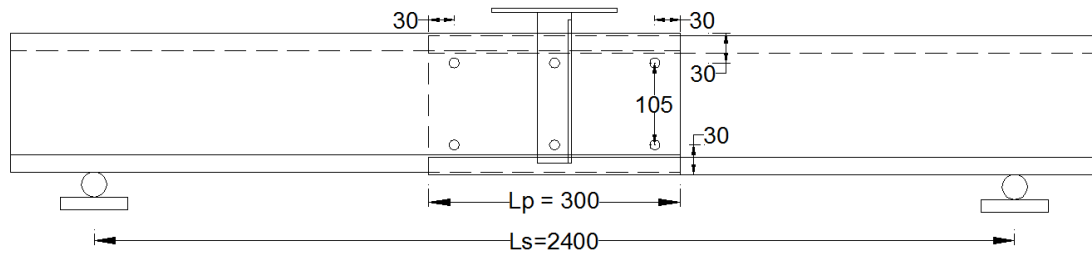


**(a) A180**



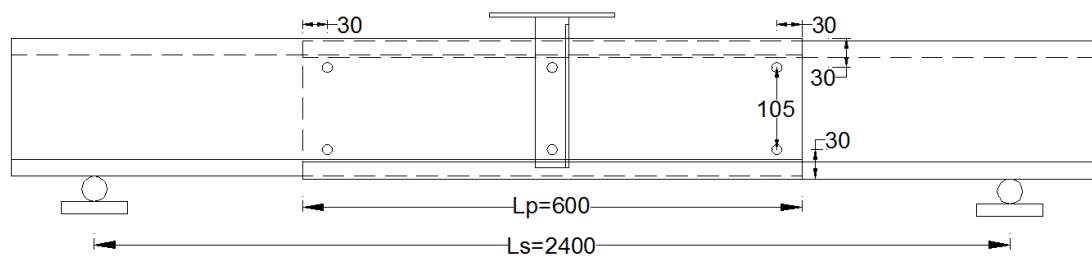
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**(b) A240**



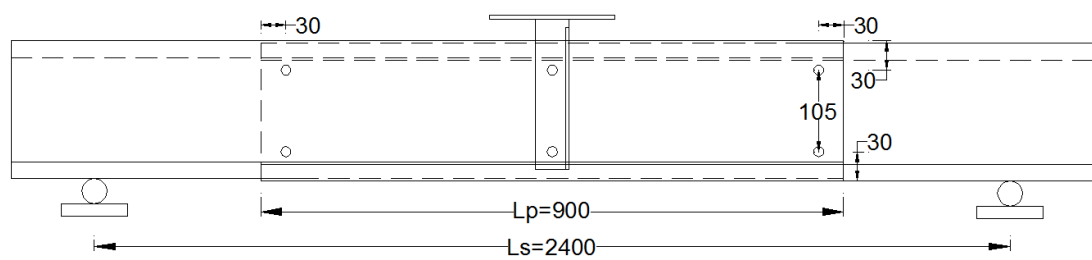
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**(c) A300**



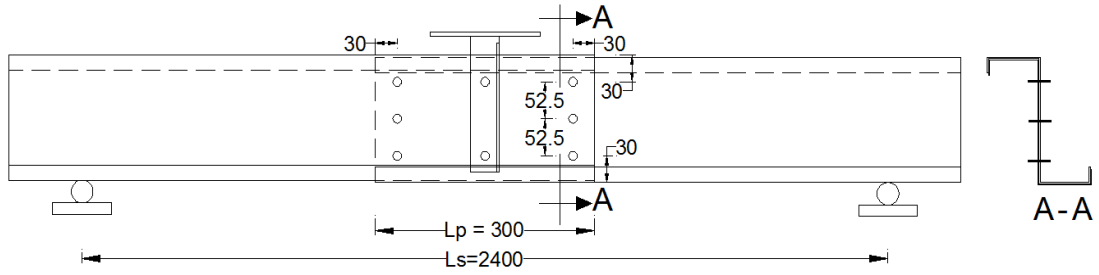
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**(d) A600**



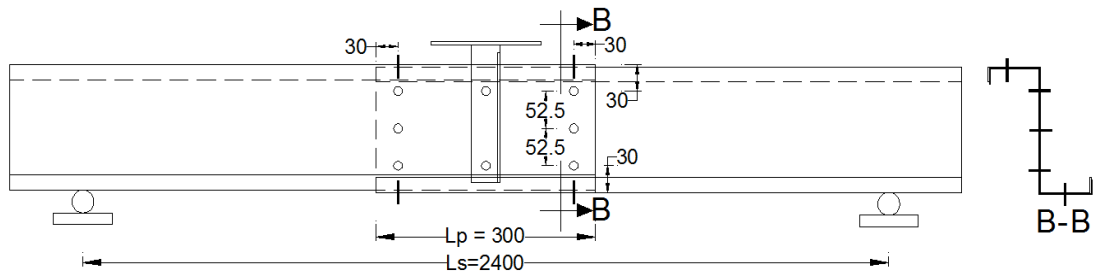
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**(e) A900**



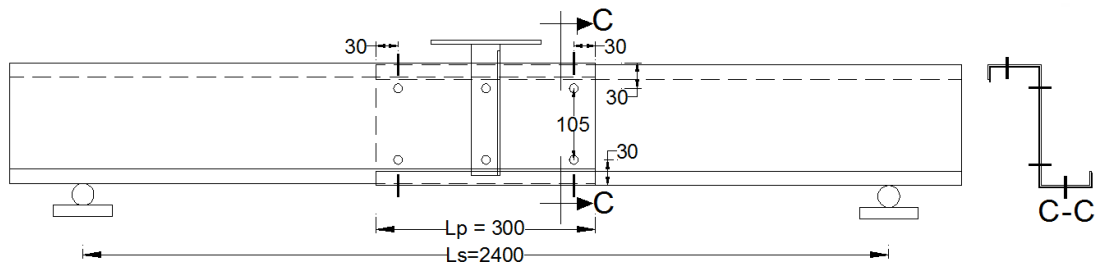
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(f) B300-1



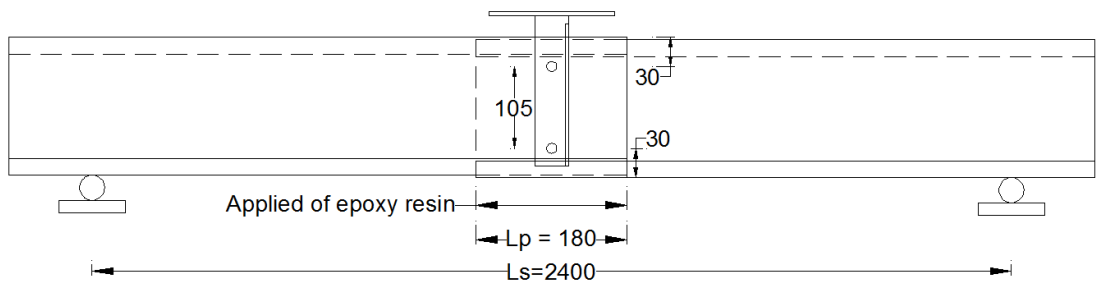
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(g) B300-2



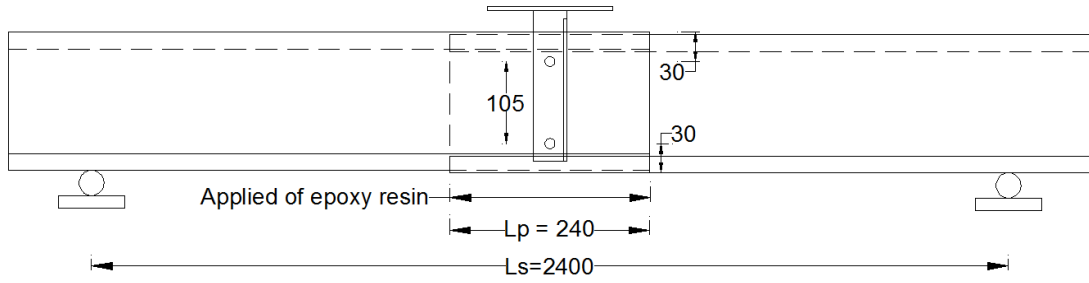
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(h) B300-3



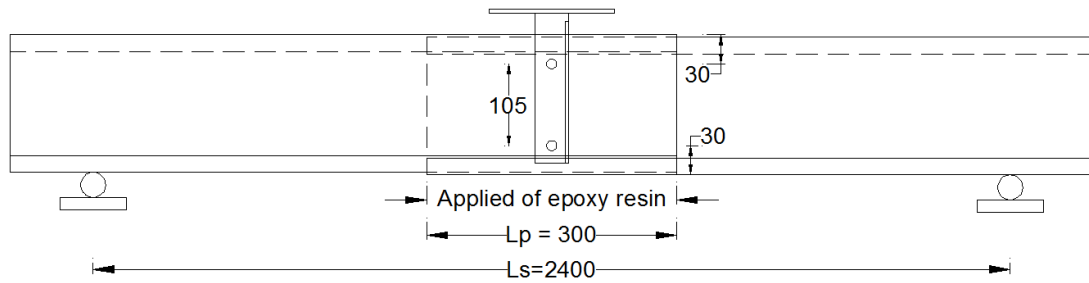
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(i) C180



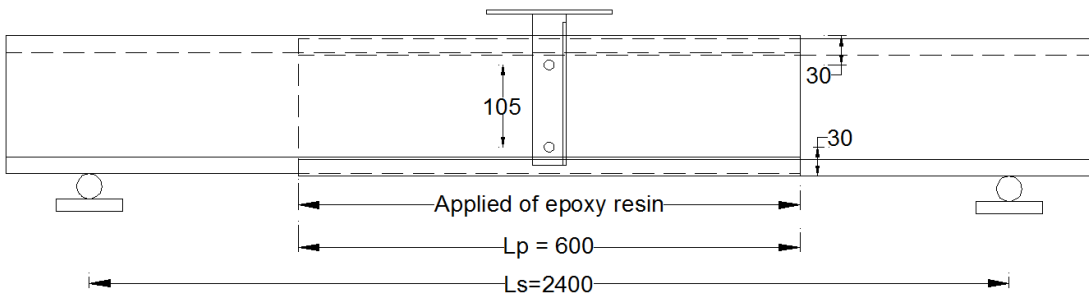
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(j) C240



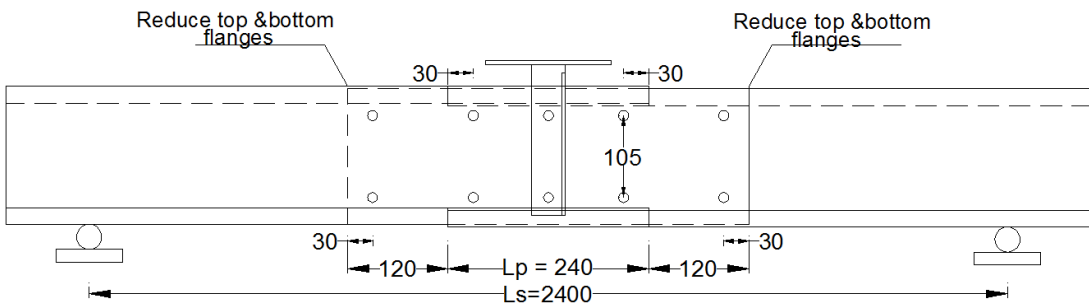
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(k) C300



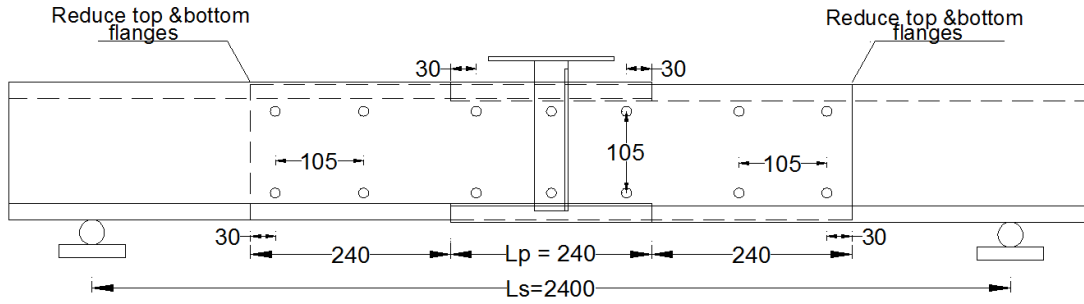
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(l) C600



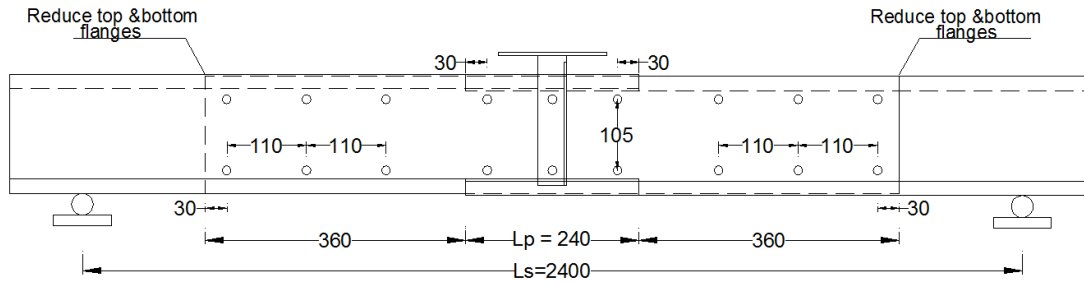
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(m) D240-1



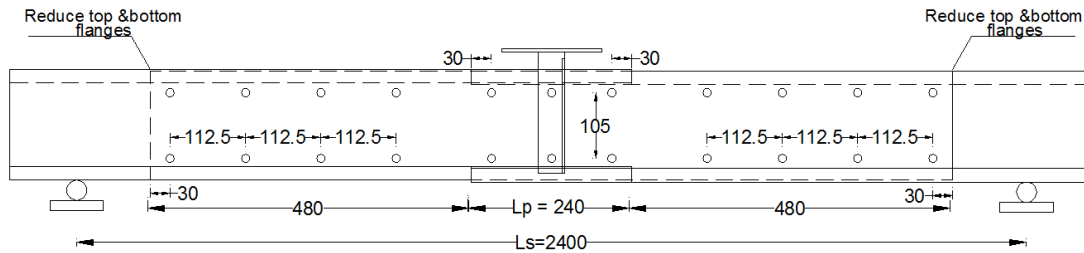
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**(n) D240-2**



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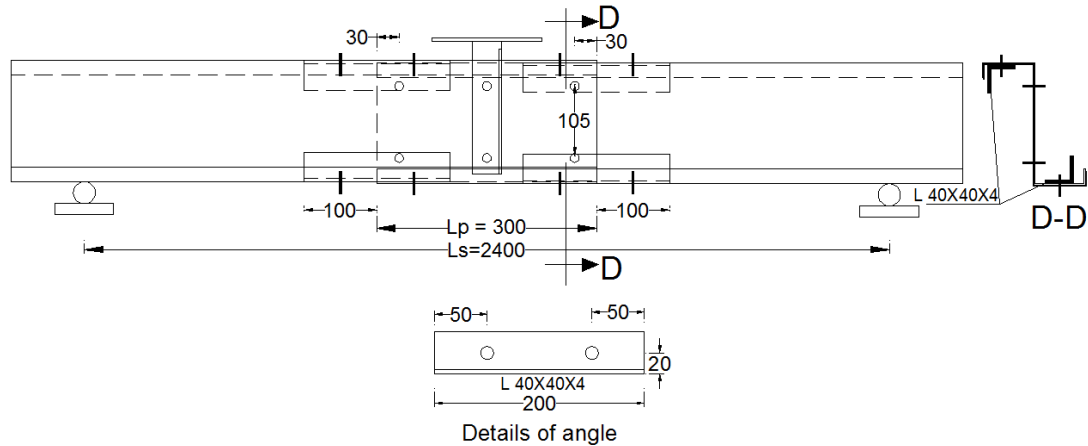
**(o) D240-3**



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**(p) D240-4**





(q) D300-5

**Fig. 3. (a-q) Test specimens (all dimensions in mm)**

*L<sub>p</sub>, length of lap connection; L<sub>s</sub>, span of the tested specimen.*

The actual geometric and mechanical properties of the used cold-formed Z-section are listed in table 2. The mechanical properties of the steel section were determined according to tension test on three coupons, and the average values of the determined properties are presented. Table 3 and table 4 show the material properties of the used bolts and epoxy, respectively, according to their manufactures.

**Table 2. Properties of Steel cold-formed Z-section**

Steel Z-cold formed properties				
E-modulus [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Yield stress (F <sub>y</sub> ) [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Ultimate stress (F <sub>u</sub> ) [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Yield strain (ε <sub>y</sub> ) %	Ultimate strain (ε <sub>u</sub> )%
210,000	240	360	0.5	3.5

**Table 3. Properties of M12 Bolts**

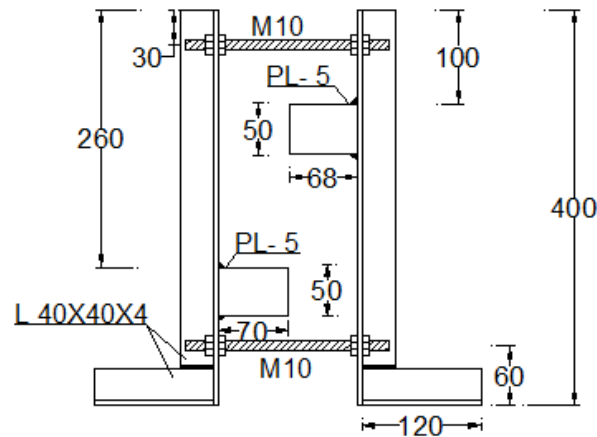
Bolts properties					
Bolt grade	Yield stress (F <sub>y</sub> b) [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Ultimate stress (F <sub>ub</sub> ) [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Permissible load for M12 ( P <sub>s</sub> ) [N]	friction	Pretension force for M12 ( T ) [N]
8.8	640	800	11830		37030

**Table 4. Properties of Adhesive epoxy**

Sikadur® -30			
Compressive strength [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]		Tensile strength [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	
E-modulus	Strength at 7 days	E-modulus	Strength at 7 days
9,600	70-95	11,200	24-31
Shear strength [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]		Bond strength on steel [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	
Strength at 7 days		Mean value	Min. value
14-21		>30	>21

225 To prevent the lateral torsional buckling, lateral supports were applied to the specimens at  
 226 equal distance of 400 mm. The lateral supports consisted of two vertical angles of 40x40x4  
 227 mm size, two bolts M10 and two steel plates of 5 mm thickness, as shown in figure 4.

228  
 229 To ensure a complete bonding between steel specimens connected by epoxy, surface at lap  
 230 zone was treated by an abrasive disk then cleaned with acetone. Surface preparation was  
 231 completed until the oxidation layer accumulated on the steel surface was removed. The  
 232 adhesive was applied to the steel adherent surfaces with a spatula, and the surfaces were  
 233 then squeezed together with a small pressure to force out the air bubbles.  
 234

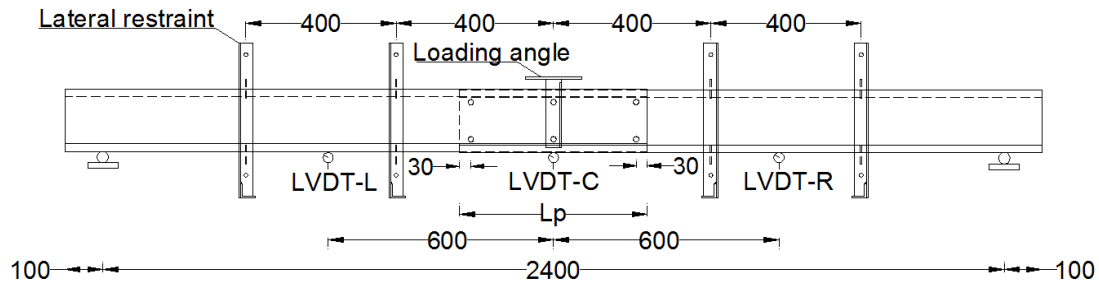


235  
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 237 **Fig. 4. Typical Detail of Lateral Restraint (all dimensions in mm)**  
 238

### 239 3. TEST SETUP

240  
 241 Linear Variable Deformation Transducers (LVDTs) of 0.01 mm accuracy and 100 mm total  
 242 length were used to measure the deflection of tested specimens. Three (LVDTs) were used  
 243 to measure the vertical deflections as shown in figures 5 and 6. The LVDTs were removed  
 244 just prior to failure to avoid the probability of any damage occurrence. A loading cell was  
 245 mounted as shown in figure 6 to monitor and control the applied loads during the test.

246  
 247 The prepared specimens were carefully lifted and fixed into the frame test as shown in figure  
 248 6. The tested specimens were loaded in one point by using one hydraulic jack. The initial  
 249 readings of all instruments was reset to make it zero. The load was applied incrementally in  
 250 small load intervals to get accurate readings. The measurements are monitored with a rate  
 251 of one reading per second. All data of instruments devices were recorded automatically and  
 252 saved in the format of the well known Office software "Excel". Also, the behavior of the  
 253 tested specimen was observed and photographed during the test.  
 254  
 255



**Fig. 5. Schematic view of the test setup and positions of Lateral Restraint and LVDTs (all dimensions in mm)**



**Fig. 6. Setup of the Experimental Test**

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Modes of failure

It was observed that all bolted specimens trend the same mode of failure which occurred at the end of lap splice where a combination of bending moment and shearing force were acting. Local buckling in compression flange and web, section distortion and separation of the lapped tension flanges are the main features of the observed mode of failure, as shown in figure 7. The localization of failure at the ends of lapping is due to the sudden change of the beam cross section. For specimens of series (A), clear separation between tension flanges, local buckling in compression flange and slight section distortion were observed at ultimate load. However, the separation between tension flanges was the main responsible of the large deformation occurred to the tested specimens. It seems that the lap splice length has no effect on the mode of failure of the tested specimens.

For tested specimens of series (B), where different arrangements of bolts were applied, the common features of the failure were localized, also, at the ends of lap splice. For specimens B300-2 and B300-3, where the upper and lower flanges of lap splice were bolted, a noticeable distortion of Z-section was occurred suddenly at the ends of lapping when the load reached its ultimate value. It seems that a transverse bending moment was occurred suddenly at ultimate load leading to the cross-section distortion and the collapse of tested specimen, as shown in figure 8.



**Fig. 7. Typical modes of failure of tested specimens with bolted connections**



**Fig. 8. Mode of failure of specimens' series (B)**

For series (D), where the stiffness effect of lap splice was studied, local buckling in compression flanges and web, and tension flanges separation were observed at failure. For specimens D240-1 and D240-2, the web stiffness of lap splice was improved by extending the web of lapped sections on the both sides of lap splice by 50% (120 mm) and 100% (240 mm), respectively, of lap splice length. The local buckling of the former specimens appeared just outside the ends of extended webs, as shown in figure 9.

For specimens D300-5, the stiffness of the upper and lower flanges was improved in comparison with specimen A300 by adding steel angles at the four ends of lap splice. For this specimen a local buckling of compression flange was observed at the ends of added angles, as shown in figure 10.

However, extending the web stiffness by 150% (360 mm) and 200% (480 mm) for specimens D240-3 and D240-4 did not affect in the position of local buckling which appeared always at the ends of the lap splice. Separation between the tension flanges was observed at ultimate load for specimens D240-3, D240-4, as shown in figure 11.



**Fig. 9. Mode of failure of specimens (D240-1 and D240-2)**



**Fig. 10. Mode of failure of specimen (D300-5)**



**Fig. 11. Mode of failure of specimens (D240-3 and D240-4)**

For all the specimens of series (C), where the bolts were replaced by the epoxy resin to connect the lap splice, only local buckling in compression flange and web was observed at a distance from the ends of lap splice, as shown in figure 12. The maximum recorded distance at which local buckling appeared was 80 mm from the end of lap splice, i.e. half the beam depth.



**Fig. 12. Mode of failure of specimens' series (C)**

## 4.2 Ultimate load

Table 5 presents the values of ultimate load and mid-span deflection for all tested specimens.

338 **Table 5. Experimental Results specimens**

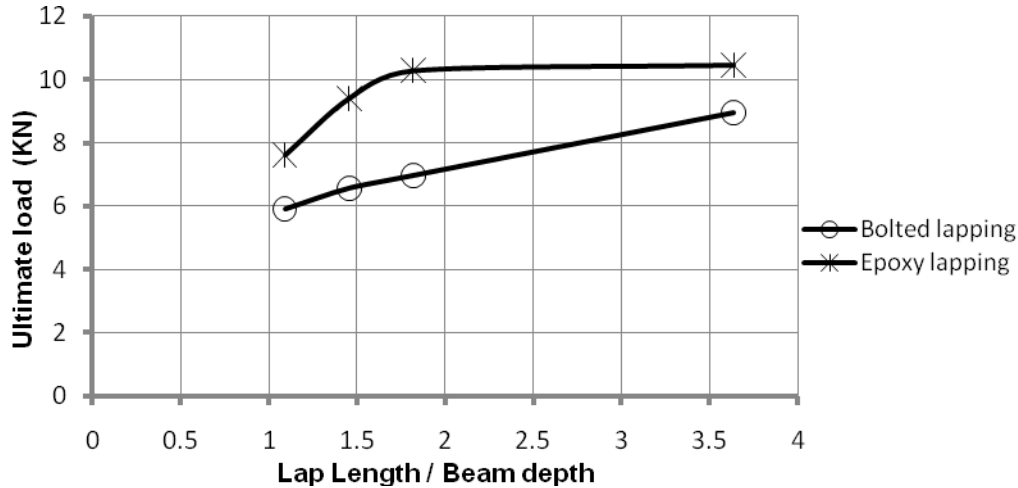
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Test Series	Specimen	Lap Length (mm)	Measured ultimate load (KN)	Maximum Recorded Deflection (mm)
A	A180	180	5.90	19.39
	A240	240	6.56	16.54
	A300	300	6.96	15.07
	A600	600	8.94	14.01
	A900	900	11.12	13.10
B	B300-1	300	6.75	12.76
	B300-2		10.23	11.55
	B300-3		10.37	9.97
C	C180	180	7.63	15.50
	C240	240	9.41	12.63
	C300	300	10.28	12.32
	C600	600	10.46	11.40
D	D240-1	240	8.21	9.40
	D240-2		8.55	13.13
	D240-3		8.53	12.77
	D240-4		8.49	11.68
	D300-5	300	10.51	9.11

340  
 341 The effect of each parameter of this study on the ultimate load is discussed and analyzed in  
 342 the following subsections.  
 343

344 Figure 13 presents the relationship between the lap length to beam depth ratio and the  
 345 ultimate load for tested specimens with bolted lap splice and with lap splice connected by  
 346 epoxy resin. For both lapping techniques, increasing the lap length to beam depth ratio from  
 347 1.09 to 3.64 led to increase the ultimate load by 51.5% and 37.1% for bolted lapping and  
 348 epoxy lapping, respectively.  
 349

350 As shown in Figure 13, epoxy led to increase the ultimate load by 29.32%, 43.45%, 47.7%  
 351 and 17.00% compared to that of bolted specimens A180, A240, A300 and A600 (with web  
 352 bolts only), respectively, so, this technique was better than the conventional technique by  
 353 using bolts. For specimens connected by epoxy, the ultimate load increases as the lap  
 354 length to beam depth ratio increases till ratio of 1.81, but for higher ratios the ultimate load  
 355 appears constant.



**Fig. 13. Relationship between ultimate load and lap length to beam depth ratio**

Increasing the web bolts of the lap splice did not reveal a clear effect on the ultimate load of tested specimens, as can be seen for specimens B300-1 and B300-2 where their web bolts were increased in comparison with specimens A300 and B300-3, respectively. However, adding bolts to connect the upper and lower flanges of lap splice led to a significant increase in the ultimate load as can be seen for specimens B300-2 and B300-3, where their ultimate loads increased by 51.6% and 49%, respectively, in comparison with specimens B300-1 and A300 in which web bolts are used only to connect the lap splice.

The web stiffness of the lap splice was improved in specimen D240-1 by extending its web on both sides of the splice by 50% (120 mm) of the splice length. This improvement led to increase the ultimate load by 25.2% in comparison with specimen A240. However, extending the web by 100% (240 mm), 150% (360 mm) and 200% (480 mm) in specimens D240-2, D240-3 and D240-4, respectively, did not lead to a significant extra increase in the ultimate load. On the other hand, increasing the flanges stiffness by adding additional steel angles at the ends of the lap splice, in specimen D300-5, produced a significant increase in the ultimate load by 51% in comparison with specimen A300.

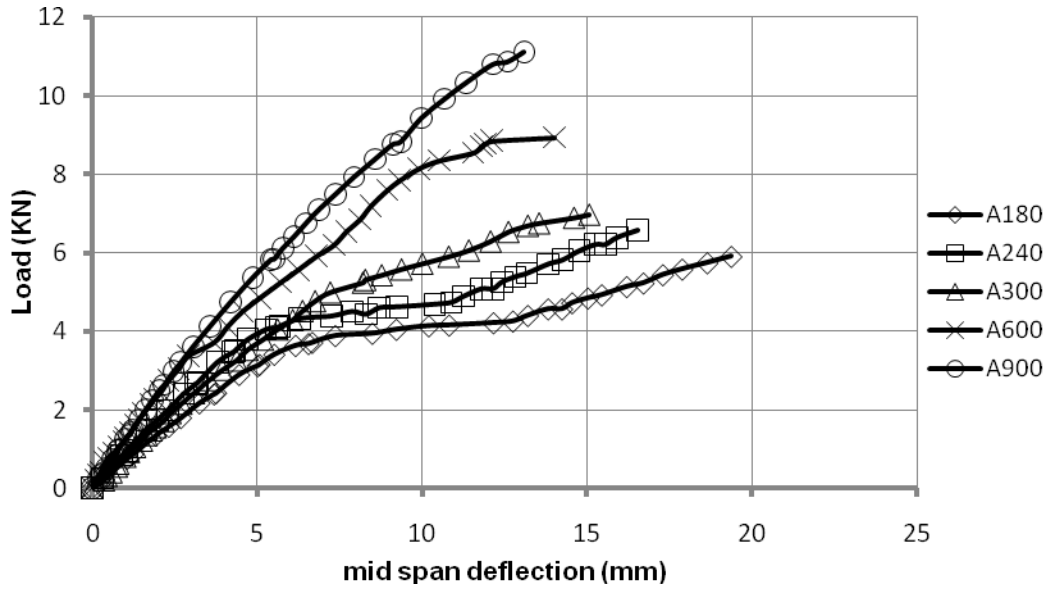
#### 4.3 Vertical deflection

The effect of the investigated parameters on the load-deflection curve of the tested specimens was discussed and analyzed in the following subsections.

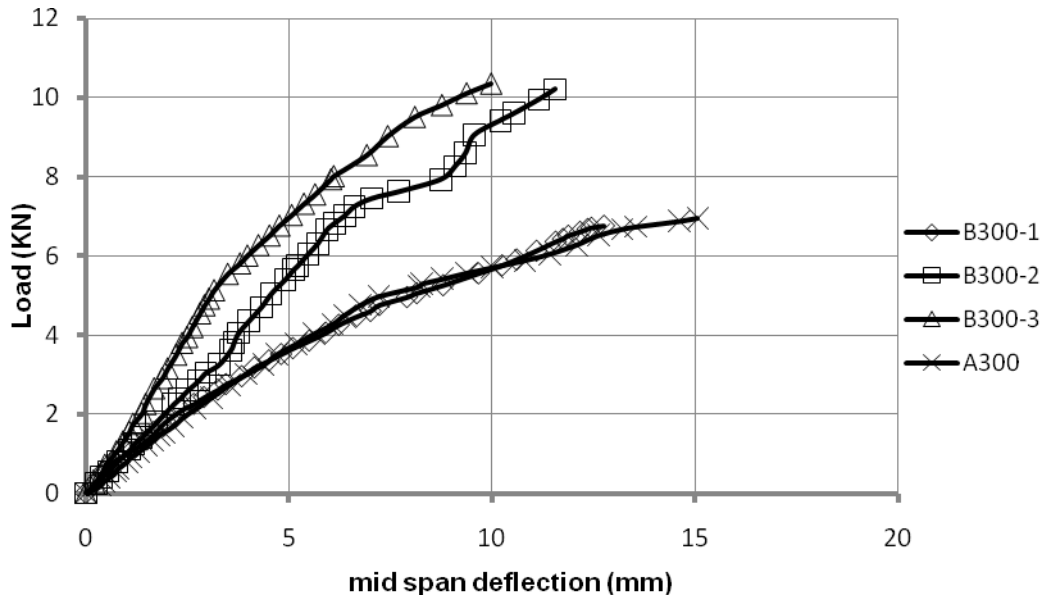
As shown in figure 14, increasing the lap splice length produced stronger and more rigid specimens but led to reduce its ductility, i.e. long lap length gives strong and rigid connection with less ductility compared to short lap length.

Series B includes specimens with different bolt arrangements to connect the lap splice. The web bolts were increased in specimens B300-1 and B300-2 compared to specimens A300 and B300-3, respectively. Also, flange bolts were added in specimens B300-2 and B300-3 compared to B300-1 and A300, respectively. Adding flange bolts led to increase the rigidity and resistance of the tested lapped specimens B300-2 and B300-3, as shown in figure 15. However, increasing the web bolts did not produce a clear effect on the load-deflection of the tested specimens B300-1 and B300-2 in comparison with specimens A300 and B300-3.





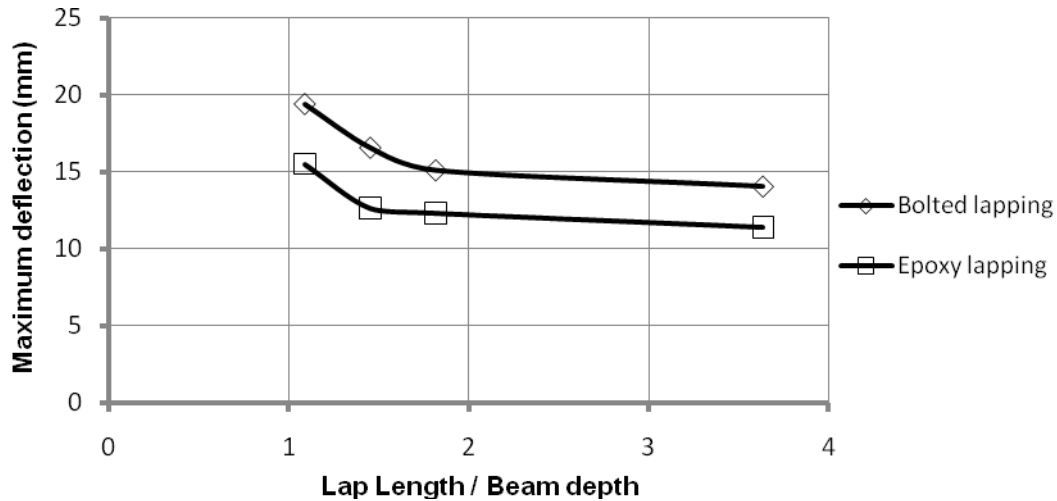
**Fig. 14. Load-vertical deflection relationships for specimens of series A**



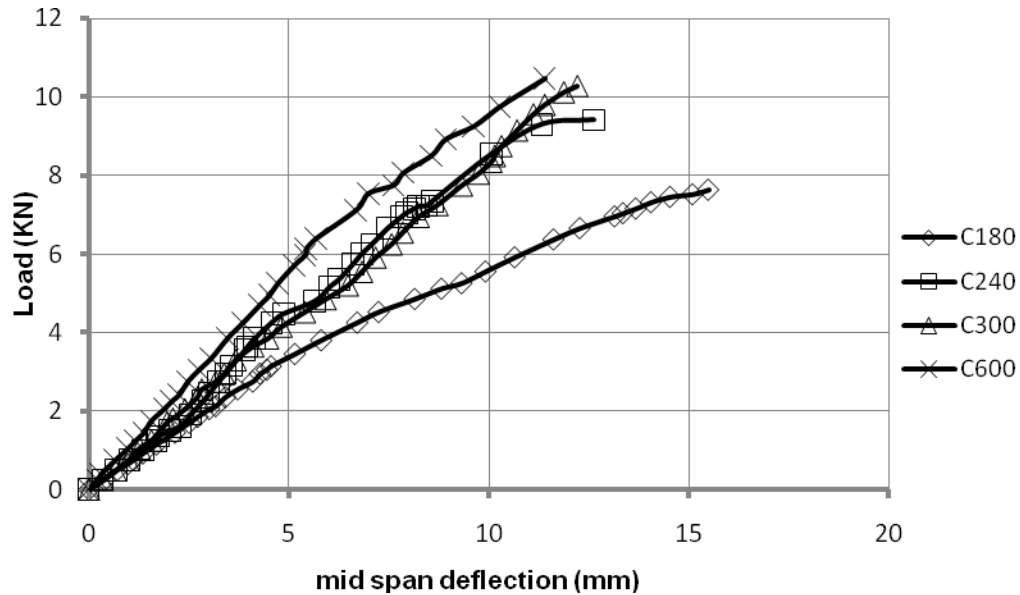
**Fig. 15. Load-vertical deflection relationship for specimens of series B and specimen A300**

As previously mentioned in above, using epoxy to connect the lap splice in place of bolts led to increase the ultimate load. However, the deflection at ultimate load is significantly decreased, as shown in figure 16. So, the lap splice connected by epoxy is stronger and more rigid but less ductile than that connected by bolts. Figure 17 shows the load-deflection curves of all tested specimens which their lap splices were connected by epoxy.





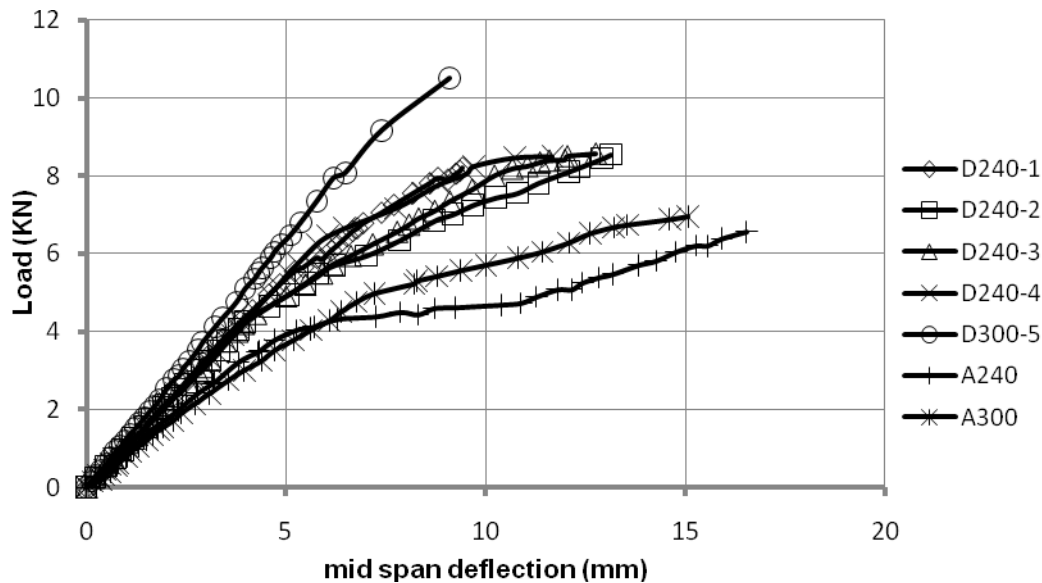
**Fig. 16. Relationship between the maximum deflection at mid span and lap length to beam depth ratio**



**Fig. 17. Load-vertical deflection relationships for specimens of series C**

The effect of improving the lap splice on the load-deflection curves was studied through the specimens of series D. Extending the web length of lapped sections to 50% (120 mm) of lap splice, as in specimen D240-1, in order to improve the web stiffness of the lap splice, produces a stronger and more rigid lapped specimen in comparison with specimen A240, as shown in figure 18, but the ductility of the enhanced specimen (D240-1) was reduced. However, extending the web length to 100% (240 mm), 150% (360 mm) and 200% (480 mm) for specimens D240-2, D240-3 and D240-4 did not reveal an extra effect on the load-deflection curve.

On the other hand, improving the flange stiffness of the lap splice by adding four steel angles at their ends, as in specimen D300-5, produces a significant effect on the load-deflection curve in comparison with specimen A300. Improving the flange stiffness produces stronger and more rigid specimen but with less ductility.



**Fig. 18. Load-vertical deflection relationships for specimens of series D and specimens A240 and A300**

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the obtained results, the following points can be concluded:

1. In all tests, section failure at the end of lap of connected sections was found to be critical under combined bending and shear. Compression flange buckling, web buckling and tension flange separation were the failure modes observed in the bolted connection specimens. For epoxy connections, compression flange buckling and web buckling were apparent at distance equal half the beam depth from the end of the lapped connections.
2. Increasing the length of lapped connection to beam depth ratio from 1.09 to 3.64 has a significant effect on the load capacity of Z-purlins, and led to increase the ultimate load by 51.5% and 37.1% for bolted lapping and epoxy lapping, respectively, also, gives stiff and strong connections than that with short lap length.
3. Adding bolts to connect the upper and lower flanges of lap splice, increasing the ultimate load between 49% and 51.6%, also, increasing the rigidity of the lapped connections compared with specimens that with web bolts only.
4. Increasing the web bolts in the lapped connections did not reveal a clear effect on of the ultimate load of lapped Z sections.
5. Using epoxy resin to connect the lapped sections led to increase the ultimate load increased by 17.0 to 47.7% compared to the corresponding bolted specimens.

- 460 6. For epoxy connections, increasing the lap length till 1.81 times the beam depth led to  
461 increase the ultimate load, after which the ultimate load was almost constant.  
462  
463 7. Improvement the stiffness of the lap splice, by extending the web or adding angles to the  
464 flanges, through a length up to 100% of lap splice length, led to increase the ultimate  
465 load by 25.2% and 51%, respectively, compared with un-stiffened specimens. Also, the  
466 improvement the lap splice stiffness affects the failure mode of the tested specimens.  
467

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505

## 506 ABBREVIATIONS

507  
508 ***L<sub>p</sub>***, length of lap connection; ***L<sub>s</sub>***, span of test; ***M10***, bolt with 10mm diameter; ***L***, steel angle;  
509 ***PL-5***, steel plate with 5mm thickness; ***LVDT-R***, linear variable deformation transducer in the  
510 right side of specimen; ***LVDT-C***, linear variable deformation transducer in the center of  
511 specimen; ***LVDT-L***, linear variable deformation transducer in the left side of specimen.