

An Update to the Canadian Shield Stress Database

NWMO-TR-2015-18

September 2015

Salina Yong and Sean Maloney
MIRARCO

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NUCLEAR WASTE
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SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION
DES DÉCHETS
NUCLÉAIRES

Nuclear Waste Management Organization
22 St. Clair Avenue East, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 2S3
Canada

Tel: 416-934-9814
Web: www.nwmo.ca

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Verified by:	Sean Maloney and Peter Kaiser		
Approved by:	Sean Maloney		
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This report provides an update of the 2005 state of ground stress report for the Ontario portion of the Canadian Shield. A database of 304 stress measurements has been assembled that includes 75 new measurements since 2005. The database covers a range of depths between 12 and 2,552 m below ground surface with measurement data obtained largely from operating mines in Ontario. A data screening process was followed that involved 5 acceptance criteria to assess quality and reduce uncertainty when establishing representative ground stress state equations. As a result of the data screening, the database supporting the analysis in this study was reduced to 199 entries.

Consistent with past studies, the state of ground stress in Shield terrain is sub-divided into 3 Zones: i) the stress-relaxed zone (Domain 1; 0-300m); ii) the transitional zone (Domain 2; 300 – 600 m); iii) the undisturbed zone (Domain 3; 600-1500m). The best-fit relationships are developed for Domains 1 and 3 as evidence suggests the interpretations are robust and less sensitive to site specific conditions. Variability and uncertainty is highest in transitional stress Domain 2, which reveals a strong dependency on the local geologic setting. As recommended in 2005, stresses in Domain 2 can be assumed to increase linearly between Domains 1 and 3 for preliminary modelling and sub-surface design purposes.

While this review has provided insight on the stress state within in the crystalline rocks of the Canadian Shield, direct measurements of ground stress magnitudes and orientations are required to provide site-specific estimates that further constrain stress state and reduce uncertainty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Deep Geologic Repository Technology Program (DGRTP) MIRARCO undertook a study to compile in-situ stress measurement data for the Canadian Shield (Kaiser and Maloney, 2005). These data were then used to examine the spatial state of ground stresses in the Canadian Shield through: i) the interpretation of ground stress domains as a function of depth; and ii) illustrative equations to predict ground stress magnitude within each stress domain. This study, conducted under the Adaptive Phased Management (APM) Program, provides an update of the 2005 review that incorporates the results of new stress measurement data on the Ontario portion of the Canadian Shield gathered since that time.

In-situ stresses in the ground are rarely uniform. Their distribution depends on a number of factors such as rock mass characteristics (i.e., heterogeneities, fabric, discontinuities, geological structure, etc.) and the site loading history (e.g., tectonic activity, erosion and/or glaciation). The end result is that local stresses may bear little semblance to the general or average stress state. Consequently, the contribution of these various factors to the measured stress state must be understood if the measurements are to be used with confidence. According to Amadei and Stephansson (1997), in-situ stresses can only be determined with an error of $\pm 10\text{--}20\%$ under ideal conditions. For engineering purposes, it is necessary to establish reliable and average stress boundary conditions along with the associated ranges of variability and uncertainty.

Extensive mineral resources throughout the region, as well as, the need to design and operate deep underground mines have been the basis of the measurement of ground stresses in the Canadian Shield. Most of the published data have been acquired from mining operations in Ontario, Manitoba, and Quebec using various methods in different geological settings. As a result, some measurements may have been made at locations that have been affected by mining activities, such as near underground excavations, while others have been impacted by core damage in high stress environments. This has resulted in a database where stress magnitudes and orientations exhibit considerable scatter. As part of this updated review, acceptance criteria were developed to screen the stress measurement data set so as to select estimates of increased quality and to reduce uncertainty in the characterisation of depth dependent ground stress states.

2. SCOPE

This review as involved a number of activities to provide a thorough up-date and re-assessment of the state of ground stresses on the Ontario portion of the Canadian Shield. Initial activities included the development of an on-line survey that was distributed to discussion groups and organizations to identify and contact potential sources with post-2005 stress measurement data. Following receipt and assembly of the new measurement data they were added to the existing 2005 database, which then was entirely vetted with new acceptance criteria to assess quality. The resulting screened data base was then used to establish depth dependent stress domains and develop illustrative equations with which to predict stress magnitude in these domains. Details regarding these various activities are discussed in the following sections.

3. STRESS MEASUREMENT DATA

The merging of the 2005 database (229) with new post-2005 data (75) acquired through the online survey process created a total of 304 entries. The new post-2005 data was provided exclusively by operating mines. While the 2005 database considered measurement data from four geological provinces (Superior, Southern, Churchill, and Grenville), this update considers only those made in the Superior and Southern provinces as shown in Figure 1.

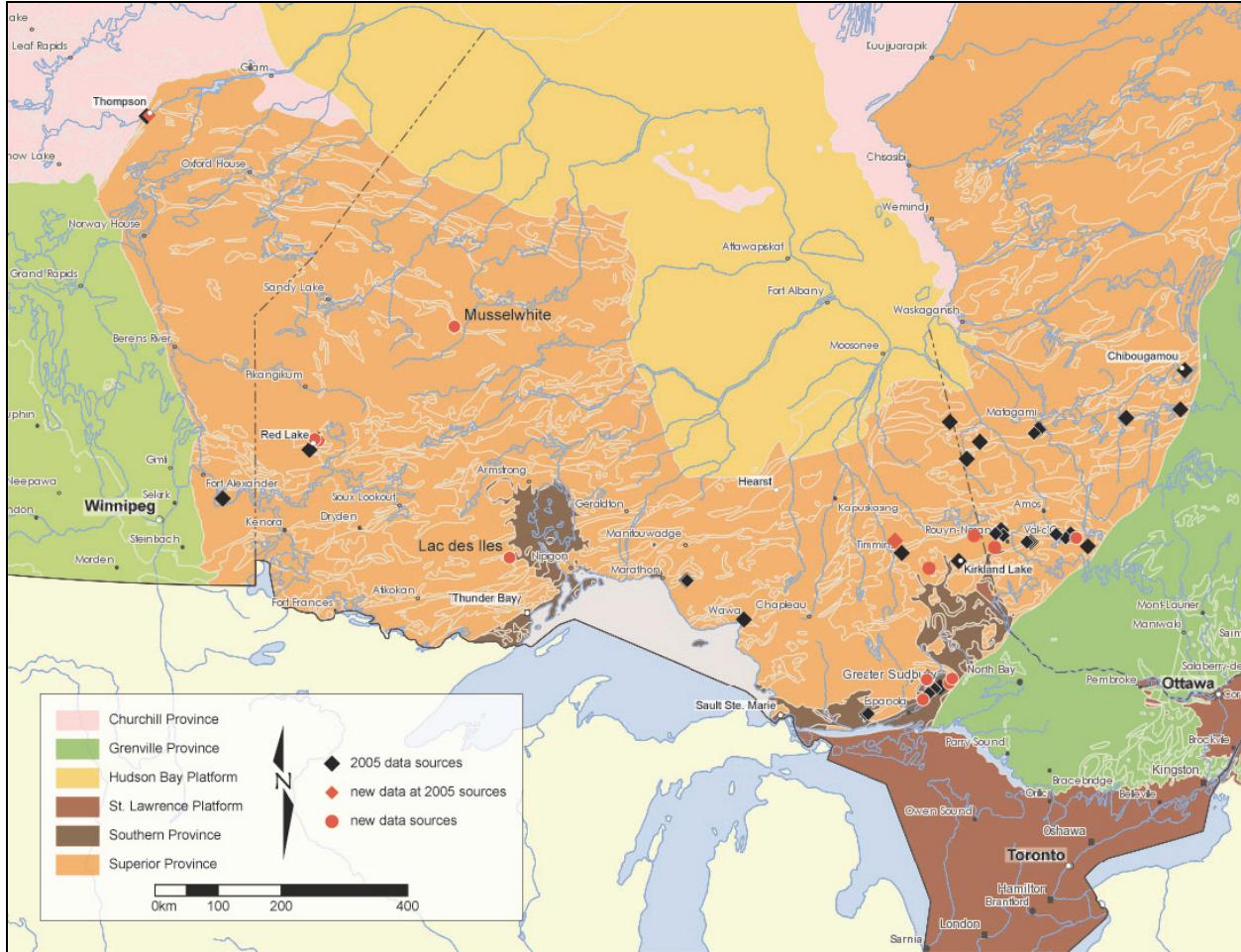


Figure 1: Locations of Data Sources in the Superior and Southern Geological Provinces of Canada (base map courtesy of Natural Resources Canada, 2009)

3.1 DATABASE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

When reviewing the database, it was noticed that some entries did not include orientation data, three orthogonal (whether principal or Cartesian space) stress magnitudes, or the vertical stress determined by the measurement campaign. This led to the development of the acceptance criteria to select data for inclusion in the final database. The acceptance criteria are:

- 1) magnitudes and orientations for three orthogonal stresses, which allowed for transformation into Cartesian space;
- 2) data interpretation within limitations of measurement technique (e.g., results eliminated when obviously impacted by epoxy softening or uncorrected for significant temperature effects for campaigns involving the CSIRO HI cell);
- 3) normality (± 0.1) and orthogonality (± 0.1) of principal stress directional cosines;
- 4) discrepancy ($\pm 15\%$) between the reported and transformed vertical stress magnitude; and
- 5) stress ratios (± 2 standard deviations).

The quality of the combined database was assessed in two stages with the first involving elimination of entries based on the first two criteria above. The deduced stress state was reported as three components within an orthogonal framework (i.e., either principal or Cartesian) in the majority of tests. In the current analysis, the second criterion was only applied to select campaigns of the newly acquired (i.e., post-2005) data. Specifically, two campaigns were selected due to the lack of nearby measurements: Musselwhite and Lac des Iles. In both cases, MIRARCO was the contractor involved and therefore, all data and relevant contextual information was readily accessible for closer examination and re-processing of the strain data. This first assessment stage resulted in the elimination of 52 entries.

The second assessment stage encompassed data elimination based on the last three criteria. Normality was assessed through calculation of the unit vector of each principal stress component while orthogonality was assessed through the calculation of the dot products of the three principal stress directional cosines. Because the first assessment stage eliminated data with incomplete stress state characteristics, all remaining data entries provided the required information for transformation from principal to Cartesian space. The transformed vertical stress component was then compared against reported values where available. The majority of entries differed by less than 0.5% and this small difference is illustrated in Figure 2. The last criterion examined inconsistencies in the data based on ratios of the principal stress magnitudes transformed into Cartesian space. Consistency in the database appeared to be best constrained by the ratio of the two horizontal stresses (rightmost plot in Figure 3). This second and final assessment stage resulted in the elimination of a further 25 entries.

Elimination of non-compliant data based on the above criteria reduces the updated 2015 database to a total of 199 entries, consisting of 173 from the 2005 database and 26 newly acquired (APPENDIX A). This database covers depths ranging from 12 to 2,552 m with sites distributed as illustrated in Figure 4. Where possible, the data presented in this report distinguishes between the 2005 and post-2005 reviews.

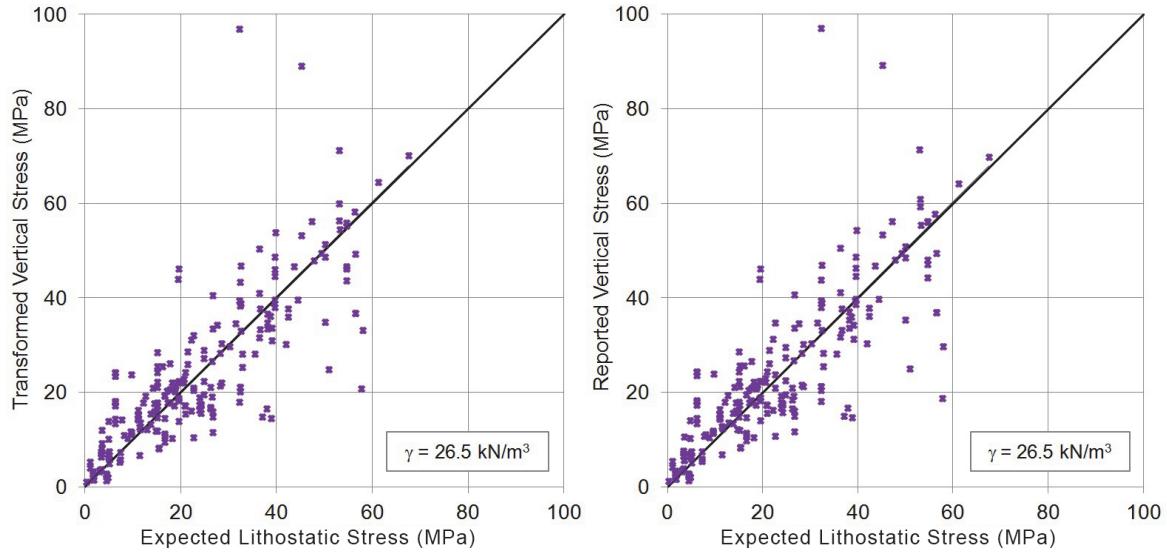


Figure 2: Transformed (left) and Reported (right) Vertical Stress Compared to Expected Overburden Stress

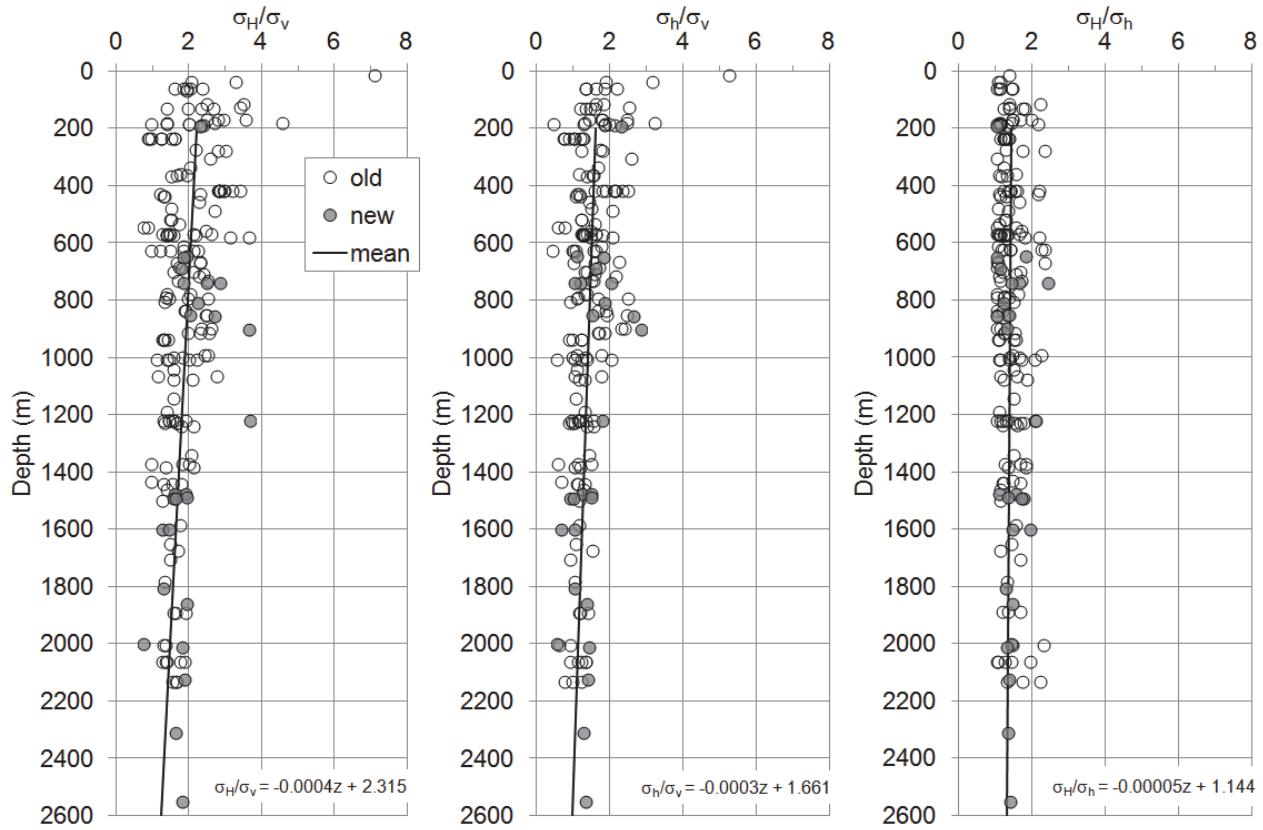


Figure 3: Ratios of Principal Stress Magnitudes Transformed into Cartesian Space (σ_H is the maximum horizontal, σ_h is the minimum horizontal, and σ_v is the vertical)

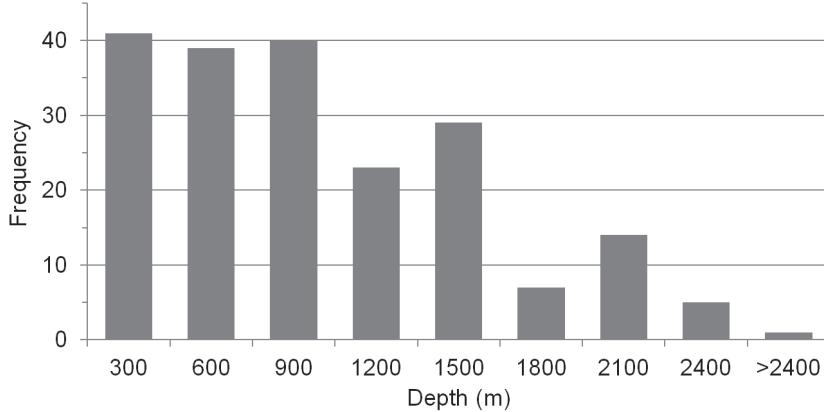


Figure 4: Depth Distribution of Updated 2015 Stress Measurements

3.2 DATABASE ANALYSIS

Analysis of the updated 2015 database entailed the development of best-fit relationships, relative to depth, for the three Cartesian stress components as the principal stress components are somewhat likewise aligned (demonstrated in Section 4.1). Relationships have been defined for the entire database as a whole and also by separating the data into the two geological provinces, as well as, into four depth domains. Following Kaiser and Maloney (2005), Domain 1 (0 to 300 m) is stress-relaxed or disturbed, largely due to movement along local flat-lying geological structures. Domain 2 (300 to 600 m) represents the transition between the overlying relaxed/disturbed domain and the underlying undisturbed domain. Domain 3 (600 to 1,500 m) is considered “undisturbed” as it is generally defined by regional fault structures and stress history (i.e., tectonic stress, glaciations, erosion, etc.). Below 1,500 m, the database is comparatively sparse; consequently, no relationship is defined for Domain 4. As well, owing to its transitional nature, relationships have not been defined for Domain 2.

As Figure 2 demonstrated, the transformed vertical stress component compares well with the expected lithostatic stress (calculated based on a generic unit weight of 26.5 kN/m³). This is further supported by a linear regression of all the data (Figure 5) with a slope of 0.97 and a corresponding coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.8. The transformed vertical stress was used in lieu of the reported due to the earlier noted discrepancy and for consistency since the transformed value guarantees the normality and orthogonality of the principal stress components. The first step in developing the best-fit relationships was to further reduce the database through removal of entries beyond two standard deviations (i.e., 95% confidence interval).

The remaining database was then separated into two groups based on their standard deviation from the trendline shown in Figure 5. In an attempt to provide the best possible relationships, linear regressions considered only data within one standard deviation. The box in Figure 6 shows that one standard deviation (68% confidence interval) constrains the dataset to deviations of less than 50% between the transformed vertical and expected overburden stress. In Figure 7, the best-fit regressions from one and two standard deviations are compared and illustrate that the reduction in the data population does not adversely impact the relationship. However, refinement of the relationship, defined with a sample size of one deviation, improves both the correlation (indicated by a 6% increase in R^2) and expected null value when projected to surface.

Although this approach appears to improve the best-fit linear regression, variability would be misrepresented if determined in the same manner. The standard deviation of each best-fit relationship reported in Section 4 is ascertained by considering the entire vetted 2015 stress database.

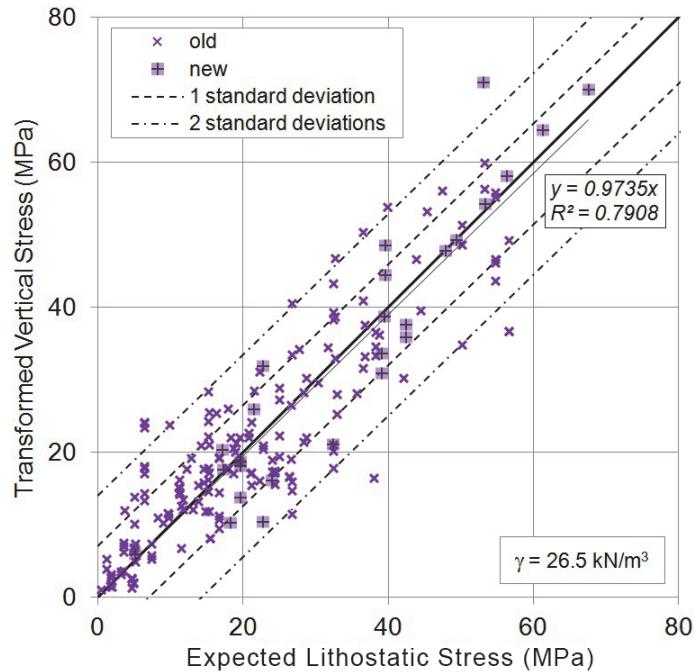


Figure 5: Constraining the 2015 Database for Developing Best-fit Relationships

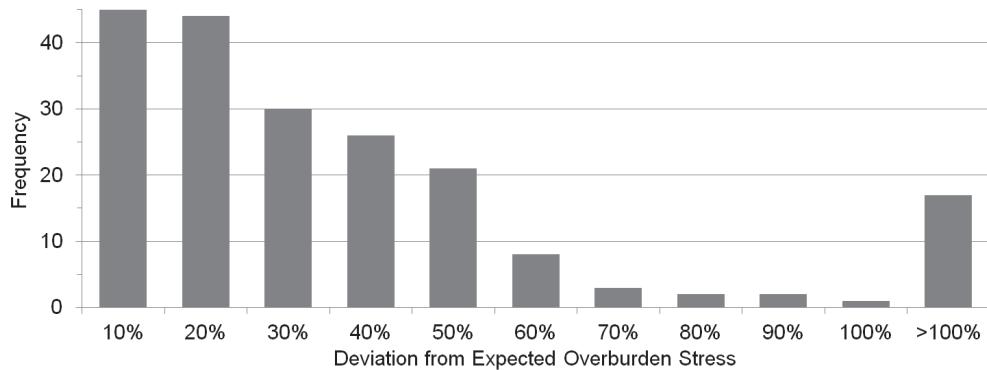


Figure 6: Distribution of Transformed Vertical Stress Deviation

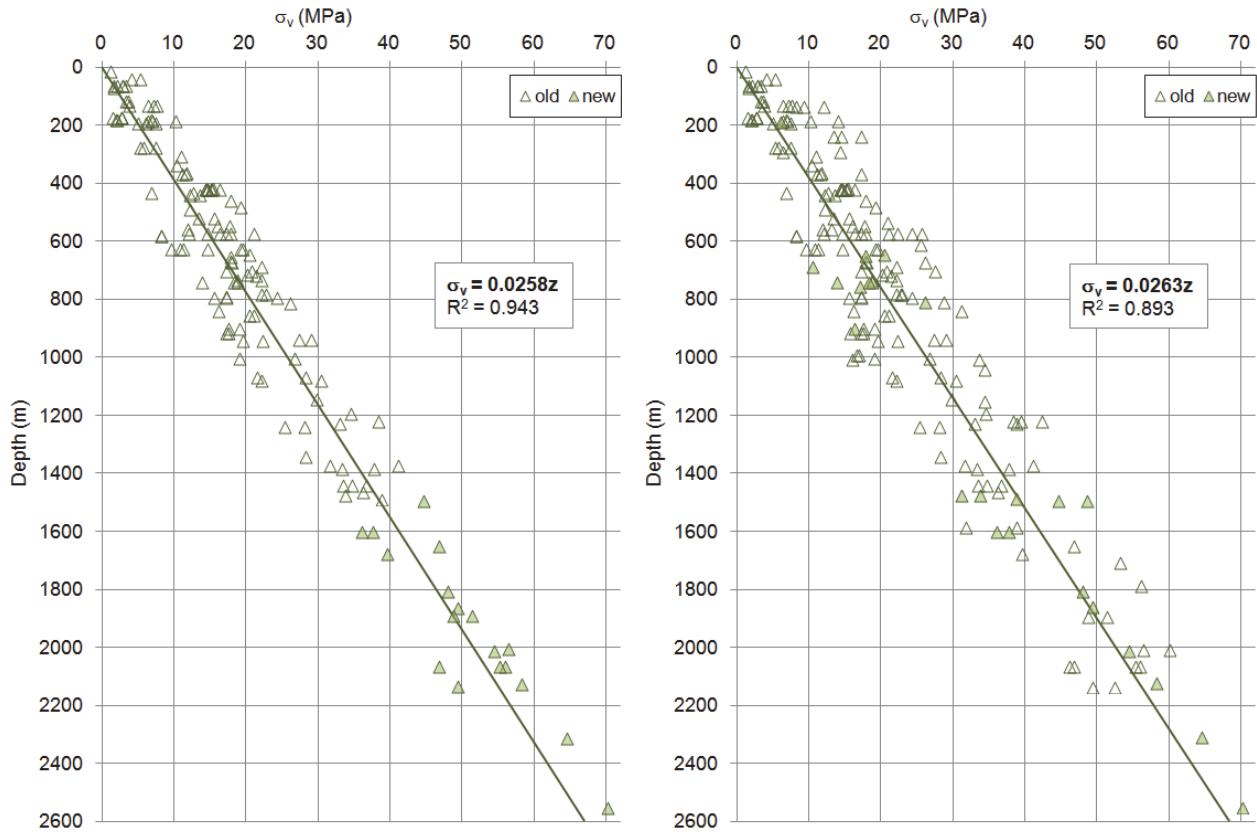


Figure 7: Linear Regression of Vertical Stress Data within One Standard Deviation (left) and Two Standard Deviations (right) of the Best-fit Trendline Defined in Figure 5

4. RECOMMENDED IN-SITU STRESS STATE

Recommendations for the in-situ stress state in the Ontario portion of the Canadian Shield are presented in two coordinate systems in this section. The relationships developed for the principal stress space are more general since they consider the entire 2015 updated database with no distinction made for the geological provinces or depth domains. Conversely, relationships developed for the Cartesian space are separated into the two geological provinces, Superior and Southern, and three stress domains.

4.1 PRINCIPAL STRESS STATE

The principal stress orientations for the updated 2015 database are plotted in Figure 8 and demonstrate that the principal stresses are somewhat aligned with Cartesian axes where the major and intermediate principal stresses are sub-horizontal whereas the minimum stress is sub-vertical. The average maximum principal stress trends WSW-ENE, which is consistent with the major trend indicated in the World Stress Map database for the study area (Reinecker et al. 2004). The direction of the minor principal stress appears to be well-constrained whereas the intermediate principal stress direction appears to be the most variable.

The principal stress magnitudes are plotted in Figure 9 along with the best-fit relationships and 95% confidence derived from data within one standard deviation of agreement between the transformed vertical and expected overburden stresses (Figure 5). Although the relationships, listed in Table 1, have been deduced from the 2015 updated database as a whole, it is apparent from the plots of the major and intermediate principal stresses that two to three depth domains exist. Such domain grouping is more difficult to discern in the minor principal stress magnitudes. The domains are more apparent when examining the principal stress ratios plotted in Figure 10. Below 200 m depth, the σ_1/σ_3 and σ_2/σ_3 ratios are dominated by a linear trend while a gradual turn towards an asymptote is evident between 200 and 300 m. While scatter exists from a depth of 300 to 1,000 m, a clear linear trend is discernible in the ratios at depths of 600 m and greater.

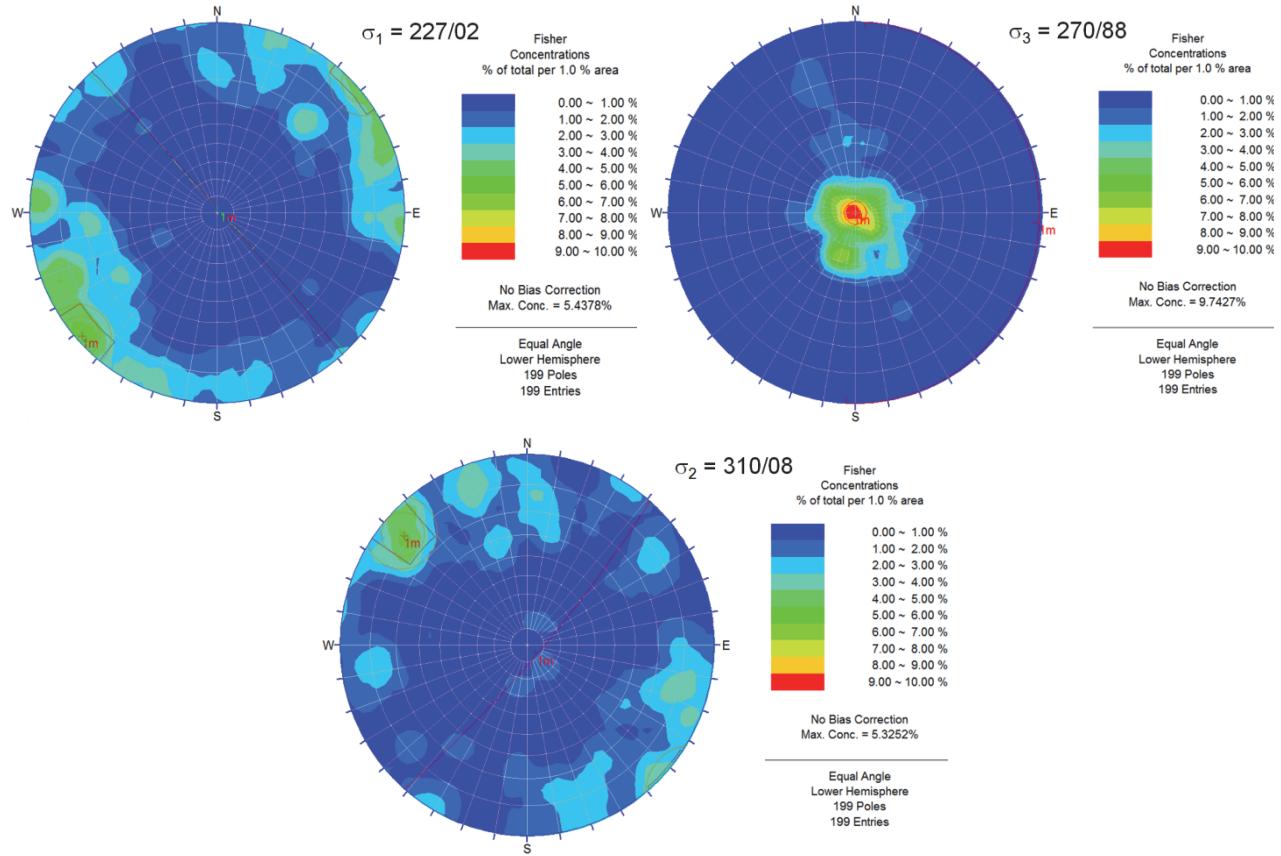


Figure 8: Distribution of Principal Stress Orientations of the 2015 Updated Database with Average Directions Indicated

Table 1: Best-fit Relationships for Principal Stress (all domains)

2015 Update
$\sigma_1 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.040 \pm 0.001)z^* - (9.185 \pm 1.500)$
$\sigma_2 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.029 \pm 0.001)z^* + (4.617 \pm 1.159)$
$\sigma_3 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.021 \pm 0.001)z^* - (0.777 \pm 0.872)$

*depth in metres

Comparison with the best-fit relationships determined from the 2005 review are summarised in Table 2 to Table 3 and plotted in Figure 11. The results are similar with a larger difference in the relationships developed for the stress-relaxed Domain 1. This is a direct result of the quality assessment undertaken in this update. The smaller differences in the undisturbed Domain 3 are related to the additional data included in this update study and show that the relationships are consistent and better constrained.

Comparison of the major and minor principal stress orientations (Table 4) also indicates similarities between the two reviews (Figure 12 and Figure 13). The differences in orientations of Domain 1 are small despite a larger difference in the best-fit magnitude relationships (Figure 11). This shows that although there is greater uncertainty in determining the magnitudes, the orientations are fairly consistent in the stress-relaxed Domain 1. A larger difference in the major principal stress is shown in the undisturbed Domain 3 and this is attributed to the addition of data in the current review. However, the difference is a shift in concentration between the two largest sets of orientation data, which appear in both reviews. Hence, two sets of orientations (30° apart in azimuth) for the major principal stress may naturally exist. Both sets are in line with the World Stress dominant orientation of WSW for this region. The minor principal in both domains is vertical and well constrained.

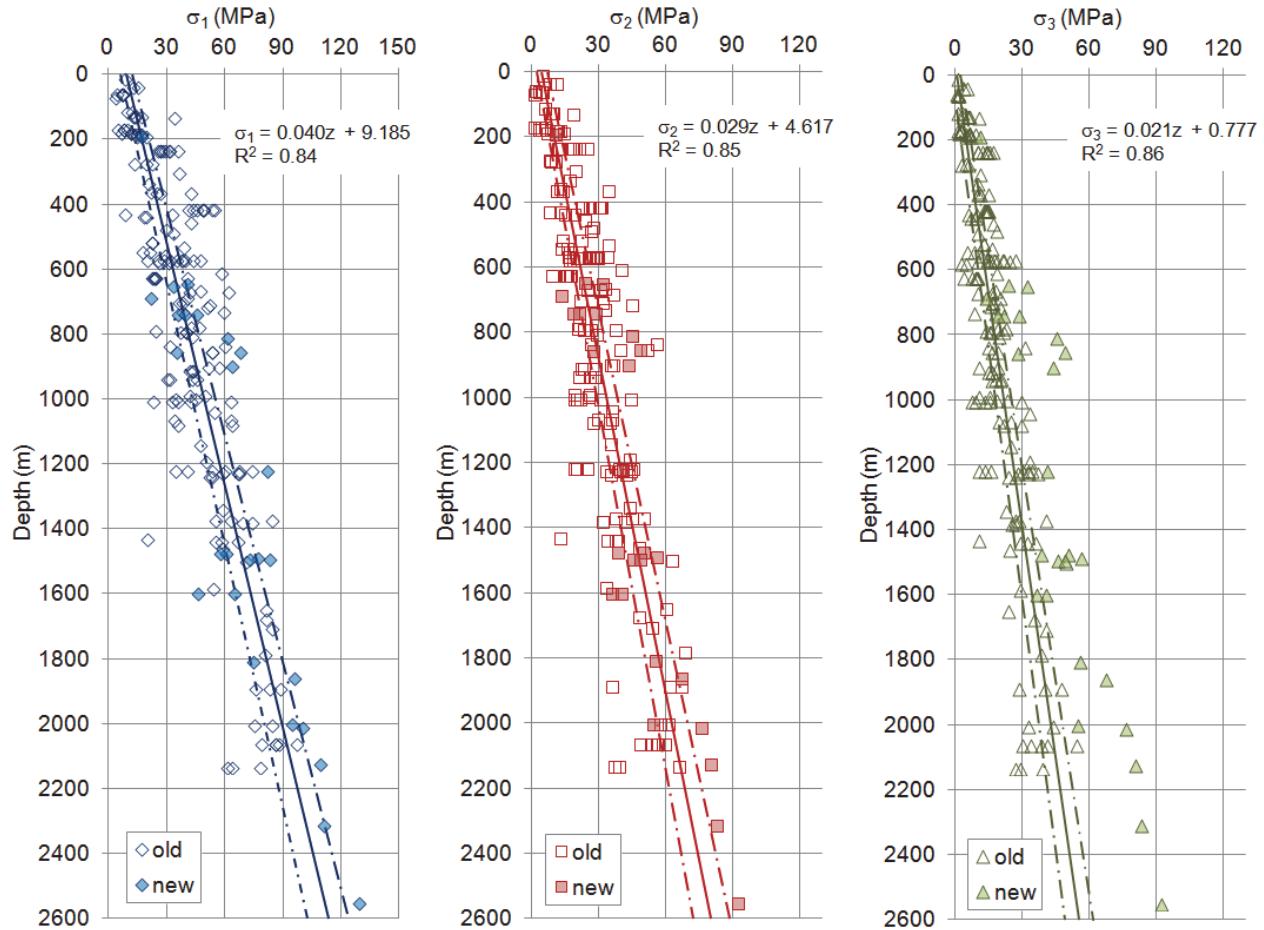


Figure 9: Principal Stress Data and Best-fit Relationships for the 2015 Updated Database (all domains)

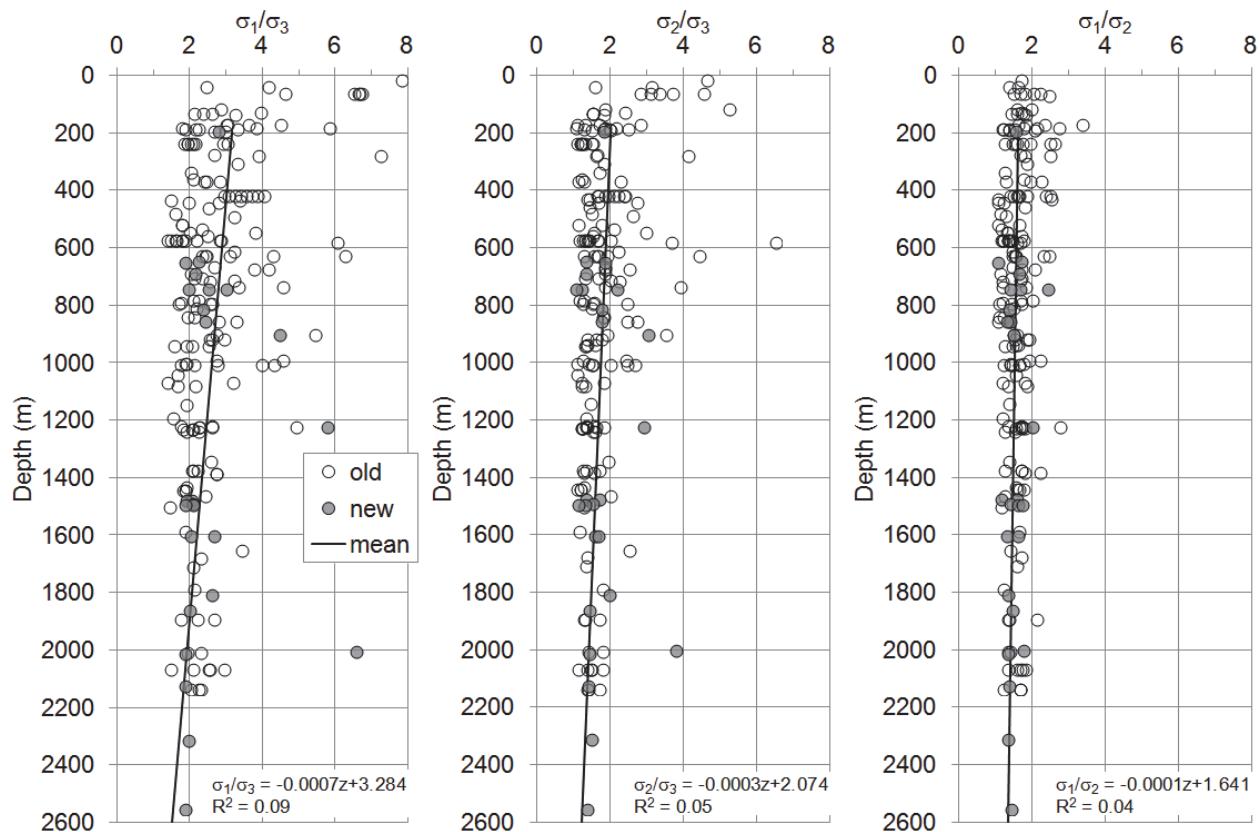


Figure 10: Principal Stress Ratios for the 2015 Updated Database (all domains)

Table 2: Comparison of Domain 1 Magnitudes with 2005 Review

2015 Update	2005 Review
$\sigma_1 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.038 \pm 0.010)z^* + (6.318 \pm 1.609)$	$\sigma_1 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.071 \pm 0.019)z^* + (5.768 \pm 3.358)$
$\sigma_2 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.019 \pm 0.008)z^* + (4.349 \pm 1.320)$	$\sigma_2 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.043 \pm 0.015)z^* + (3.287 \pm 2.600)$
$\sigma_3 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.021 \pm 0.001)z^* - (0.777 \pm 0.872)$	$\sigma_3 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.034 \pm 0.005)z^*$

*depth in metres

Table 3: Comparison of Domain 3 Magnitudes with 2005 Review

2015 Update	2005 Review
$\sigma_1 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.038 \pm 0.004)z^* + (11.052 \pm 4.437)$	$\sigma_1 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.026 \pm 0.012)z^* + (23.636 \pm 11.556)$
$\sigma_2 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.024 \pm 0.003)z^* + (8.991 \pm 3.465)$	$\sigma_2 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.016 \pm 0.010)z^* + (17.104 \pm 10.538)$
$\sigma_3 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.021 \pm 0.001)z^* - (0.777 \pm 0.872)$	$\sigma_3 \text{ (MPa)} = (0.020 \pm 0.008)z^* + (1.066 \pm 8.247)$

*depth in metres

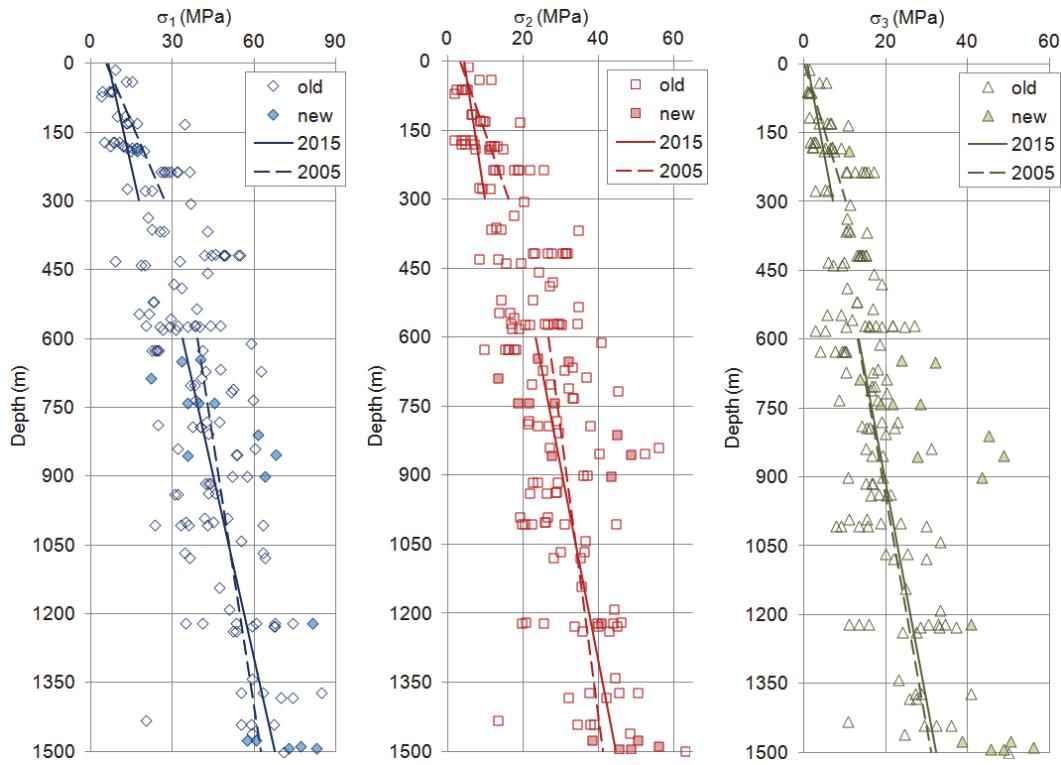


Figure 11: Principal Stress Best Fit Comparisons between 2005 Review and 2015 Update (Domain 1 and 3)

Table 4: Comparison of Principal Stress Orientations (trend/plunge) with 2005 Review

	2015 Update	2005 Review
Domain 1		
σ_1	212/02	039/02
σ_3	112/81	347/85
Domain 3		
σ_1	275/02	249/03
σ_3	236/85	134/83

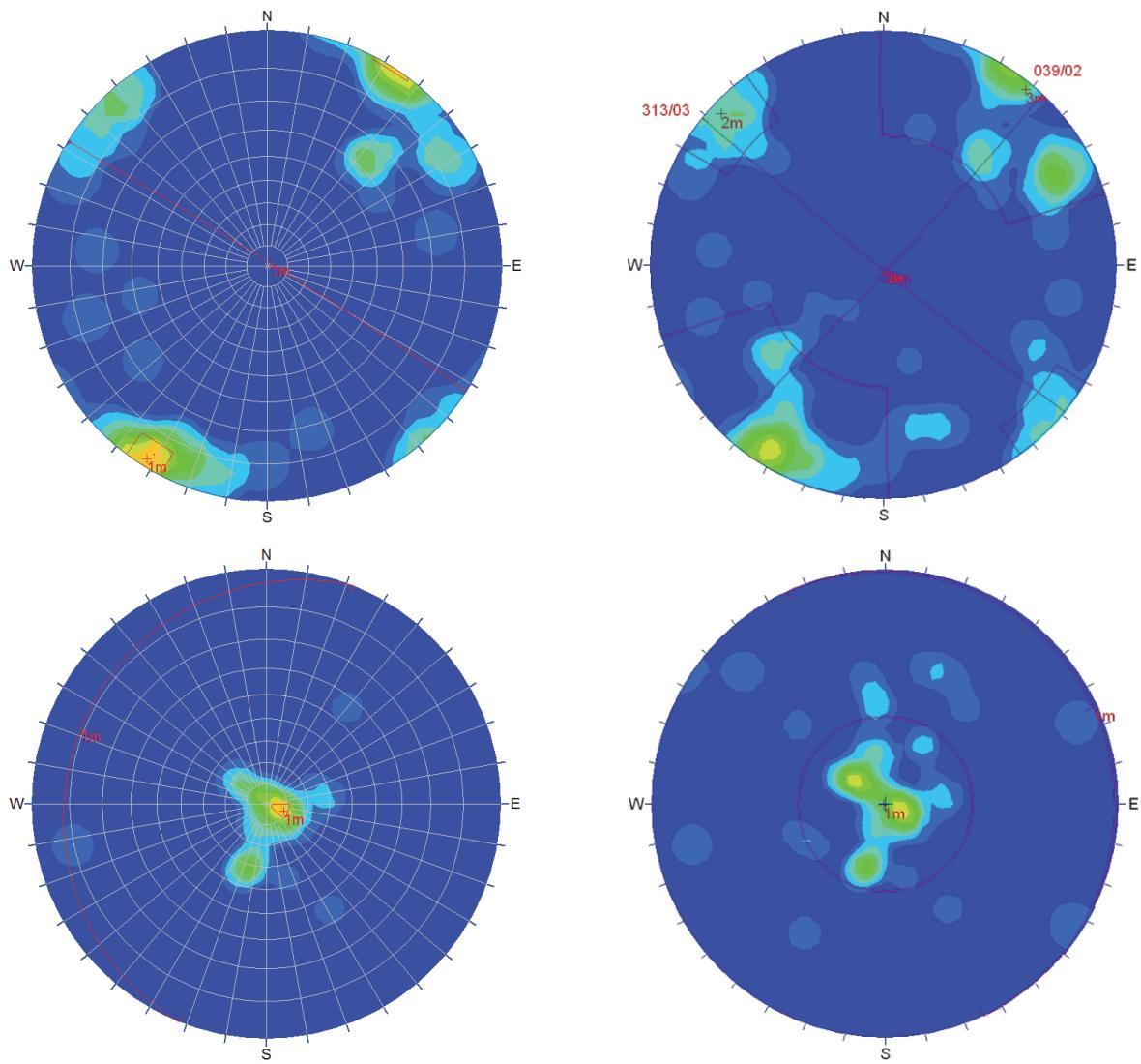


Figure 12: Principal Stress Orientation (major in top and minor in bottom)
Comparisons between 2015 Update (left) and 2005 Review (right) for
Domain 1

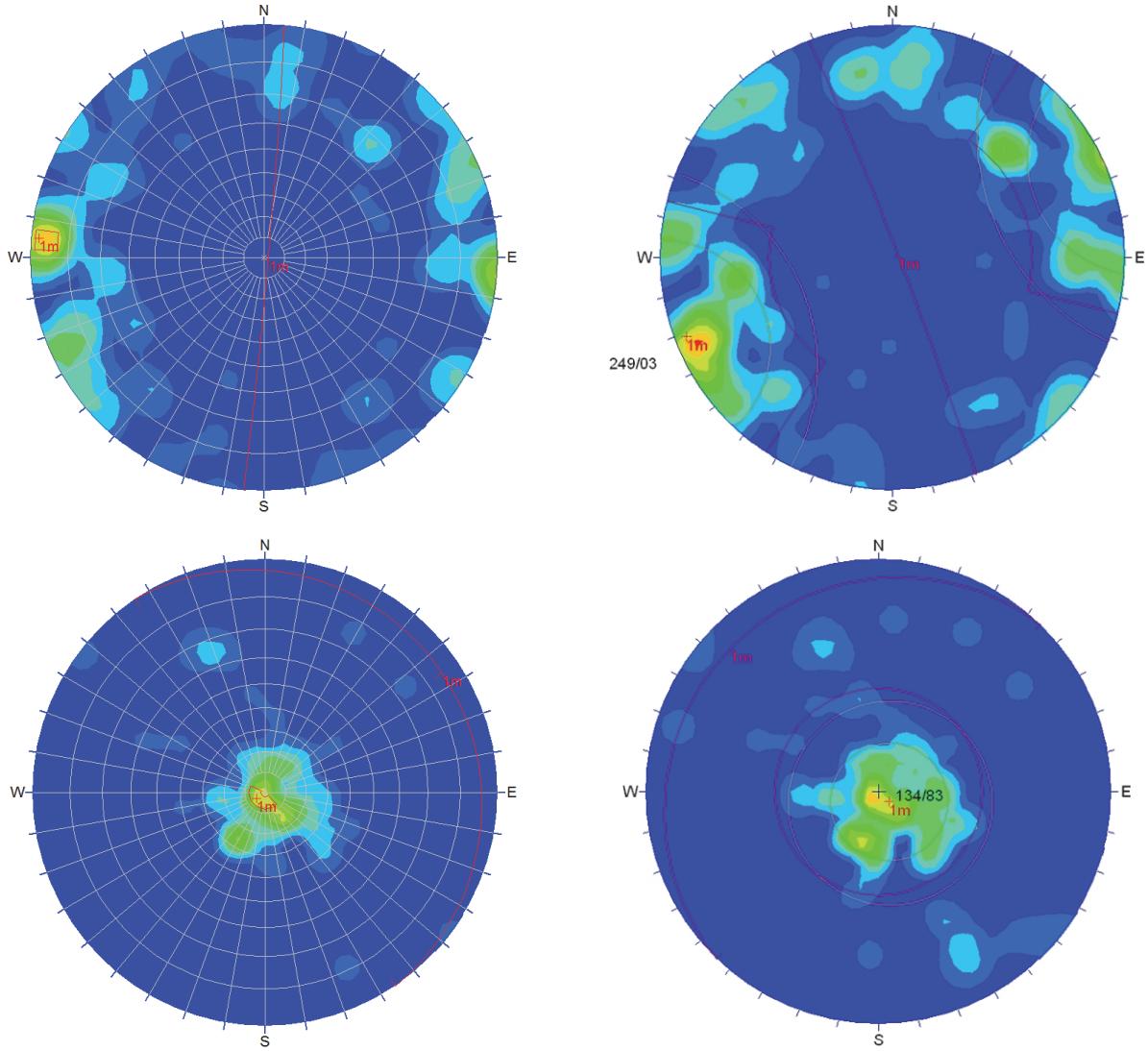


Figure 13: Principal Stress Orientation (major in top and minor in bottom)
Comparisons between 2015 Update (left) and 2005 Review (right) for
Domain 3

4.2 CARTESIAN STRESS STATE

In Cartesian space, the 2015 updated database and corresponding best-fit relationships for depth Domains 1 and 3 are summarised in Table 5 and plotted in Figure 14. The associated stress ratios are plotted in Figure 3. The relationships for Domain 1 required consideration of the entire 2015 updated database unlike those developed for Domain 3 (see Section 3.2). This emphasises the greater disturbed nature of the upper 300 m, which can be attributed to the greater weakening impact of near-surface geological processes on both the structure and material properties of this domain.

The best-fit linear regressions and corresponding stress ratios for the Superior Province are plotted in Figure 15 and Figure 16, respectively. Table 6 summarises the best-fit relationships developed for Domains 1 and 3. Again, Domain 1 regressions required consideration of the

entire 2015 updated database unlike those developed for Domain 3 (see Section 3.2). This is not surprising since all data in Domain 1 are for sites located in the Superior Province.

Table 5: Best-fit Relationships for Horizontal and Vertical Stress (entire 2015 Updated Database)

Domain 1	Domain 3
$\sigma_H \text{ (MPa)} = (0.060 \pm 0.027)z^* + (3.722 \pm 4.659)$	$\sigma_H \text{ (MPa)} = (0.035 \pm 0.005)z^* + (9.500 \pm 5.373)$
$\sigma_h \text{ (MPa)} = (0.044 \pm 0.022)z^* + (2.981 \pm 3.766)$	$\sigma_h \text{ (MPa)} = (0.024 \pm 0.005)z^* + (8.883 \pm 4.867)$
$\sigma_v \text{ (MPa)} = (0.026 \pm 0.001)z^*$	

*depth in metres

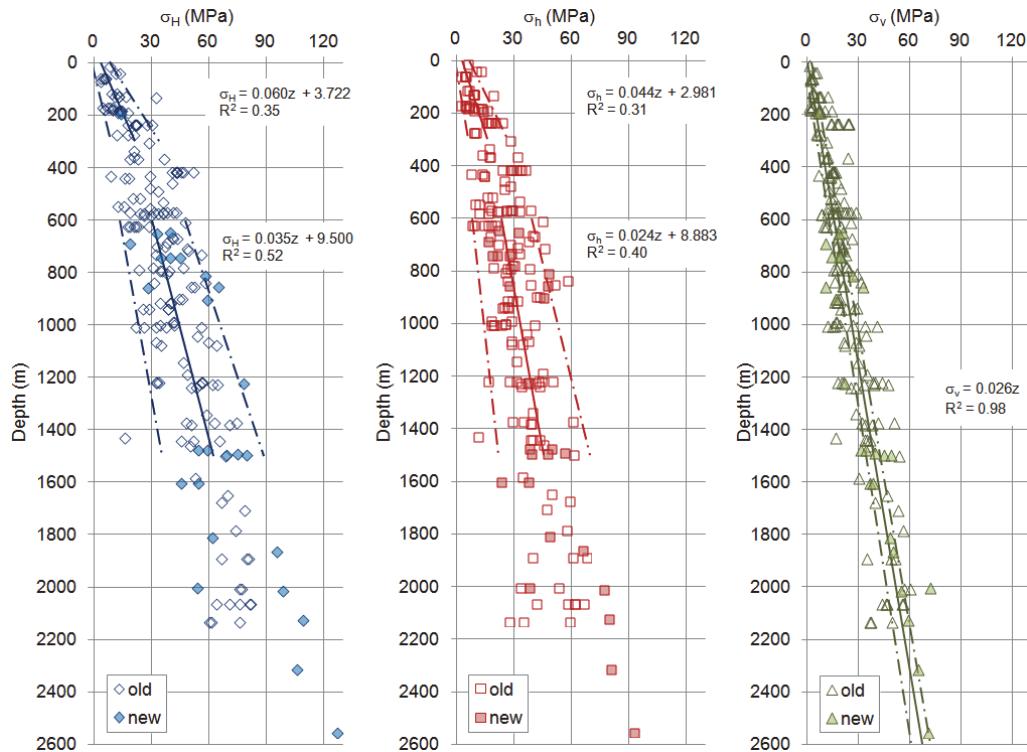


Figure 14: Horizontal and Vertical Stress Data and Best-fit Relationships for the entire 2015 Updated Database with Variability Represented by 95% Confidence Intervals (Two Standard Deviations)

Table 6: Best-fit Relationships for Horizontal and Vertical Stress (Superior Province)

Domain 1	Domain 3
$\sigma_H \text{ (MPa)} = (0.060 \pm 0.027)z^* + (3.722 \pm 4.659)$	$\sigma_H \text{ (MPa)} = (0.030 \pm 0.003)z^* + (14.303 \pm 2.728)$
$\sigma_h \text{ (MPa)} = (0.044 \pm 0.022)z^* + (2.981 \pm 3.766)$	$\sigma_h \text{ (MPa)} = (0.022 \pm 0.002)z^* + (11.196 \pm 2.310)$
$\sigma_v \text{ (MPa)} = (0.026 \pm 0.001)z^*$	

*depth in metres

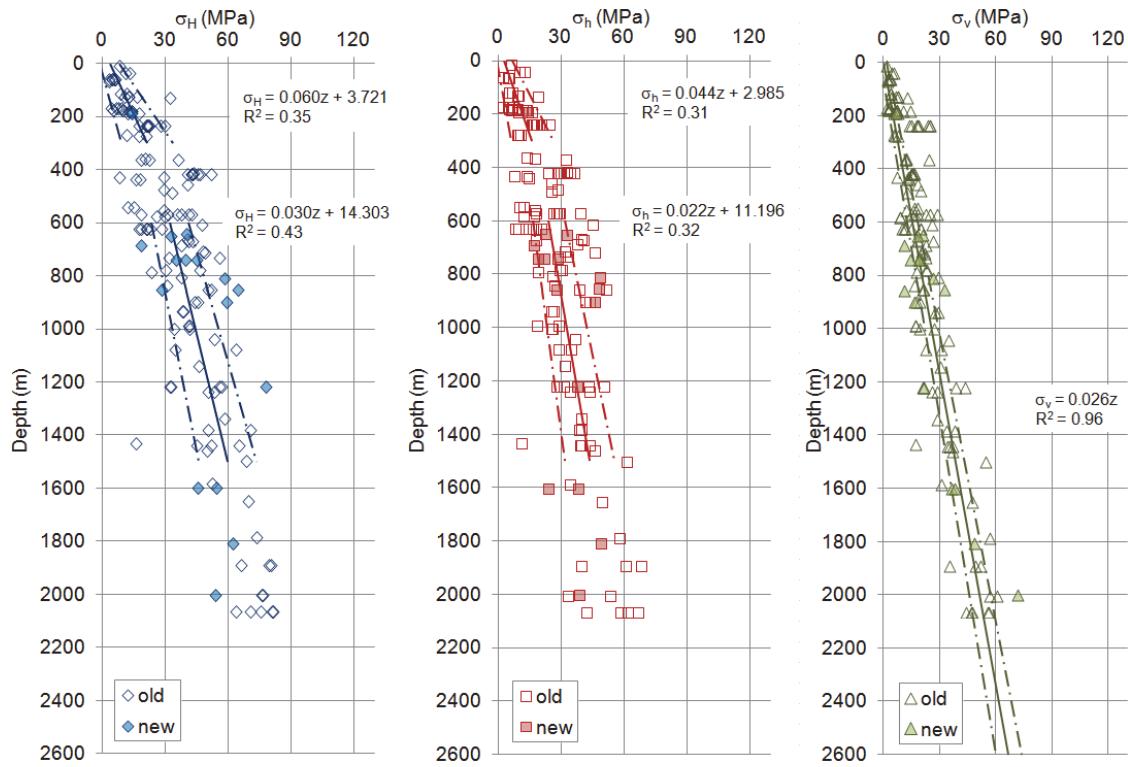


Figure 15: Horizontal and Vertical Stress Data and Best-fit Relationships for the Superior Province with variability represented by 95% confidence intervals (two standard deviations)

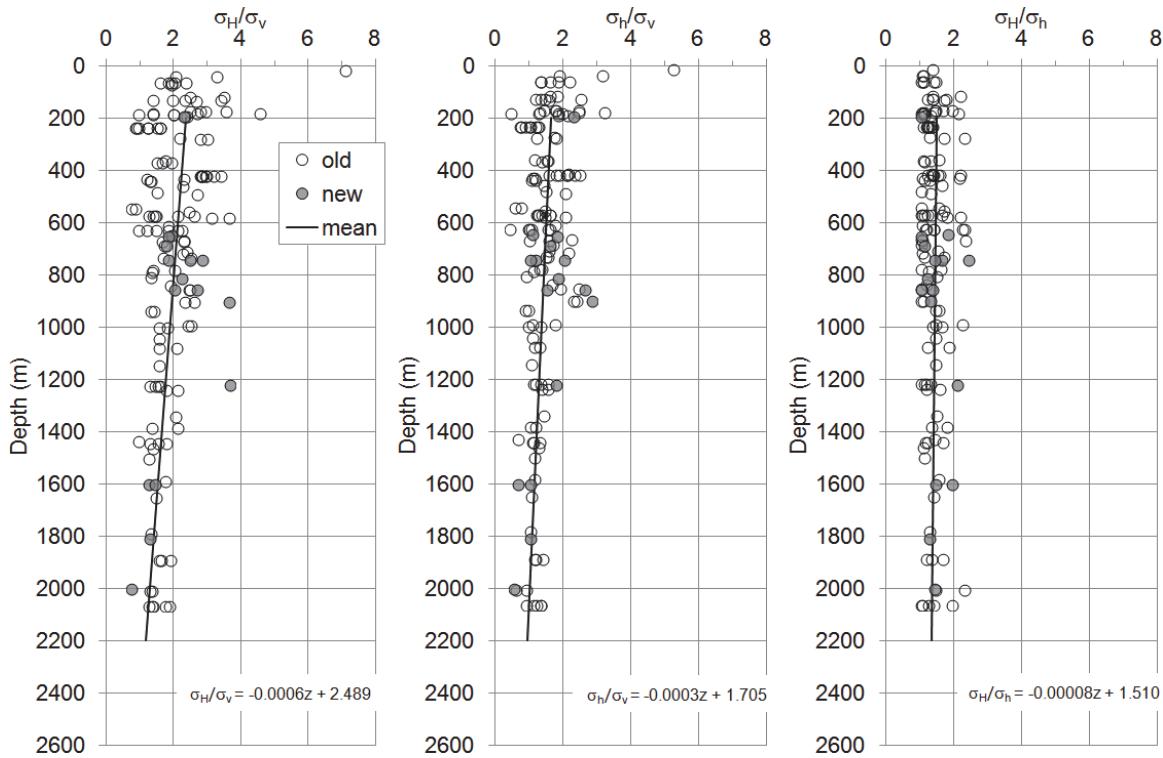


Figure 16: Horizontal and Vertical Stress Ratios for the Superior Province

Less data was available for the Southern Province: 51 entries compared to 148 entries for the Superior Province. As a result, regression of best-fit relationships is only possible in Domain 3 for the two horizontal stress components (Figure 17; Table 7). The corresponding stress ratios are plotted in Figure 18. These plots show well-constrained relationships, which is likewise illustrated by the higher coefficient of determination (R^2) for the two horizontal stresses. Projection of the best-fit relationship for the vertical stress nearly intersects zero at ground surface and its slope is close to that of the generic rock unit weight ($\gamma = 26.5 \text{ kN/m}^3$) used to determine the expected lithostatic stress. This is consistent with the notion that Domain 3 is the least disturbed by near-surface geological processes.

Table 7: Best-fit Relationships for Horizontal and Vertical Stress (Southern Province)

Domain 3	
$\sigma_H \text{ (MPa)} = (0.049 \pm 0.003)z^* - (5.940 \pm 3.090)$	
$\sigma_h \text{ (MPa)} = (0.030 \pm 0.003)z^* + (3.208 \pm 2.939)$	
$\sigma_v \text{ (MPa)} = (0.026 \pm 0.002)z^*$	

*depth in metres

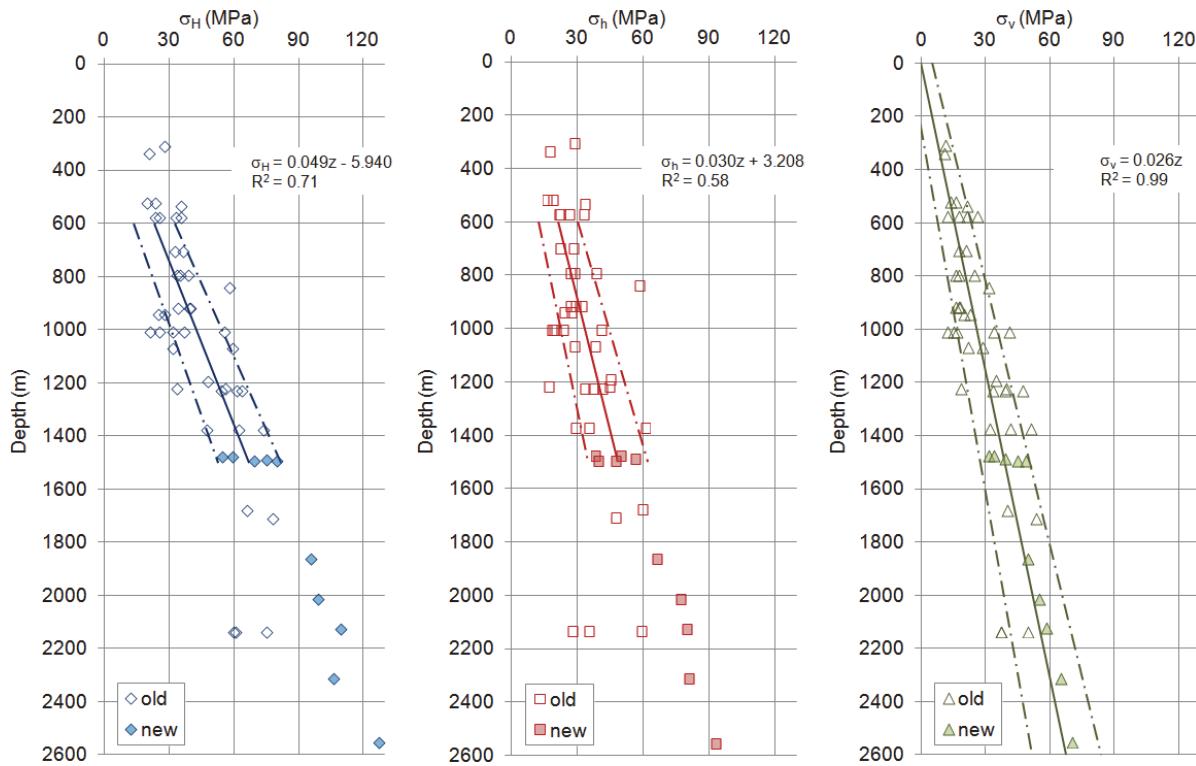


Figure 17: Horizontal and Vertical Stress Data and Best-fit Relationships for the Southern Province with variability represented by 95% confidence intervals (two standard deviations)

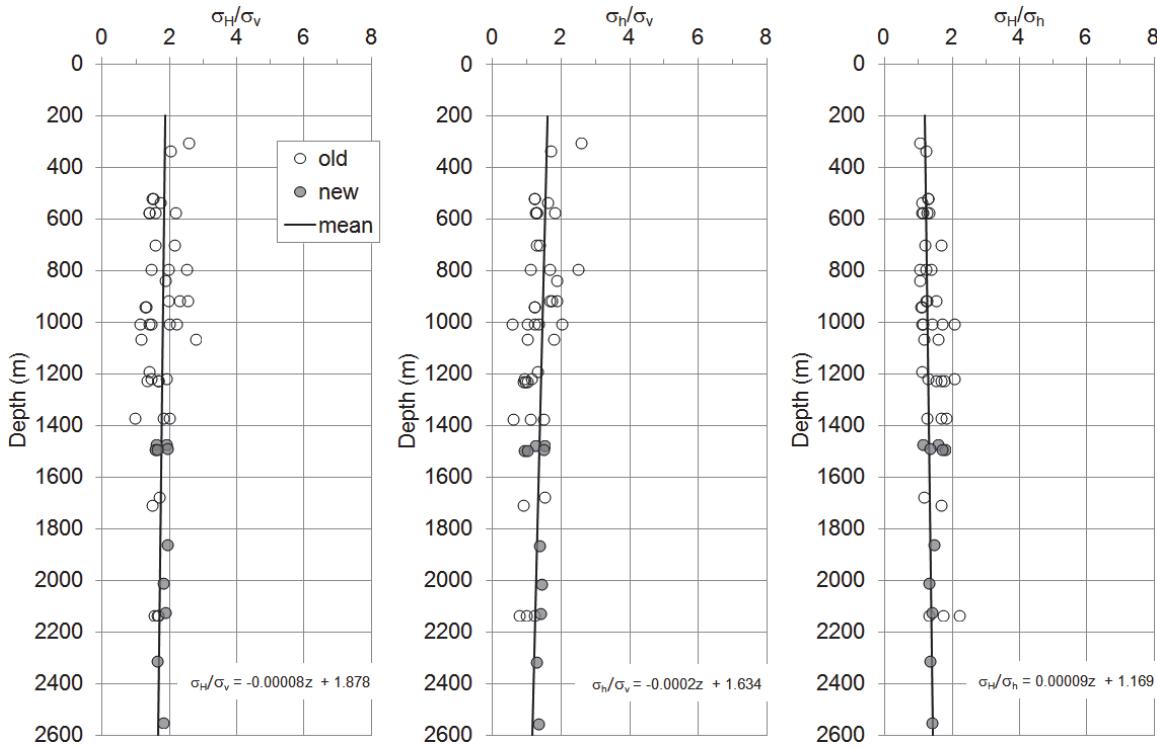


Figure 18: Horizontal and Vertical Stress Ratios for the Southern Province

4.3 DATA UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty in constraining the in-situ stress tensor based on field measurements can be attributed to a number of sources related to experimental error (glue or instrument issues, installation or procedural errors, etc.) or analysis error (selection of final strains or displacements or material properties, assumptions associated with specific techniques, etc.). Although the data quality was assessed in this study, it is not possible to completely eliminate either source of error in the current database. The best-fit relationships were developed based on the quality assessment and the definition of uncertainty in this discussion is measured against this “best” estimate.

The distributions of the deviation of the database from the mean best-fit relationships are plotted in Figure 19, according to depth domains and geological setting. This allows for a relative assessment of the uncertainty within the database as defined by the width and symmetry of the curves, as well as the distance of the curve peaks from the mean. Relative precision is indicated by the width of the curve: tall and narrow define high precision while squat and wide indicates low precision. The symmetry of the curve provides an idea of the skewness and the tendency of results to be above or below the mean. The distance of curve peak from the mean is an indicator of either the presence of appreciable systematic errors and/or a sample population insufficient for minimising random errors.

Regressions of the best quality data for Domain 2 and depths greater than 1,500 m were completed to ascertain the mean for the purpose of assessing the uncertainty in this section. However, the results confirm that development of best-fit relationships would not be robustly constrained for these depth domains.

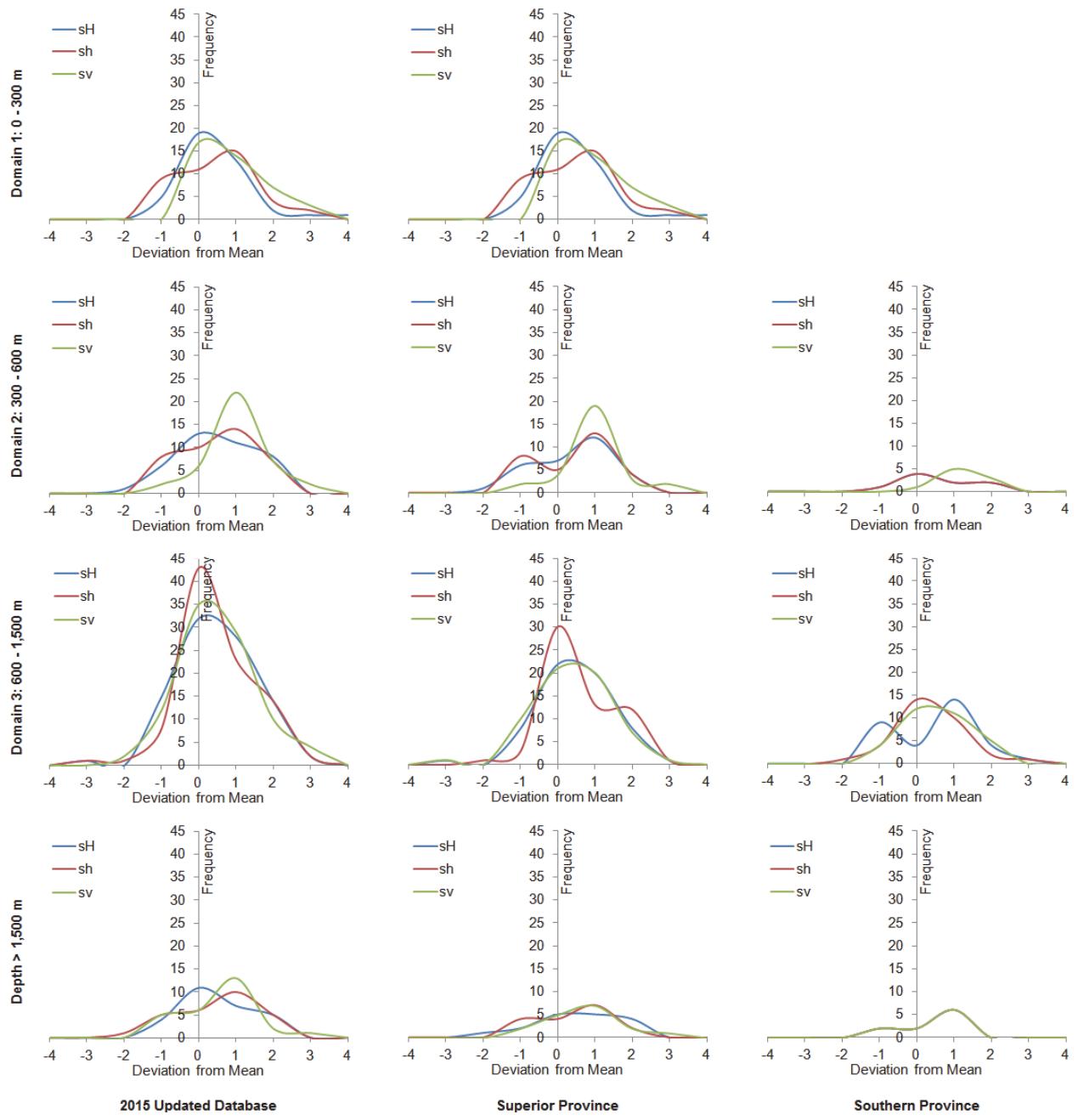


Figure 19: Distribution of Horizontal and Vertical Stress Deviation from Best-fit Relationships

Curves for the three Cartesian stress components of Domain 3 indicate that this domain, regardless of geological setting, is the best constrained. The curves are relatively narrow and the peaks are centered about the mean. The uncertainty increases when the distributions are separated into geological provinces. In both cases, σ_v remains well-constrained with a unimodal characteristic. A bimodal character takes form in σ_h of the Superior Province and σ_h of the Southern Province. There is a general positive skew to the curves and the Southern Province is

not as well constrained as the Superior Province. This is most likely due to a small number of measurements made in the Southern Province.

In Domain 1, which represent only the Superior Province, the maximum horizontal and vertical stress components are better constrained than the minimum horizontal stress. This has been evident throughout this study. There is generally more scatter in the magnitude and orientation data of σ_h .

Interestingly, the number of data in Domains 1 and 2 differ by only two points but the stress components of the stress-relaxed Domain 1 appear to be better constrained than transitional Domain 2. The peak of σ_v is consistently centered about one deviation from the mean in Domain 2. In addition, a bimodal nature appears in the Superior Province for both horizontal stress components. The uncertainty of the horizontal stress components in the Southern Province are equivalent in distribution and lie on top of one another.

Although measurement data available for depths greater than 1,500 m is half of that for Domain 2, the characteristics of the three Cartesian stress components are similar and show greater uncertainty in the mean estimate for this depth range. In the Southern Province, the distributions of all three components are equivalent and lie atop each other.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this report has been to provide a reasoned interpretation of the stress determination data compiled for this review. The 2005 database included 229 entries and 75 were added in the 2015 review for a total of 304 entries. As a result of the data quality assessment, the current 2015 database encompasses 199 entries, consisting of 173 from the 2005 review and 26 additions. The best-fit relationships (summarised below) developed in this study also focused on the depth domains Domains 1 (0 to 300 m) and 3 (600 to 1500 m) that would provide the most robust interpretation (data volume and regression characteristics). Variability and uncertainty has been shown in this study to be highest in the transitional stress Domain 2 (300 to 600 m depths).

Domain 1	Domain 3
σ_H (MPa) = $(0.060 \pm 0.027)z^* + (3.722 \pm 4.659)$	σ_H (MPa) = $(0.035 \pm 0.005)z^* + (9.500 \pm 5.373)$
σ_h (MPa) = $(0.044 \pm 0.022)z^* + (2.981 \pm 3.766)$	σ_h (MPa) = $(0.024 \pm 0.005)z^* + (8.883 \pm 4.867)$
σ_v (MPa) = $(0.026 \pm 0.002)z^*$	

*depth in metres

While this review will provide insights for the initial phases of a siting program, direct measurements of ground stress magnitudes and orientations would be required to provide a more reliable means to constrain the stress state and to reduce uncertainty in the design and performance assessment of a DGR.

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