

# Improvements to the Analytical Model to Describe UIS Events

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**Abstract**—We generalize and refine an analytical model to describe unclamped inductive switching (UIS) events in power MOSFETs and derive a novel, fast method to extract thermal impedance and series resistance from the UIS waveform. We show excellent agreement between model and measurement for SiC MOSFETs. The method allows for the comparison of thermal impedance measurements of packaged parts to that of formerly not easily accessible waferlevel die. The model allows to evaluate UIS ruggedness and provides insight into the nature of ruggedness limitations. A figure of merit for UIS ruggedness is provided and different MOSFET architectures are compared with respect to UIS ruggedness.

**Index Terms**—Power MOSFET, SiC, thermal model, UIS modeling, unclamped inductive switching (UIS) ruggedness.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**R**UGGEDNESS during unclamped inductive switching (UIS) in power MOSFETs is receiving increasing attention due to their application in the ongoing electrification of many energy processes, especially in the automotive industry [1].

Accurate modeling of UIS events is important for the improvement of UIS ruggedness. The UIS pulse primarily results in a temperature rise due to self-heating, which is determined by the thermal impedance (see Section II). First efforts to model UIS pulses were presented by Blackburn [2] using a square root dependency for the transient thermal impedance. This model was refined by McGloin and Sdrulla [3] by including the breakdown voltage dependencies and expanded by Agnone *et al.* [4] and Ren *et al.* [5].

UIS failure in Si has been shown to be primarily due to parasitic bipolar turn-on [6]. In SiC, it is believed that melting of the backend metallization is the relevant failure mode [5], [7]. We provide strong evidence to further corroborate this theory.

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In this article, we generalize the UIS model as described, e.g., in [5] for any possible transient thermal impedance functions and show how to retrieve the relevant parameters from the UIS waveform, namely, thermal impedance and series resistance. Hereby, the temperature coefficients of UIS avalanche voltage, BV<sub>DSS</sub>, and series resistance are measured, compared, and used as input parameters for the model. Next, we apply the model to establish a formula that describes UIS failure dependency on peak current and voltage rating. Finally, we compare the model to measured UIS events and show excellent agreement. This will allow screening of weak parts and can be used to confirm the abovementioned UIS failure mechanism in SiC.

## II. MODEL

The voltage waveform  $V(t)$  of a UIS event is primarily a function of the temperature rise  $\Delta T(t)$  due to self-heating and the current  $I(t) = I_p(1 - (t/\tau_{av}))$  [2], where  $I_p$  is the peak current and  $\tau_{av}$  is the duration of the UIS pulse. Okuto [8] proposed to write  $V(t)$  as

$$V(t) = V_{br}(1 + \beta \Delta T) + r_s I(t)(1 + \gamma \Delta T) \quad (1)$$

whereby  $V_{br}$  is the voltage of avalanche onset and  $\beta$  its temperature coefficient. Here, ohmic behavior is assumed for the voltage drop along the current path with a series resistance  $r_s$ . The temperature coefficient of  $r_s$  is marked by  $\gamma$ . We will use this formula as have several authors before [3], [5]. When we substitute  $I(t)$  by  $I_p(1 - (t/\tau_{av}))$  in (1), we can simplify the temperature dependency of the resistance by ignoring second-order effects:  $\gamma \Delta T(1 - (t/\tau_{av})) \approx (1/2)\gamma \Delta T$  (see Appendix A)

$$V(t) = V_{br}(1 + \beta \Delta T) + r_s I_p \left(1 - \frac{t}{\tau_{av}}\right) + \frac{1}{2} r_s I_p \gamma \Delta T. \quad (2)$$

The temperature waveform  $\Delta T(t)$  during a UIS event is a solution of the heat equation, which can be integrated with the help of the transient thermal impedance  $z_{th}$  [4], [9]

$$\Delta T(t) = \int_0^t P(t') \frac{d}{dt} z_{th}(t - t') dt' \quad (3)$$

where  $P(t) = V(t)I(t)$  is the power dissipated at the junction and  $t'$  is the variable of integration. The integral in (3) can be integrated by parts. Then, we take advantage of

$z_{th}(0) = 0$  and replace  $V(t)$  by its average  $\bar{V} = \int V dt / \tau_{av}$ , which is an excellent approximation for voltage ranges of practical relevance. This allows us to rewrite (3)

$$\Delta T(t) = V(0)I_p z_{th}(t) - \frac{\bar{V}I_p}{\tau_{av}} \int_0^t z_{th}(t') dt'. \quad (4)$$

We use this expression for  $\Delta T$  in (2), differentiate, and get a differential equation for  $z_{th}$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{dt} z_{th}(t) - \frac{\bar{V}}{\tau_{av} V(0)} z_{th}(t) \\ = \frac{1}{(\beta V_{br} + \frac{1}{2} \gamma r_s I_p) V(0)} \left( \frac{dV}{dt} + \frac{r_s}{\tau_{av}} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

which can be solved for  $z_{th}$

$$\begin{aligned} z_{th}(t) = \frac{1}{\beta V_{br} I_p + \frac{1}{2} \gamma r_s I_p^2} \\ \times \left( \frac{V(t) - V(0)}{V(0)} + \left( \frac{\bar{V} - V(0)}{V(0)} + \frac{r_s I_p}{\bar{V}} \right) \right. \\ \left. \times \left( e^{\frac{\bar{V}}{V(0)} \frac{t}{\tau_{av}}} - 1 \right) \right). \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

Now, we have an explicit analytical expression, allowing for the calculation of the thermal impedance  $z_{th}$  from the voltage waveform  $V(t)$ . The series resistance  $r_s$  can be obtained in two ways: either it is extracted with the help of (2) at  $t = 0$  via  $r_s = (\Delta V(0) / \Delta I_p)$  from experimental UIS waveforms acquired at different  $I_p$  values or, alternatively,  $r_s$  can be extracted from a single UIS event, if we use additional assumptions about  $z_{th}$ , as we shall see next.

$z_{th}$  is modeled by a thermal equivalent network (Cauer network) of several thermal resistances  $r_{th,i}$  and capacitances  $c_{th,i}$  in a low-pass filter series. Solving the network for  $z_{th}$  yields

$$z_{th}(t) = \sum r_{th,i} \left( 1 - e^{-\frac{t}{r_{th,i} c_{th,i}}} \right). \quad (7)$$

We want to apply this formula to UIS waveforms. Typically,  $\tau_{av}$  is less than a few 100  $\mu$ s. In this range (7) can be approximated by

$$z_{th}(t) = \frac{t^q}{\tilde{c}}. \quad (8)$$

For a given thermal equivalent network,  $q$  and  $\tilde{c}$  can be extracted from  $r_{th,i}$  and  $c_{th,i}$  by means of linear regression of  $\ln(z_{th}(t))$  versus  $\ln(t)$ . The intensive, dimensionless parameter  $q$  is typically assumed to be  $(1/2)$  [2], but we extracted  $q$  of  $\approx 0.4$  to  $\approx 0.9$  from our  $z_{th}$  measurements. The extensive, modified heat capacitance  $\tilde{c}$  is typically  $\tilde{c} < 0.1$   $W s^q / K$ . This knowledge about the nature of  $z_{th}$  can now be utilized to determine  $r_s$  in (6). This can be achieved by fitting (6) to a  $t^q$  power law and varying  $r_s$  until the regression coefficient  $R^2$  is optimized.

Furthermore, substituting  $z_{th}(t)$  by (8) into (3) and (1) yields explicit expressions for  $\Delta T$  and  $V(t)$

$$\Delta T(t) = \frac{\bar{V} I_p}{\tilde{c}} t^q \left( 1 - \frac{t}{(1+q)\tau_{av}} \right). \quad (9)$$

This expression allows us to calculate the maximum temperature rise

$$\Delta T_{max} = \frac{\bar{V} I_p}{\tilde{c}} \frac{q^q}{(1+q)} \tau_{av}^q. \quad (10)$$

Now, we can use  $E = (1/2) \bar{V} I_p \tau_{av}$  and solve for  $\tau_{av}$  and then substitute it in (10) to express the avalanche energy ( $E$ ) dissipated during a UIS event in terms of  $\Delta T_{max}$

$$E = \frac{(1+q)^{\frac{1}{q}}}{2q} \Delta T_{max}^{\frac{1}{q}} \tilde{c}^{\frac{1}{q}} \bar{V}^{1-\frac{1}{q}} I_p^{1-\frac{1}{q}}. \quad (11)$$

This expression provides insight into the failure mechanism of power MOSFETs due to UIS stress. If failure is due to the MOSFET reaching a critical temperature, the failure energy must show a dependency of  $E$  on  $I_p$  like in (11). We shall use (11) in Section IV to show this. Moreover, (11) provides a possible UIS figure of merit, which allows for the comparison of MOSFET architectures with differently rated operating voltages and currents.

### III. COMPARISON TO MEASURED UIS WAVEFORMS

Now, we shall compare the model described in Section II to measured UIS data. We measured two of our commercially released Gen3 (see [10]) MOSFET products C3M0017120 (17 m $\Omega$ ) and C3M0075120 (75 m $\Omega$ ) with an ITC-UIS station and recorded  $V(t)$  with an oscilloscope. Measurement noise was removed with a kernel smoother function, and then,  $t = 0$  and  $t = \tau_{av}$  were determined by filtering  $dV/dt$  between the 1st and the 99th percentile. Thus, obtained  $V(t)$  allows for the calculation of  $V(0)$ . Repeating this procedure at different peak currents  $I_p$  allows to extrapolate to  $V(0)$  at  $I_p = 0$ . This value  $V(t = 0, I_p = 0)$  is the equivalent of the normal avalanche breakdown voltage BVDSS obtained through an  $I-V$  sweep. The slope of this linear fit represents  $r_s$  as introduced in (1). Measuring UIS waveforms at different temperatures  $T$  and repeating this procedure for each  $T$  allow for the extraction of  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  from (2).

Fig. 1 shows on the top the values for  $V_{br} = V(t = 0, I_p = 0)$  and BVDSS measured at different temperatures for 14 samples from the two different devices. Solid lines represent UIS extracted values and dashed lines represent BVDSS from  $I-V$  sweeps. The slopes of these lines allow for the extraction of  $\beta$ . Both methods show very similar values: 120 ppm/K for the UIS-extracted avalanche temperature coefficient and about 160 ppm/K for the  $I-V$ -sweep-extracted coefficient with no significant difference between the two transistor types. This is as expected since both describe the same vertical avalanche process.

On the bottom of Fig. 1, we plot measured  $r_s = dV/dI$  as a function of temperature. Here, there is a significant difference between the transistor types. C3M0017120 has  $r_s$  of  $\approx 0.4$   $\Omega$  and  $\gamma$  around  $-300$  ppm/K, whereas C3M0075120 has an  $r_s$  of  $\approx 1.1$   $\Omega$  and  $\gamma$  around  $-800$  ppm/K. We observe a good qualitative scaling of  $r_s$  with  $RDson$  as one would expect. We speculate that the different values of  $\gamma$  for the two transistor types might be due to different field enhancements due to different corner roundings and curvatures of the diffused  $P$ -WELL.

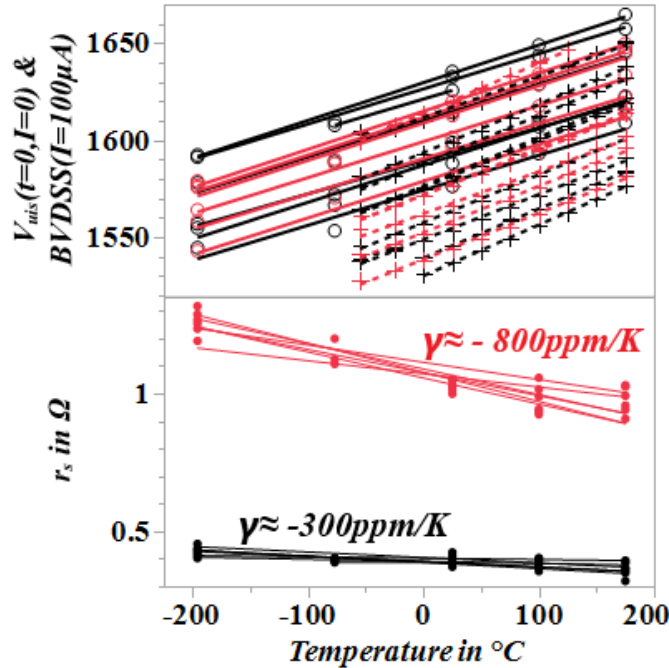


Fig. 1. Top:  $V_{br} = V(t=0, I_p=0)$  (solid) and BVDSS ( $I=100\mu A$ ) versus  $T$  with a slope of  $\beta$  for 14 samples from two different transistor types C3M0017120 (black) and C3M0075120 (red). Bottom:  $r_s$  versus  $T$  with slopes of  $\gamma$ .

Now, equipped with  $V(t)$ ,  $V(0)$ , and  $\bar{V}$  [from  $V(t)$ ] and  $r_s$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$ , we can proceed to calculate  $z_{th}$  according to (6). Fig. 2 shows  $V(t)$  from UIS pulses from a C3M0017120 MOSFET with  $I_p = 30$  A (black),  $I_p = 70$  A (red), and  $I_p = 120$  A (blue), each with five different inductance values: 1.8–5.4 mH in steps of 0.9, 0.3–0.7 mH in steps of 0.1, and 0.06–0.18 mH in steps of 0.03 mH, respectively. Fig. 2 also shows  $z_{th}$ , calculated from the curves in the upper half of Fig. 2 with the help of (6). In this plot,  $r_s$  was extracted as described previously by variation until  $R^2$  was optimized. Since all waveforms under vastly different conditions reproduce the same thermal impedance, this plot illustrates the validity of (6).

Next, we compare  $z_{th}$  from (6) to the standard  $z_{th}$  measurement method (transient dual interface (TDI), JESD 51-14 [13]), based on body diode  $V_f$  as a thermometer. Fig. 3 shows  $z_{th}$  calculated from (6) for the transistors from Fig. 1. Our new measurement method shows qualitative agreement between the two different methods. However, the UIS-extracted  $z_{th}$  curves are slightly steeper. The TDI method reproduces an exponent  $q$  of exactly (1/2), which was entered into the model to begin with. From [13], “due to the electrical disturbances at the beginning of the measurement (*with the TDI method*), the signal has to be discarded for all points of time  $t$  smaller than a cutoff time  $t_{cut} \dots (t)^{1/2}$  can be used to extrapolate to  $\dots t = 0$ .” In our method, based on (6), the exponent  $q$  is independently measured and comes out higher ( $q \sim 0.7$ ).

This new method for extracting  $z_{th}$  is not only very fast but also allows for the measurement of  $z_{th}$  in nonstandard environments, like at wafer level or open cavity packages.

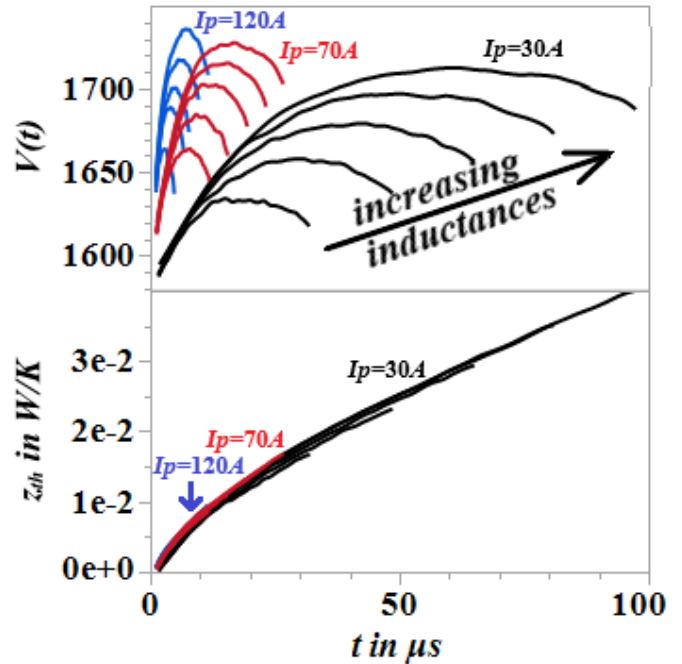


Fig. 2. Top row:  $V(t)$  from UIS pulses from a C3M0017120 MOSFET with  $I_p = 30$  A (black),  $I_p = 70$  A (red),  $I_p = 120$  A (blue), and each of the five different inductance values. Bottom row:  $z_{th}$  in K/W calculated from curves above with the help of (6); blue curve buried behind red curve.

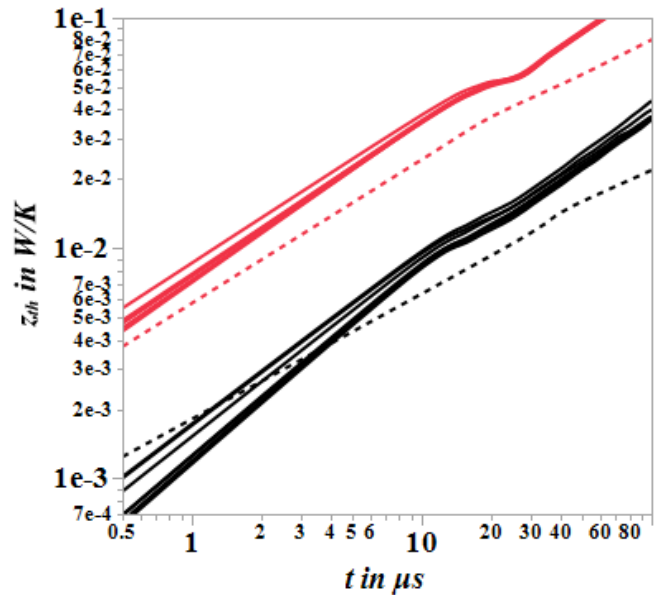


Fig. 3.  $z_{th}$  extracted from UIS waveform with (6) for the transistors from Fig. 1, again C3M0017120 (black,  $I_p = 70$  A) and C3M0075120 (red,  $I_p = 20$  A). Dashed Lines show data sheet reference for the two products based on TDI measurements.

Fig. 4 shows a comparison of  $z_{th}$  readouts calculated with (6) from UIS-waveforms at  $t = 10 \mu s$  for three different cases for the same 17 mΩ product: on wafer level, standard overmold, and open cavity package. For all three cases,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  were assumed to be the same as extracted according to Fig. 1 from packaged parts. It can be seen that in a wafer-level setup,

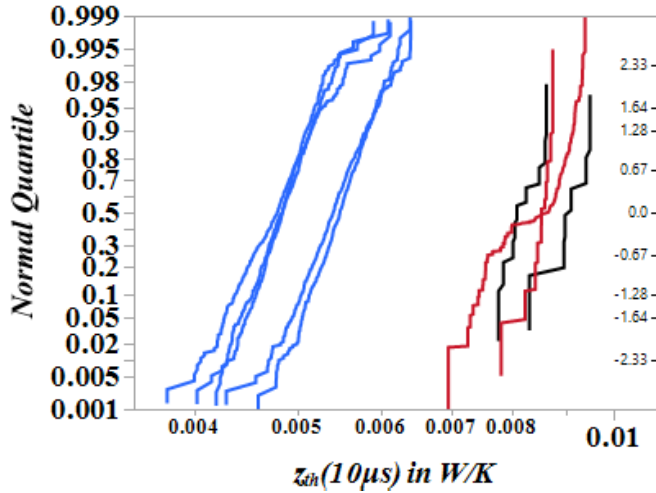


Fig. 4. Cumulative  $z_{th}(t = 10 \mu s)$  for C3M0017120 transistors in three different setups: wafer level (blue, five wafers,  $\sim 500$  sites, and two different frontside platings), overmolded package (red, from two different wafers 500 and 189 parts), and open cavity package (black, from two different wafers, 32 and 27 parts).

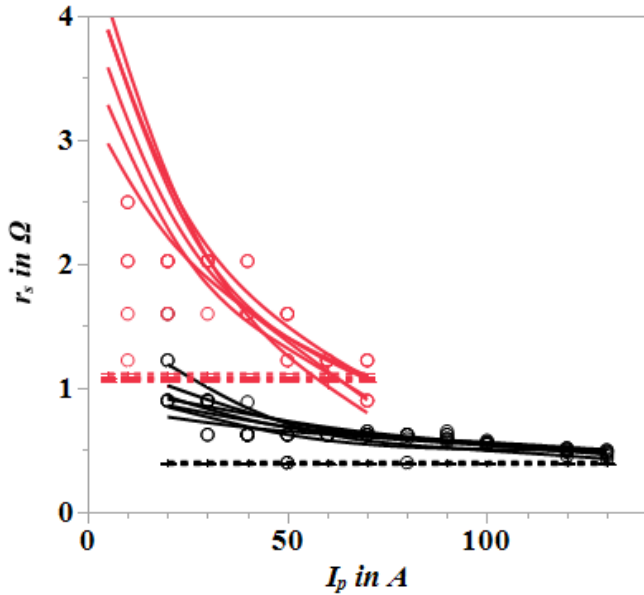


Fig. 5.  $r_s$  from varying  $r_s$  in (6) and optimizing  $R^2$  (solid lines) and  $r_s$  from Fig. 1 being the slope  $dV/dI$  (dashed lines) for the transistors from Fig. 1, again C3M0017120 (black) and C3M0075120 (red).

$z_{th}$  is a factor of 1.5 lower than packaged parts and there is little difference between open cavity and fully overmolded packages.

Finally, we want to compare the two different methods for extracting the series resistance  $r_s$  from the slope  $dV/dI$  and  $r_s$  from optimizing  $R^2$ . Each circle in Fig. 5 represents an  $r_s$  value extracted from a UIS curve at a given  $I_p$  with (6) and optimized with respect to  $R^2$ , the solid lines show a spline through those values. The dashed lines show  $r_s$  from Fig. 1. The agreement at higher peak currents is very good. This is yet another confirmation of the consistency of the model. The nonlinear nature of the series resistance becomes apparent with

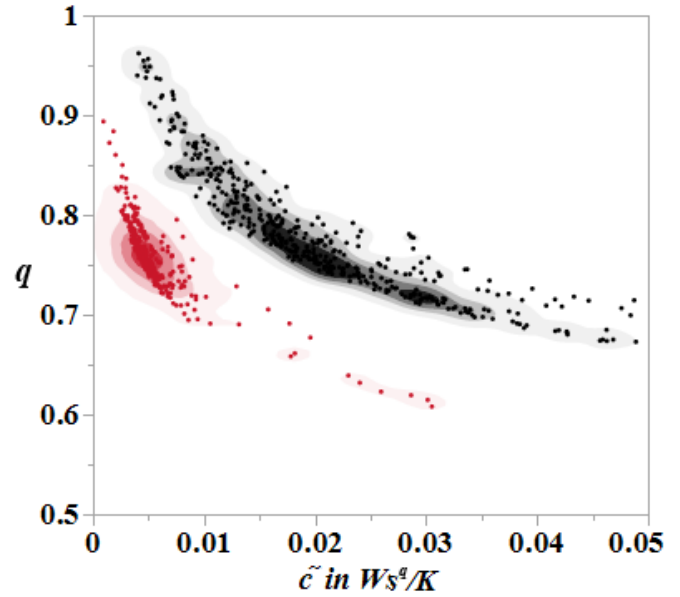


Fig. 6.  $q$  versus  $\tilde{c}$  30 packaged MOSFETs of each of the devices C3M0017120 (black) and C3M0075120 (red) by measuring  $z_{th}$  and fitting  $q$  and  $\tilde{c}$  according to (8).

the method of (6), which shows the higher values for  $r_s$  for lower peak currents  $I_p$ .

#### IV. APPROXIMATION FOR $Z_{TH}$

In Section II, we discussed an approximation for  $z_{th}$ , which we want to apply to experimentally measured  $z_{th}$  curves. We measured 30 packaged MOSFETs of each of the devices C3M0017120 and C3M0075120, extracted first  $z_{th}$  (6) and then  $q$  and  $\tilde{c}$  according to (8) by fitting slope and intercept of the log-log of  $z_{th}$  against  $t$ . In Fig. 6, the results are plotted together with their bivariate densities. The densities peak for  $q$  around 0.75 for both devices, whereas  $\tilde{c}$  differs between the two devices. For C3M0017120, we get approximately  $0.02 W s^{0.75}/K$  and for C3M0075120 approximately  $0.005 W s^{0.75}/K$ . Thus, we see that  $q$  is indeed an intrinsic parameter, whereas  $\tilde{c}$  scales with the MOSFET area.

Next, we can apply these measurements to gain some insight into the failure mechanism for UIS. UIS pulses dissipate energy in the MOSFET and ruggedness, with regard to this energy, described by an upper limit, is an important design parameter for power circuits. This upper limit can be explored by repeating pulses and ramping inductances at a constant peak current  $I_p$  and thereby establishing a function of the UIS ruggedness energy  $E_{max}$  as a function of  $I_p$ . Wang and Jiang [11], and Gao *et al.* [12] reported an inverse proportional dependency  $E_{max} \propto I_p^{-\kappa}$ , with  $\kappa \approx 0.5$ .

In Fig. 7, we report UIS ruggedness data of several MOSFETs, including the designs discussed above from ramping inductances  $L$  at constant current peaks  $I_p$ . We plot the median of the areal density  $e_{max}$  of  $E_{max}$  as a function of the areal density  $j_p$  of  $I_p$ . The fit lines show an approximate relationship of the type  $e_{max} = 0.22 \text{ JA}^{0.5}/\text{mm}^3 \times j_p^{-0.5}$ . This relationship is essentially the same for all MOSFET types, independent of their area. It can now be compared to (11).



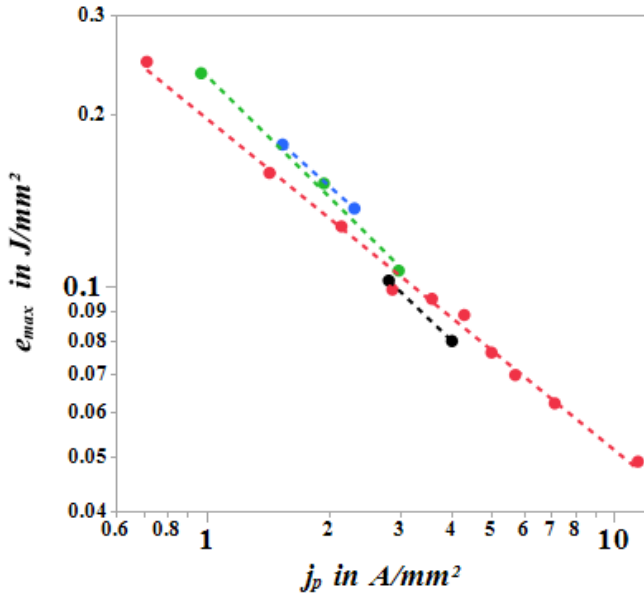


Fig. 7. Median of the areal density of  $e_{\max}$  in  $\text{J}/\text{mm}^2$  of four different MOSFET layouts as a function of the areal density of  $j_p$  in  $\text{A}/\text{mm}^2$ , C3M0016120 (blue), C3M0017120 (black), C3M0021120 (green), and C3M0075120 (red).

Since  $\kappa \approx 0.5$  and  $q = (1/1 + \kappa)$ , we get  $q \approx 0.67$ , which is close to the measured  $q$  from Fig. 6.

Now, we are in a position where we can use (11) to draw conclusions. Indeed, in Fig. 7,  $E_{\max}$  shows a dependency on  $I_p$  as predicted by (11). Furthermore, we can extract the critical maximum temperature  $\Delta T_{\max, \text{crit}}$  at which failure occurs, e.g., melting of the metal lines. First, (11) can be rewritten in areal density form

$$e_{\max} = \frac{(1+q)^{\frac{1}{q}}}{2q} \Delta T_{\max, \text{crit}}^{\frac{1}{q}} \bar{c}^{\frac{1}{q}} \bar{V}^{1-\frac{1}{q}} j_p^{1-\frac{1}{q}}. \quad (12)$$

Here,  $\bar{c} = \tilde{c}/A$  is the modified heat capacity density ( $A$  is die area). Resolving for  $\Delta T_{\max, \text{crit}}$  yields

$$\Delta T_{\max, \text{crit}} = \frac{2^q q^q}{1+q} \frac{1}{\bar{c}} e_{\max}^q \bar{V}^{1-q} j_p^{1-q}. \quad (13)$$

Extracting  $\bar{c}$  from Fig. 6 and  $\bar{V}$  from Fig. 2, we calculate  $\Delta T_{\max, \text{crit}} \approx 800$  K. This is in line with recent reports from [14].

A fair comparison of UIS ruggedness of MOSFETs with different architectures, ratings, or from different vendors is difficult since the measurement conditions vary. Given the results from above, we propose to use the fit of  $\log(e_{\max})$  versus  $\log(j_p)$  as a figure of merit to evaluate UIS ruggedness. We acquired parts from three different vendors and measured their ramp to breakdown energies for 30 MOSFETs each, on the same station as for the Wolfspeed parts. Since the die areas of the parts from the vendors are unknown, we decided to use  $C_{\text{oss}}$  from the products' data sheet instead, which we found scales best with the actual die area. Fig. 8 shows a comparison of the median ramp to UIS breakdown energy densities from the different products similar to Fig. 7, whereby  $E_{\max}$  and  $I_p$  were divided by  $C_{\text{oss}}$  instead of die area. It can be seen that the

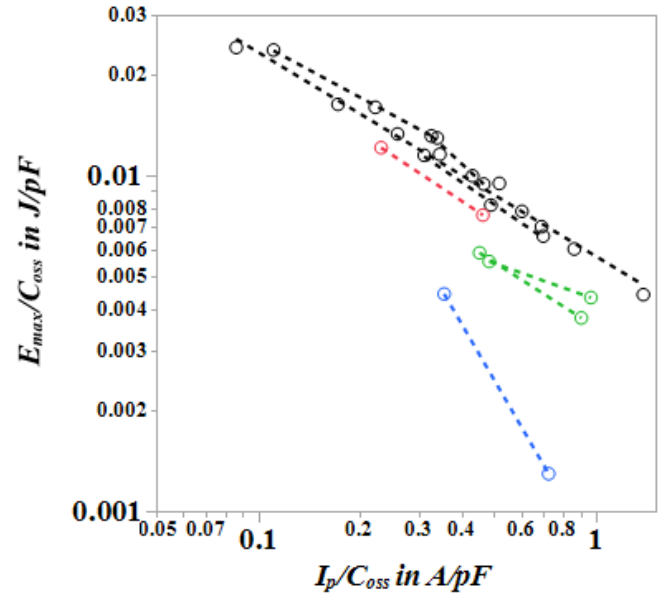


Fig. 8.  $E_{\max}/C_{\text{oss}}$  in  $\text{J}/\text{pF}$  of several different MOSFET layouts from different vendors as a function of  $I_p/C_{\text{oss}}$  in  $\text{A}/\text{pF}$ . Wolfspeed (black, same parts as in Fig. 7), Vendor 1 (red, planar,  $R_{\text{ds(on)}} = 80$  m $\Omega$ ,  $C_{\text{oss}} = 80$  pF), Vendor 2 (green, trench,  $R_{\text{ds(on)}} = 30, 45$  m $\Omega$ ,  $C_{\text{oss}} = 116$ , and 115 pF), and Vendor 3 (blue, trench,  $R_{\text{ds(on)}} = 40$  m $\Omega$ ,  $C_{\text{oss}} = 76$  pF).

Wolfspeed parts allow for a higher energy density at a given current density before failure occurs.

## V. CONCLUSION

We have derived a simple analytical model for UIS pulses, which improves substantially over older models. We have derived a new, accurate and fast method to extract the transient thermal impedance  $z_{\text{th}}$ , series resistance  $r_s$ , and temperature coefficients  $\beta$  for avalanche voltage and  $\gamma$  for series resistance from the UIS waveform. We showed the consistency of this method and applied it to show differences in thermal impedance between wafer-level and packaged parts. The new model provides insight into the physical nature of the failure mechanism during UIS pulses. We use this method to propose a new figure of merit to compare MOSFETs with respect to ruggedness.

## APPENDIX A

### JUSTIFICATION FOR $I_{\text{eff}} = I_p/2$ IN (2)

We can use (9) to calculate  $I_{\text{eff}}$  in (2)

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{\int_0^{\tau_{\text{av}}} \Delta T \left(1 - \frac{t}{\tau_{\text{av}}}\right) dt}{\int_0^{\tau_{\text{av}}} \Delta T dt} \\ &= \frac{\frac{\bar{V} I_p}{\bar{c}} \int_0^{\tau_{\text{av}}} t^q \left(1 - \frac{t}{(1+q)\tau_{\text{av}}}\right) \left(1 - \frac{t}{\tau_{\text{av}}}\right) dt}{\frac{\bar{V} I_p}{\bar{c}} \int_0^{\tau_{\text{av}}} t^q \left(1 - \frac{t}{(1+q)\tau_{\text{av}}}\right) dt} \\ &= \frac{q+2}{q^2+4q+3} \approx \frac{1}{2} \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

for typical values of  $0.4 < q < 0.9$ .

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