Evaluation of the Radiation Susceptibility of a 3D NAND Flash Memory

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To be presented by Dakai Chen at the 2017 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Nuclear and Space Radiation Effects Conference (NSREC), New Orleans, Louisiana, July 17-21, 2017.
Acronyms

- three dimensional (3D)
- multiple-bit upset (MBU)
- Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH)
- multiple-level-cell (MLC)
- negated AND or NOT AND (NAND)
- single-event functional interrupt (SEFI)
- single-event upset (SEU)
- silicon (Si)
- single-level-cell (SLC)
- total ionizing dose (TID)
MOTIVATION

- Samsung introduced the V-NAND in 2013 as planar flash has reached design limits [1]
- In Q3 2017, 3D NAND flash will exceed 50% of total NAND market for the first time [2]
- Samsung, Toshiba, Micron, and China’s new entrant Yangtze River Storage plan to release 64-layer, and Hynix developing a 72-layer 3D NAND flash late 2017 to early 2018
- NASA, ESA and other parties in the space industry have implemented state-of-the-art NAND flash into flight missions [3], [4]
- Impact on single-event upset (SEU) including multiple-bit upset (MBU) sensitivity? Other mechanisms?

1. Samsung Electronics, “Samsung 3bit V-NAND memory boasts higher density to enhance capacity” Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd, South Korea, August, 2015.

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Device and Experimental

- **Device under test**
  - Hynix 128 Gb single die (40 nm) 3D NAND with gate-all-around charge-trap flash [1]
  - Micron 128 Gb single die (16 nm) planar NAND

- **ARM Cortex-M4 Microcontroller and custom PCB mounted with flash**

- **Test Facility**
  - Heavy ion testing at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and Texas A&M University
  - High energy proton testing at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH)

- **Test modes**
  - Static, dynamic read, dynamic read/read/erase/write
  - Patterns: All 0’s, 1’s (FF), checkerboard (AA and 55)

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Single-event functional interrupt (SEFI) observed during static on and dynamic tests
  - Power cycle can recover in most cases

SEU cross sections similar to the Micron planar NAND in multiple-level-cell (MLC) storage mode

Single-level-cell (SLC) mode produced significantly lower SEU cross sections
  - Plain SLC mode showed the least SEU susceptibility
PATTERN DEPENDENCE

- Unique pattern dependence relative to the Micron planar NAND reflects different threshold voltage distribution schemes between the technologies
- Significant enhancement in SEU cross section for all 0’s relative to checkerboard
- 3D NAND showed lower sensitivity to MBU relative to the planar NAND
  - Higher noise margin between program levels
- Enhanced MBU sensitivity at 90° to 0° face angle

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ANGULAR EFFECTS

- Cross section decreased slightly from normal incidence to 60° base angle for the same LET.
- MBU cross section showed enhancement from 0° to 90° face angle.
- Enhancement from 90° to 0° face angle more significant with increasing number of upset bits per byte.
- Enhancement from 90° to 0° face angle more significant for higher base angle (60° vs. 45°).

Cross section ratio from 90° to 0° face angle for MLC mode, 00 pattern
MLC mode, 00 pattern
LET (MeV·cm²/mg), ion and angle
40.7 (Kr 45°)
57 (Kr 60°)
20 (Ar 60°)

Cross section decreased slightly from normal incidence to 60° base angle for the same LET.
- MBU cross section showed enhancement from 0° to 90° face angle.
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- SEU sensitivity to protons is significantly lower than heavy ions
- Similar pattern dependence and mode sensitivity
- Cross section increased for decreasing proton energy, similar to 41 nm Micron planar NAND flash [1]
  - Increase in the number of proton-induced secondaries with low LET
  - SEU LET threshold for MLC < 0.9 MeV·cm²/mg, while for SLC is between 3.5 and 7 MeV·cm²/mg


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**FLUENCE DEPENDENCE**

- Cross section decreased for increasing fluence, similar to that observed for the 128 Gb Micron planar flash [1]
- Influence of dose on SEUs?
  - 1 krad(Si) or less for each run
- Annealing of SEUs?
  - Annealing on orders of hours [2]
- Irradiation runs with different durations, but the same fluence, resulted in similar cross sections
  - **Annealing and TID had negligible impact**

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FLUENCE DEPENDENCE


- Attribute to the variable threshold voltage distribution of high density NAND flash
- High density results in poor coverage at typical irradiation fluence levels
- Cells with lower threshold voltages will be vulnerable to upset, while the majority of the population with higher threshold voltages are not susceptible to SEU
- We increasingly encounter a proportionally higher population of robust cells at a higher fluence than at a lower fluence, leading to the decrease in cross section with increasing fluence
Fluence effect more significant for lower LET ions

Higher LET ions can upset a larger population with higher threshold voltages

Fluence effect much more significant for single-bit upset than for MBU
CONCLUSION

• The more relaxed noise margins of 3D NAND leads to benefits in the SEU performance relative to planar NAND of similar performance and density
• Lower MBU sensitivity with less upset bits per byte
• Evaluation of MBU susceptibility requires irradiation at base and face angle orientations
• SEU cross section varied inversely with fluence, indicative of a variable SEU rate during mission
• Relatively robust against proton-induced SEE, characteristic of response of traditional planar NAND