

Abstract Submitted
for the MAR05 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Simulation of Current Filaments in Photoconductive Semiconductor Switches K. KAMBOUR¹, HAROLD P. HJALMARSON, Sandia National Laboratories, CHARLES W. MYLES², Texas Tech University — Optically-triggered, high-power photoconductive semiconductor switches (PCSS's) using semi-insulating GaAs are under development at Sandia. These switches carry current in high carrier-density filaments. The properties of these filaments can be explained by collective impact ionization theory in which energy redistribution by carrier-carrier scattering within the filament enhances the impact ionization. This allows these filaments to be sustained by fields which are relatively low compared to the bulk breakdown fields. For GaAs, the sustaining field is approximately 4.5 kV/cm. For this talk, a hydrodynamic implementation of the collective impact ionization theory is used to compute the properties of these filaments. These continuum calculations are based on previous calculations in which the steady-state properties of filaments are computed using a Monte Carlo method to solve the Boltzmann equation. The effects of defects will also be considered in the presentation of the results.

¹Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin company, for the United States Department of Energy under contract DE-AC04-94AL85000.

²CWM supported in part by a grant from the AFOSR MURI program.

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Date submitted: 07 Dec 2004

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