Abstract Submitted
for the MAR06 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Ab initio molecular dynamics of a proton in amorphous SiO$_2$ illustrating the hopping mechanism JULIEN GODET, ALFREDO PASQUARELLO, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Institute of Theoretical Physics, CH-1015 Lausanne — The scaling of metal-oxide-semiconductor devices to smaller dimensions is a major issue in current silicon technology. In order to understand the role of hydrogen at silicon-oxide interfaces, we here investigate charged states of hydrogen in amorphous SiO$_2$ (a-SiO$_2$) using first-principles calculations (DFT-GGA). We first show that the formation energies of $H^0$, $H^+$ and $H^-$ in a-SiO$_2$ are essentially equivalent to those in $\alpha$-quartz. In particular, the $H^+$ and $H^-$ species are always more stable than their neutral counterpart. Then, we focus on the basic diffusion mechanism of the proton in a-SiO$_2$. Our molecular dynamics simulations show that the proton hops between O atoms. The hopping does not occur between first O neighbors connected through the network, but takes place across rings when the O–O distance is about 2.3 Å. The hopping process is favored by the thermal vibrations of the O atoms.

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Date submitted: 26 Nov 2005
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