
Operating and Handling Considerations

Solid state devices are being designed into an increasing variety of electronic equipment because of their high standards of reliability and performance. However, it is essential that equipment designers be mindful of good engineering practices in the use of these devices to achieve the desired performance.

This Note summarizes important operating recommendations and precautions which should be followed in the interest of maintaining the high standards of performance of linear integrated circuits and MOS field-effect transistors.

The ratings included in RCA data bulletins are based on the Absolute Maximum Rating System, which is defined by the following Industry Standard (JEDEC) statement:

Absolute-Maximum Ratings are limiting values of operating and environmental conditions applicable to any electron device of a specified type as defined by its published data, and should not be exceeded under the worst probable conditions.

The device manufacturer chooses these values to provide acceptable serviceability of the device, taking no responsibility for equipment variations, environmental variations, and the effects of changes in operating conditions due to variations in device characteristics.

The equipment manufacturer should design so that initially and throughout life no absolute-maximum value for the intended service is exceeded with any device under the worst probable operating conditions with respect to supply-voltage variation, equipment component variation, equipment control adjustment, load variation, signal variation, environmental conditions, and variations in device characteristics.

It is recommended that equipment manufacturers consult RCA whenever device applications involve unusual electrical, mechanical or environmental operating conditions.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The design flexibility provided by integrated circuits and MOS/FET's makes possible their use in a broad range of applications and under many different operating conditions. When incorporating these devices in equipment, designers should anticipate the rare possibility of device failure and make certain that no safety hazard would result from such an occurrence.

The small size of these devices provides obvious advantages to the designers of electronic equipment. However, it should be recognized that these compact devices usually provide only relatively small insulation area between adjacent leads and the metal envelope. When these devices are used in moist or contaminated atmospheres, therefore, supplemental protection must be provided to prevent the development of electrical conductive paths across the relatively small insulating surfaces.

Devices should not be connected into or disconnected from circuits with the power on because high transient voltages may cause permanent damage to the devices.

TESTING PRECAUTIONS

In common with many electronic components, solid-state devices should be operated and tested in circuits which have reasonable values of current limiting resistance, or other forms of effective current overload protection. Failure to observe these precautions can cause excessive internal heating of the device resulting in destruction and/or possible shattering of the enclosure.

MOUNTING

Integrated circuits are normally supplied with lead-tin plated leads to facilitate soldering into circuit boards. In those relatively few applications requiring welding of the device leads, rather than soldering, the devices may be obtained with gold or nickel plated Kovar leads.* It should be recognized that this type of plating will not provide complete protection against lead corrosion in the presence of high humidity and mechanical stress. The aluminum-foil-lined cardboard "sandwich pack" employed for static protection of the flat-pack also provides some additional protection against lead corrosion, and it is recommended that the devices be stored in this package until used.

When integrated circuits are welded onto printed circuit boards or equipment, the presence of moisture between the closely spaced terminals can result in conductive paths that may impair device performance in high-impedance applications. It is therefore recommended that conformal coatings or potting be provided as an added measure of protection against moisture penetration.

In any method of mounting integrated circuits which involves bending or forming of the device leads, it is extremely important that the lead be supported and clamped between the bend and the package seal, and that bending be done with care to avoid damage to lead plating. In no case should the radius of the bend be less than the diameter of the lead, or in the case of rectangular leads, such as those used in RCA 14-lead and 16-lead flat-packages, less than the lead thickness. It is also extremely important that the ends of the bent leads be straight to assure proper insertion through the holes in the printed-circuit board.

MOS FIELD-EFFECT TRANSISTORS

Insulated-Gate Metal Oxide-Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistors (MOS FETs), like bipolar high-frequency transistors, are susceptible to gate insulation damage by the electrostatic discharge of energy through the devices. Electrostatic discharges can occur in an MOS FET if a type with an unprotected gate is picked up and the static charge, built in the handler's body capacitance, is discharged through the device. With proper handling and applications procedures, however, MOS transistors are currently being extensively used in production by numerous equipment manufacturers in military, industrial, and consumer applica-

* MIL-38510A, paragraph 3.5.6.1(a), lead material.

Operating and Handling Considerations

tions, with virtually no problems of damage due to electrostatic discharge.

In some MOS FETs, diodes are electrically connected between each insulated gate and the transistor's source. These diodes offer protection against static discharge and in-circuit transients without the need for external shorting mechanisms. MOS FETs which do not include gate-protection diodes can be handled safely if the following basic precautions are taken:

1. Prior to assembly into a circuit, all leads should be kept shorted together either by the use of metal shorting springs attached to the device by the vendor, or by the insertion into conductive material such as "ECCOSORB* LD26" or equivalent.
(NOTE: Polystyrene *insulating* "SNOW" is not sufficiently conductive and should not be used.)
2. When devices are removed by hand from their carriers, the hand being used should be grounded by any suitable means, for example, with a metallic wristband.
3. Tips of soldering irons should be grounded.
4. Devices should never be inserted into or removed from circuits with power on.

*Trade Mark: Emerson and Cumming, Inc.

SOLID STATE CHIPS

Solid state chips, unlike packaged devices, are non-hermetic devices, normally fragile and small in physical size, and therefore, require special handling considerations as follows:

1. Chips must be stored under proper conditions to insure that they are not subjected to a moist and/or contaminated atmosphere that could alter their electrical, physical, or mechanical characteristics. After the shipping container is opened, the chip must be stored under the following conditions:
 - A. Storage temperature, 40°C max.
 - B. Relative humidity, 50% max.
 - C. Clean, dust-free environment.
2. The user must exercise proper care when handling chips to prevent even the slightest physical damage to the chip.
3. During mounting and lead bonding of chips the user must use proper assembly techniques to obtain proper electrical, thermal, and mechanical performance.
4. After the chip has been mounted and bonded, any necessary procedure must be followed by the user to insure that these non-hermetic chips are not subjected to moist or contaminated atmosphere which might cause the development of electrical conductive paths across the relatively small insulating surfaces. In addition, proper consideration must be given to the protection of these devices from other harmful environments which could conceivably adversely affect their proper performance.