HIGH TEMPERATURE WIRELESS COMMUNICATION AND ELECTRONICS FOR HARSH ENVIRONMENT APPLICATIONS

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In order for future aerospace propulsion systems to meet the increasing requirements for decreased maintenance, improved capability, and increased safety, the inclusion of intelligence into the propulsion system design and operation becomes necessary. These propulsion systems will have to incorporate technology that will monitor propulsion component conditions, analyze the incoming data, and modify operating parameters to optimize propulsion system operations. This implies the development of sensors, actuators, and electronics, with associated packaging, that will be able to operate under the harsh environments present in an engine. However, given the harsh environments inherent in propulsion systems, the development of engine-compatible electronics and sensors is not straightforward.

The ability of a sensor system to operate in a given environment often depends as much on the technologies supporting the sensor element as the element itself. If the supporting technology cannot handle the application, then no matter how good the sensor is itself, the sensor system will fail. An example is high temperature environments where supporting technologies are often not capable of operation in engine conditions. Further, for every sensor going into an engine environment, i.e., for every new piece of hardware that improves the in-situ intelligence of the components, communication wires almost always must follow. The communication wires may be within or between parts, or from the engine to the controller. As more hardware is added, more wires, weight, complexity, and potential for unreliability is also introduced. Thus, wireless communication combined with in-situ processing of data would significantly improve the ability to include sensors into high temperature systems and thus lead toward more intelligent engine systems.

NASA Glenn Research Center (GRC) is presently leading the development of electronics, communication systems, and sensors capable of prolonged stable operation in harsh 500°C environments. This has included world record operation of SiC-based transistor technology (including packaging) that has demonstrated continuous electrical operation at 500°C for over 2000 hours. Based on SiC electronics, development of high temperature wireless communication has been on-going. This work has concentrated on maturing the SiC electronic devices for communication purposes as well as the passive components such as resistors and capacitors needed to enable a high temperature wireless system. The objective is to eliminate wires associated with high temperature sensors which add weight to a vehicle and can be a cause of sensor unreliability.

This paper discusses the development of SiC based electronics and wireless communications technology for harsh environment applications such as propulsion health management systems and in Venus missions. A brief overview of the future directions in sensor technology is given including maturing of near-room temperature “Lick and Stick” leak sensor technology for possible implementation in the Crew Launch Vehicle program. Then an overview of high temperature electronics and the development of high temperature communication systems is presented. The maturity of related technologies such as sensor and packaging will also be discussed. It is concluded that a significant component of efforts to improve the intelligence of harsh environment operating systems is the development and implementation of high temperature wireless technology.
High Temperature Wireless Communication
And Electronics For Harsh Environment
Applications

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OUTLINE

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EXPLORATION ISHM/IVHM AND SENSOR MOTIVATION

• FUTURE EXPLORATION MISSIONS WILL REQUIRE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED INTEGRATED SYSTEM/VEHICLE HEALTH MANAGEMENT (ISHM/IVHM) THROUGHOUT THE VEHICLE
  ➢ LIMITED GROUND SUPPORT
  ➢ CONSTRAINED IN TIME, RESOURCES, AND CAPABILITIES FROM PERFORMING EXTENSIVE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE, REPAIR, OR REPLACEMENT.
  ➢ IMPROVED SYSTEM SAFETY, RELIABILITY, AND EFFICIENCY.
  ➢ IDENTIFY PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY CAUSE HARM
• VEHICLE SYSTEMS THAT REQUIRE INTENSE HUMAN INTERVENTION OR MONITORING ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO REALIZATION OF THE EXPLORATION VISION.
• INCLUSION OF AUTOMATED VEHICLE INTELLIGENCE INTO THE SYSTEM DESIGN AND OPERATION IS NECESSARY
  • ENABLE INTERNAL SYSTEMS TO MONITOR COMPONENT CONDITIONS, ANALYZE THE INCOMING DATA, AND MODIFY OPERATING PARAMETERS TO OPTIMIZE SYSTEM OPERATIONS TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED PERFORMANCE AND RELIABILITY.
  • IF PROBLEMS DO OCCUR, SOME AUTONOMOUS PROGNOSIS/DIAGNOSIS, FAULT ISOLATION, AND REMEDIATION IS NECESSARY I.E. THE VEHICLE WILL NEED INTEGRATED INTELLIGENCE AND ADVANCED ISHM SYSTEMS.
EXPLORATION ISHM/IVHM SENSOR SYSTEMS

- HIGH-QUALITY DATA PROVIDED BY SENSOR SYSTEMS IS A FOUNDATION OF ISHM
- PRESENT SENSOR TECHNOLOGY DOES NOT MEET NASA EXPLORATION NEEDS. NASA NEEDS IN SENSORS ARE SPECIALIZED AND REVOLVE AROUND ITS UNIQUE MISSION. OFF-THE-SHELF TECHNOLOGY IS OFTEN NOT APPLICABLE
- IF ISHM IS GOING TO BE EFFECTIVE, THEN IT SHOULD BE APPLIED WHERE IT IS NEEDED, NOT JUST WHERE IT IS CONVENIENT.
  - FOR EXAMPLE, LIMITED ON-BOARD HARSH ENVIRONMENTS SENSORS LEAVING SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF THE PROPULSION SYSTEM UNMONITORED.
- WHILE NASA MIGHT LEVERAGE SENSOR TECHNOLOGY BEING DEVELOPED ELSEWHERE, NASA UNIQUE PROBLEMS REQUIRE SPECIALIZED SOLUTIONS.
ISHM SENSOR SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

• DO NOT ASSUME IT WILL JUST BE THERE WHEN NEEDED
• SENSORS AND ISHM INCLUSION OFTEN PROBLEMATIC IN VEHICLE SYSTEMS
  ➢ LEGACY SYSTEMS
  ➢ CUSTOMER ACCEPTANCE
  ➢ LONG-TERM VS SHORT-TERM CONSIDERATIONS
• MICROSYSTEM APPROACHES MAY PROVIDE NEW CAPABILITIES
• BASED ON INTELLIGENCE RESIDING WITHIN EACH SMART SENSOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE COMPLETE SYSTEM.

Microsystem Block Diagram
POSSIBLE STEPS TO REACH INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

• “LICK AND STICK” TECHNOLOGY (EASE OF APPLICATION)
  ➢ Micro and nano fabrication to enable multipoint inclusion of sensors, actuators, electronics, and communication throughout the vehicle without significantly increasing size, weight, and power consumption. Multifunctional, adaptable technology included.

• RELIABILITY:
  ➢ Users must be able to believe the data reported by these systems and have trust in the ability of the system to respond to changing situations e.g. decreasing sensors should be viewed as decreasing the available information flow about a vehicle. Inclusion of intelligence more likely to occur if it can be trusted.

• REDUNDANCY AND CROSS-CORRELATION:
  ➢ If the systems are easy to install, reliable, and not increase weight/complexity, the application of a large number of them is not problematic. This allow redundant systems, e.g. sensors, spread throughout the vehicle. These systems will give full-field coverage of the engine parameters but also allow cross-correlation between the systems to improve reliability of sensor data and the vehicle system information.

• ORTHOGONALITY:
  ➢ Systems should each provide a different piece of information on the vehicle system. Thus, the mixture of different techniques to “see, feel, smell, hear” as well as move can combine to give complete information on the vehicle system as well as the capability to respond to the environment.
"LICK AND STICK" LEAK SENSOR SYSTEM

- FUEL/OXYGEN LEAK DETECTION WITH POWER, SIGNAL CONDITIONING, TELEMETRY ALL IN THE SURFACE AREA OF A POSTAGE STAMP
- GOAL: DETECT EXPLOSIVE CONCENTRATIONS FOR MULTIPLE VEHICLES, A WIDE RANGE OF FUELS WITH "LICK AND STICK" SYSTEMS
- MOVING TOWARD CLV APPLICATIONS
- SYSTEM CALIBRATION AND SELF-CHECK ARE MAJOR ISSUES (ON-BOARD INTELLIGENCE)
AERONAUTICS IVHM PROGRAM

AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM

Integrated Continuous Onboard Vehicle Health State Assessment and Management
- Airframe
- Propulsion
- Aircraft Systems

Onboard Environmental Hazard Detection and Effects Mitigation
- Icing & Fuel Safety
- Lightning and EMI/EMC
- Ionizing Radiation

IVHM System Technologies
- Architectures and Databases
- Verification and Validation
- Integration & Assessment
Propulsion Health Management

- Gas Path Health Management
- Structural Health Management
- Propulsion Condition Monitoring via Integrated Propulsion & Aircraft Measurements
- High Temperature Sensors, Electronics, and Communications

IVHM
Enable New Capabilities …
• Propulsion Structural Health Monitoring
• High-temperature Pressure Sensors and
• High-temperature Wireless Communications and Energy Harvesting Technologies

Technical Approach:
• Propulsion structural health monitoring including smart accelerometers, and optical strain and blade tip-timing sensors.
• Pressure sensors for incorporation into gas-path trending and fault diagnostic models to infer turbine health.
• Integration of sensor technology with high temperature wireless communications and energy harvesting to enable a smart systems operable at high temperatures.
  ➢ High-temperature wireless communications based on SiC electronics and rugged RF passive components
  ➢ Energy harvesting systems focusing thermo-electric and photo-voltaic materials for generation of power for remote sensors.

Significant wiring exists with present sensor systems
Allow Sensor Implementation by Eliminating Wires

World Record High Temperature Electronics Device Operation
High Temperature RF Components
Energy Harvesting Thin Film Thermoelectrics
SENSORS AND ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY BRANCH

SCOPE OF WORK

PHYSICAL SENSORS (T, Strain, Heat Flux)

CHEMICAL SENSORS

SILICON CARBIDE HIGH TEMP ELECTRONICS

MICRO-ELECTRO-MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

NANOTECHNOLOGY
NASA GRC: CUTTING EDGE DEVELOPMENT HARSH ENVIRONMENT SENSORS AND ELECTRONICS
HARSH ENVIRONMENT ELECTRONICS AND SENSORS APPLICATIONS

• NEEDS:
  - OPERATION IN HARSH ENVIRONMENTS
  - RANGE OF PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL MEASUREMENTS
  - INCREASE DURABILITY, DECREASE THERMAL SHIELDING, IMPROVE IN-SITU OPERATION

• RESPONSE: UNIQUE RANGE OF HARSH ENVIRONMENT TECHNOLOGY AND CAPABILITIES
  - STANDARD 500C OPERATION BY MULTIPLE SYSTEMS
  - TEMPERATURE, PRESSURE, CHEMICAL SPECIES, WIND AVAILABLE
  - HIGH TEMPERATURE ELECTRONICS TO MAKE SMART SYSTEMS

• ALL-IN-ONE SHOP FOR HARSH ENVIRONMENT SYSTEM APPLICATIONS

• ENABLE EXPANDED MISSION PARAMETERS/IN-SITU MEASUREMENTS

Range of Physical and Chemical Sensors for Harsh Environments

Harsh Environment Packaging (2000 hours at 500C)

High Temperature Signal Processing and Wireless

Long Term: High Temperature “Lick and Stick” Systems
6H-SiC JFET NOR Gate

3 x 300 µm JFET’s

VDD VSS

Input A Input B

Output

150 µm

A

ABA + B

00 101 0

10 0 11 0

T = 600 °C

VDD = 3.5 V

VSS = 0 V

Vsubstrate = -1.8 V.

Unpackaged device tested for approx. 1 hour on prober with hot-chuck in 1997.
NASA/GMI 6H-SiC JFET Amplifier Circuit
(Under Construction)
Chip Level Packages for 500°C Application

- Three types of ceramic substrate and Au thick-film metallization based chip-level packages
- A compatible low resistance die-attach scheme tested for 1000hrs
- Compatible printed circuit board level interconnection system developed
WORLD’S FIRST 500 HOUR 500 °C TRANSISTOR WITH VERY STABLE OPERATION

• 2000 hours of transistor operation achieved (some limited degradation)
• Device Operation Also Demonstrates Viability of Supporting Technologies
  - Packaging and ohmic contacts operated over 2000 hours at 500 °C without degradation.
• Strong Foundation for Improved Device Operation
  - Revised “junction gate” process should enable 2000 hours at 500 °C without transistor degradation.
Demonstration of 500ºC AC Amplifier Based on SiC MESFET and Ceramic Packaging – Test assembly 2006

Optical Picture of the Test Assembly

- The test assembly includes four testing circuit units
- Common - Source AC amplifier tested at 500 C for over 1100 hours
High Temperature Wireless Development

OBJECTIVES:
• HIGH TEMPERATURE WIRELESS TELEMETRY, DISTRIBUTED ELECTRONICS OVER A BROAD OPERATING RANGE

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES:
— DEVELOPMENT OF RELIABLE HIGH TEMPERATURE TELEMETRY ELECTRONICS, POWER SOURCES, REMOTE COMMUNICATION ELECTRONICS, AND PACKAGING

GOALS SUPPORTED:
— ENHANCE PERFORMANCE
— SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE COST

PROVIDE DATA TRANSFER IN HARSH ENVIRONMENTS IMPROVING RELIABILITY AND ENABLING NEW CAPABILITIES

Example: Gas Turbine Engine Development Requires Extensive Instrumentation Yielding Extensive Wiring Complexity

Wires from 1000 Sensors

Prototype Oscillator Circuit
HIGH TEMPERATURE ELECTRONICS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND SENSORS BENEFITS TO NASA MISSIONS

Intelligent Propulsion Systems

More Electric + Distributed Control Aircraft

Space Exploration Vision PMAD

Venus Exploration

Pillar Two: Revolutionary Technology Leaps
HIGH TEMPERATURE WIRELESS AND SENSOR APPLICATION: VENUS

EXAMPLE POSSIBLE MISSION: Venus Integrated Weather Sensor (VIWS) System

Sensor Suite to Monitor Venus Weather Conditions including: Data Processing and Communication, Wind Flow, Seismic, Pressure/Temperature/Heat Flux, Chemical Environment

- HIGH TEMPERATURE ELECTRONIC NOSE (Chemical Species)
- Hi-g SiC ACCELEROMETER (Seismic Activities)
- PRESSURE SENSOR (Pressure)
- HOTProbe (Wind flow, Pressure, Temperature)
- MULTIFUNCTIONAL PHYSICAL SENSOR ARRAY (Temperature, Heat Flux)
- SiC ELECTRONICS (Data Processing and Com)
SUMMARY

• ISHM/IVHM IS NECESSARY AND NOT JUST GOING TO SHOW UP WHEN NEEDED
• ONE INTELLIGENT SYSTEM APPROACH: SMART COMPONENTS (NODES) MADE POSSIBLE BY SMART SENSOR SYSTEMS
• SELF-AWARE COMPONENTS YIELD A SELF-AWARE SYSTEM
• TECHNOLOGY BEST APPLIED WITH STRONG INTERACTION WITH USER/TAILOR
• SENSOR FOR NEEDS OF APPLICATIONSensors should be included at the beginning of the design process rather than as an afterthought
• WIRELESS PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN LICK AND STICK TECHNOLOGIES (both early on and if included as an afterthought)
• HARSH ENVIRONMENT RESULTS IN SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR COMPONENT TECHNOLOGIES
• NASA GRC RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF SPACE AND AERONAUTIC APPLICATIONS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF HARSH ENVIRONMENT TECHNOLOGIES
• HIGH TEMPERATURE COMMUNICATIONS, SENSORS, ELECTRONICS, ACTUATORS, AND MICROSYSTEMS UNDER DEVELOPMENT
• LONG-TERM VISION FOR AN INTELLIGENT SYSTEM IS A SYSTEM THAT IS SELF-MONITORING, SELF-CORRECTING AND REPAIRING, AND SELF-MODIFYING INCLUDING HARSH ENVIRONMENT SYSTEMS.