Application Report
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Semiconductor and IC Package Thermal Metrics

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ABSTRACT

Many thermal metrics exist for semiconductor and integrated circuit (IC) packages ranging from θ_{ja} to Ψ_{jt}. Often, these thermal metrics are misapplied by those who try to use them to estimate junction temperatures in their systems. This document describes traditional and new thermal metrics and puts their application in perspective with respect to system-level junction temperature estimation.

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1 Theta-ja (θ_{ja}) Junction-to-Ambient and Theta-jma (θ_{jma}) Junction-to-Moving Air

The junction-to-ambient thermal resistance,θ_{ja}, is the most commonly reported thermal metric and is the most often misused. θ_{ja} is a measure of the thermal performance of an IC package mounted on a specific test coupon. The intent of θ_{ja} is to give a metric by which the relative thermal performance of a package can be compared. Thus, the thermal performance of a TI device can be compared to a device from another company. This is true when both companies use a standardized test to measure θ_{ja}, such as that specified by JEDEC in the EIA/JESD 51 series of documents. Sometimes, however, JEDEC conditions are not followed and the excursions from the standards are not documented. These test variations can have a dramatic effect on the measured values of θ_{ja}. Therefore, unless test conditions are reported with the θ_{ja} value, they should be considered suspect.

The measurement of θ_{ja} is performed using the following steps (summarized from EIA/JESD 51-1):

Step 1. A part, usually an integrated circuit (IC) package containing a thermal test chip that can both dissipate power and measure the maximum chip temperature, is mounted on a test board.

Step 2. The temperature sensing component of the test chip is calibrated.

Step 3. The package/test board system is placed in either a still air (θ_{ja}) or moving air (θ_{ma}) environment.

Step 4. A known power is dissipated in the test chip.

Step 5. After steady state is reached, the junction temperature is measured.

Step 6. The difference in measured ambient temperature compared to the measured junction temperature is calculated and is divided by the dissipated power, giving a value for θ_{ja} in °C/W.

1.1 Usage

Unfortunately, θ_{ja} has often been used by system designers to estimate junction temperatures of their devices when used in their systems. The equation usually assumed to be valid for calculating junction temperature from θ_{ja} is:

$$T_{junction} = T_{ambient} + \left(\theta_{ja} \times Power\right) \quad (1)$$

This is a misapplication of the θ_{ja} thermal parameter since θ_{ja} is a variable function of not just the package, but of many other system level characteristics such as the design and layout of the printed circuit board (PCB) on which the part is mounted. In effect, the test board is a heat sink that is soldered to the leads of the device. Changing the design or configuration of the test board changes the efficiency of the heat sink and therefore the measured θ_{ja}. In fact, in still air JEDEC defined θ_{ja} measurements, almost 70-95% of the power generated by the chip is dissipated from the test board, not from the surfaces of the package. Since a system board rarely approximates the test coupon used to determine θ_{ja}, application of θ_{ja} using Equation 1 results in extremely erroneous values.

Table 1 lists factors that can influence θ_{ja} for a given package outline when all materials are held constant. The first column lists the factor while the second column gives a *rule of thumb* estimate as to the impact of the factor.

Table 1. Factors Effecting θ_{ja} for a Given Package Outline

Factors Effecting θ_{ja}	Strength of Influence (rule of thumb)
PCB design	Strong (100%)
Chip or pad size	Strong (50%)
Internal package geometrical configuration	Strong (35%)
Altitude	Strong (18%)
External ambient temperature	Weak (7%)
Power dissipation	Weak (3%)

In light of the fact that θ_{ja} is not a characteristic of the package by itself but of the package, PCB, and other environmental factors, it is best used as a comparison of a package's thermal performance between different companies. For example, if TI reports a θ_{ja} of 40°C/W for a package compared to a competitor's value of 45°C/W, the TI part will likely run 10% cooler in an application than the competitor's part.

1.2 Test Card Impact

JEDEC has recently established a set of standards for measuring and reporting the thermal performance of IC packages. These standards fall under the EIA/JESD 51 umbrella. EIAJ/Semi also has a set of thermal standards that are substantially different from the JEDEC version. Since θ_{ja} is not a constant, it is critical to determine the standards that were used to calculate or measure θ_{ja} before attempting a comparison.

Within the JEDEC specification, two test board types are allowed. A 1s (single signal layer) configuration gives a *typical* usage value for a moderately populated, multi-plane system level PCB application. A 2s2p (double signal layer, double buried power plane) configuration gives a best case performance estimate assuming a sparsely populated, high trace density board design with buried power and ground planes. Figure 1 shows modeled θ_{ja} differences for these two boards for 17 different package types. Note that all the materials and package geometries were held constant for these models.

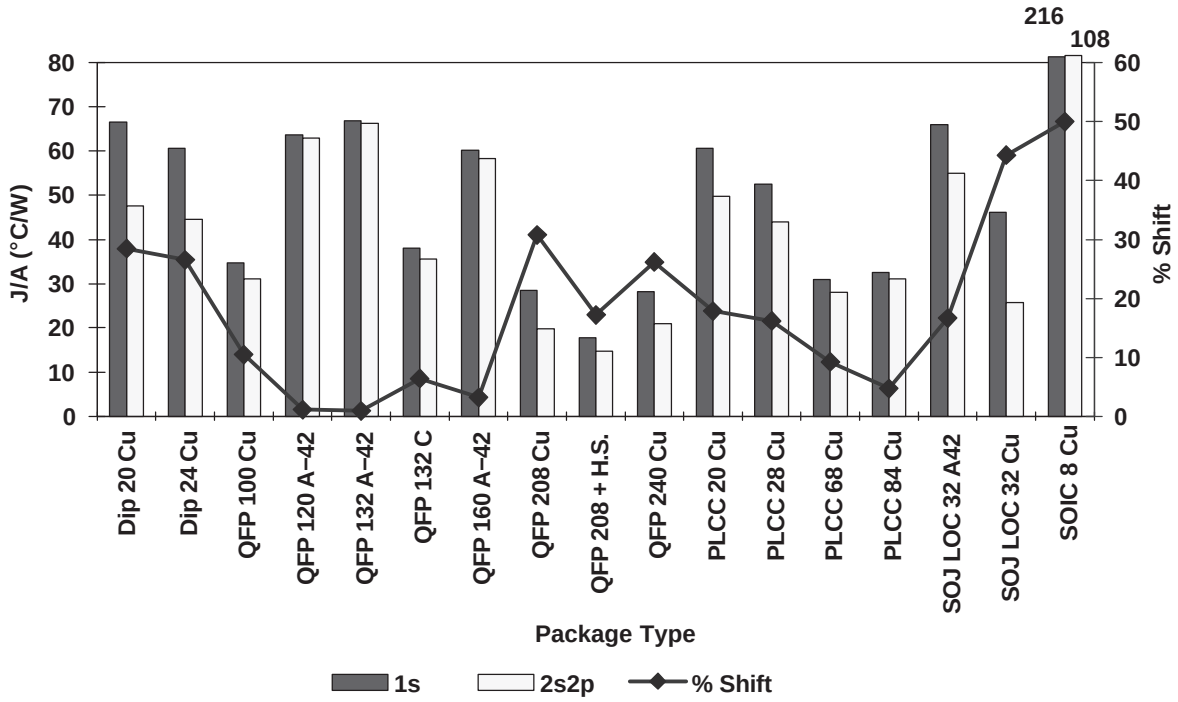

Figure 1. 1s vs. 2s2p PCB for Various Packages

As shown, as much as a 50% θ_{ja} variation can be expected as a function of 1s vs. 2s2p test card construction alone.

1.3 Die Size Impact

The chip or die pad inside a package can perform the same function as a heat spreader if the chip or pad is large enough. The function of the heat spreader is two-fold. First, it spreads energy from the hot spot of the chip over a wider area on the package's surface, thereby increasing convective energy loss. Second, it increases heat transfer from the pad to the lead fingers or to the package balls, which then conduct the heat to the PCB. Figure 2 shows the impact of die size on θ_{ja} for a tape-based area array chip scale package (CSP). As shown, the θ_{ja} for this package changes almost 8x with die size. *It is important to re-measure or recalculate θ_{ja} for a package if a die shrink is planned.*

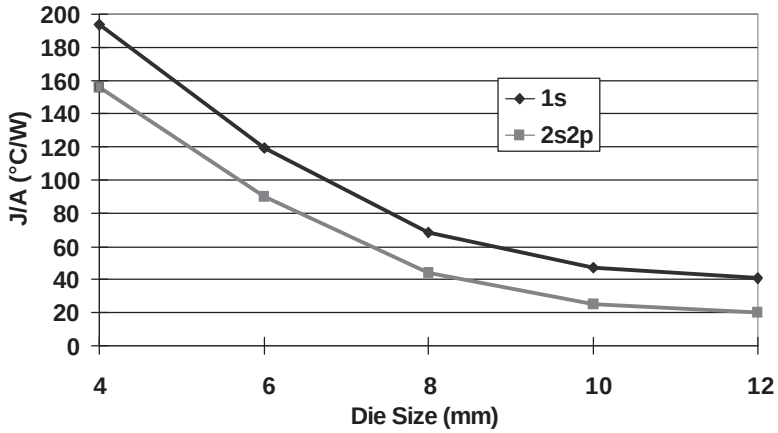

Figure 2. Die Size Impact on a CSP

1.4 Internal Package Geometrical Configuration

This topic refers to the layout within a package, be it a traditional lead frame package, small pad (S-Pad) package, lead-on-chip (LOC), or ball grid array (BGA) package. More mundane geometrical configurations can also have a major impact on the package thermal performance. These can include the distance between the tips of the lead in the package and the die pad as shown in Figure 3, or even the downset between the pad and lead fingers. The latter is an especially important thermal criterion in thin packages. In BGAs, design of the interposer trace configuration is important in spreading heat from the die to the package balls where it is conducted into the PCB.

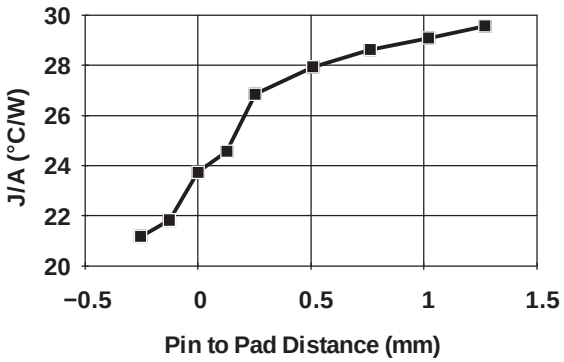

Figure 3. J/A vs. Pin to Pad Distance

1.5 Altitude

Since the air pressure of the ambient environment changes with altitude, the cooling efficiency of the air also changes. IBM [1] showed that a device is expected to run 20% hotter at 8000 ft compared to the same device operating at sea level. Other investigators have shown large shifts in fan performance and internal chassis air flow when used at different altitudes. These effects should be considered, especially when the system design is marginal from a thermal standpoint. Many major system companies have pressure chambers that are used to test their systems at various effective altitudes. Usually, these companies instrument their designs to measure internal component temperatures when operating at different partial pressures. Table 2 lists multiplication factors taken from the IBM work to derate sea level θ_{ja}'s:

Table 2. Multiplication Factors

Altitude (ft)	Factor
0	1.0
3000	1.1
5000	1.14
7000	1.17
8350	1.2

1.6 Ambient Temperature

Since the density, viscosity, and heat capacity of air change with temperature, it should not be surprising to find that θ_{ja} changes with ambient temperature. Experiments in the TI thermal lab show about a 10-20% improvement in θ_{ja} when measured between an ambient of 0-100°C – that is, θ_{ja} at the 100°C ambient is about 20% improved over the θ_{ja} of the 0°C ambient.

1.7 Power Dissipation

The surface temperature of the device drives both convection and radiation energy loss from the package. The hotter the package surface gets, the more efficient convection and radiation heat loss to the ambient environment. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that θ_{ja} improves by about 3% when a package's power is doubled. For very low power dissipations, θ_{ja} is sometimes found to be 2-3x higher than at rated package power levels.

1.8 Theta-ja Effective

Theta-ja (θ_{ja}) is a system-level parameter that depends strongly on system parameters as described in the sections above; therefore, it is sometimes useful to define a Theta-ja Effective, $\theta_{jaeffective}$, which is simply the θ_{ja} of the device operating in the system of interest. If $\theta_{jaeffective}$ can be estimated from thermal modeling or measurements in the system, it is possible to use Equation 1 to calculate the junction temperature assuming the power of the surrounding components on the system does not change. Equation 1 then becomes:

$$T_{junction} = T_{ambient} + \left(\theta_{jaeffective} \times Power\right) \quad (2)$$

The system conditions leading to a $\theta_{jaeffective}$ should always be defined when reporting a $\theta_{jaeffective}$.

2 Theta-jc (θ_{jc}) Junction-to-Case

The junction-to-case thermal resistance metric was originally devised to allow estimation of the thermal performance of a package when a heat sink was attached. JEDEC JESD51.1 states that Theta-jc is, “the thermal resistance from the operating portion of a semiconductor device to outside surface of the package (case) closest to the chip mounting area when that same surface is properly heat sunk so as to minimize temperature variation across that surface.” Though no current JEDEC specification is available defining θ_{jc}, a fairly universal industry practice exists for measuring θ_{jc}. This method is described in the following section. The SEMI Standard G43-87 describes a fluid immersion method for measuring θ_{jc}. Though TI has used this method in the past, it only has historical value and is not detailed here.

2.1 Cu Cold Plate θ_{jc} Measurement

This method forces almost all the power of the test device through a defined surface of the package. Depending on how a heat sink will be applied to the device, this may be the top of bottom of the package. Most generally, it is the top surface of the package. θ_{jc} is good to determine the thermal resistance between the die and the surface onto which a heat sink is to be mounted.

Summarized, the procedure is:

Step 1. An IC package normally containing a thermal test chip is mounted on a test PCB, which is normally the 1s JEDEC defined test board.

Step 2. The package is pressure fit in a *dead bug* configuration to a Cu cold plate (a Cu block with circulating constant temperature fluid)when the top of the case is to be measured. Otherwise, a Cu cold plate contact to the bottom of the package is provided through the PCB when the primary cooling path of the package is through a soldered plate into the PCB.

Step 3. Silicone thermal grease or other thermal interface material provides thermal coupling between the cold plate and package.

Step 4. Insulation is provided around the test coupon to minimize parasitic heat loss.

Step 5. Power is applied to the device.

Step 6. The junction temperature of the test chip is measured.

Step 7. The temperature of the package surface in contact with the cold plate is measured by a thermocouple or other temperature sensor pressed against this surface.

Step 8. θ_{jc} is calculated by dividing the measured temperature delta by the dissipated power.

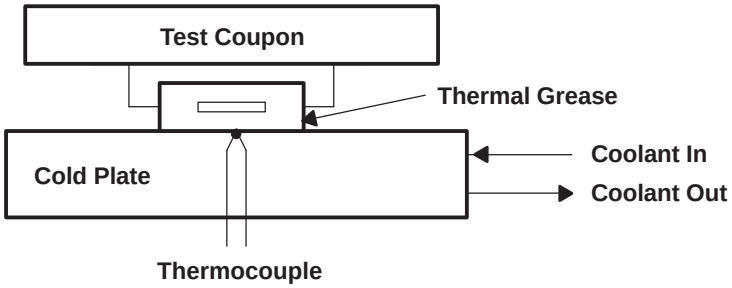

Figure 4. Cu Cold Plate Measurement Process

2.2 Theta-jc (θ_{jc}) Application

The old and obsolete understanding of θ_{jc} is shown in Equation 3.

$$\theta_{ja} = \theta_{jc} + \theta_{ca} \tag{3}$$

Here, the package thermal performance θ_{ja} is reported to be the sum of two resistances, θ_{jc} and θ_{ca}. θ_{ca} stands for the case-to-ambient thermal resistance, which was defined by this equation. This might have been a valid equation for packages with metal cans, which were relatively at a constant temperature and were not thermally coupled to the PCB. But, these conditions do not apply with today's plastic or ceramic packages that are tightly coupled to the PCB. Large thermal gradients are common across today's packages, so the meaning of Equation 3 is questionable.

A traditional, but invalid, usage of θ_{jc} is to calculate the junction temperatures of chips operating in a system. Case temperatures of devices operating in the system are measured using thermocouples, IR cameras, or fluor-optic probes. The following equation is then mistakenly used to calculate the junction temperature: Equation 4:

$$T_{junction} = T_{case} + (\theta_{jc} \times Power) \tag{4}$$

The fallacy here is that only a very small percentage of heat energy in a typical plastic package is convected and radiated off the top surface of the package. Many models have shown 60-95% of thermal energy from a chip is actually convected and radiated off the PCB to which the package is attached. If one assumes the entire power is dissipated by the top surface, the junction temperature calculated by Equation 4 is higher than reality. In designs with thermal margin, this is a nuisance, but in designs without thermal margin, erroneous limitations might be imposed. This limitation of θ_{jc} is overcome by the new thermal metric, Ψ_{jt}, which is described below.

Equation 5 shows the proper application of θ_{jc} for those instances when a high efficiency heat sink is applied to the top surface of a device for which θ_{jc} is small compared to θ_{ja}:

$$T_{junction} \cong T_{ambient} + \left(\left(\theta_{jc} + \theta_{cs} + \theta_{sa} \right) \times Power \right) \tag{5}$$

Here, θ_{sa} is the heat sink-to-ambient performance of the heat sink and θ_{cs} is the case-to-sink thermal resistance of the thermal interface material (see Equation 7). The ambient temperature is at the location used for characterizing θ_{sa}, usually some distance away from the heat sink. This equation is the most accurate for packages where θ_{jc} is small compared to θ_{ja}, meaning that most of the heat can be dissipated through the top surface of the package when a sufficiently efficient heat sink is applied.

Equation 6 shows an approximation that is more accurate than Equation 5 for any combination of θ_{ja}, θ_{jc}, or θ_{sa} if θ_{ja} is known for the system configuration:

$$T_{junction} \cong T_{ambient} + \left(\frac{\theta_{ja} \times \left(\theta_{jc} + \theta_{cs} + \theta_{sa} \right)}{\theta_{ja} + \theta_{jc} + \theta_{cs} + \theta_{sa}} \right) \times Power \tag{6}$$

2.3 Theta-cs (θ_{cs})

The best method for calculating θ_{cs} is to actually measure the θ_{cs} value, but if this is not possible, Equation 7 can be used to estimate θ_{cs}. Note that this is merely an estimate since the thermal interfacial resistance that can be developed between any two surfaces is neglected.

$$\theta_{cs} = \frac{T}{k * A} \tag{7}$$

Where:

T = The thickness of interface layer between package and heat sink
k = The bulk thermal conductivity of the thermal interface material
A = The area over which the thermal interface material is applied

2.4 Theta-jc Top and Theta-jc Bottom

Some packages have mechanisms such as heat slugs or exposed pads to remove heat from the top, bottom, or both surfaces of the package. When only a single surface is used for heat removal, this is the surface that would be used for Theta-jc based on the JEDEC JC51.1 spec. Sometimes, designers wish to also include heat sinks on the top of the package, even if the exposed pads are soldered to the PCB. In such instances, it is appropriate to define Theta-jc top (θ_{jctop}) and Theta-jc bottom ($\theta_{jcbottom}$) to avoid confusion over which surface is being referenced. The top surface is the surface of the package facing away from the PCB while the bottom surface is the surface of the package facing towards the PCB. When $\theta_{jcbottom}$ is to be measured, a special PCB is constructed with a cut-out to allow contact between the bottom package surface and Cu cold plate. When in contact with the Cu cold plate, the temperature taken at the bottom surface of the package becomes the case temperature that is used in calculating the temperature delta between the case and chip junction temperature.

It should be noted that Texas Instruments has at times used the nomenclature of Theta-jp, or junction-to-pad, to refer to the thermal resistance between the junction and exposed pad of the package. This nomenclature has been used regardless of whether the pad was exposed on the top or bottom of the package.

3 Psi-jt (Ψ_{jt}) Junction-to-Top of Package

In an attempt to provide the user community with a thermal metric to estimate in-use junction temperatures from measured case temperatures, a new thermal metric, Ψ_{jt}, has been adopted by the industry (EIA/JESD 51-2). The metric is defined by the Greek character Psi (Ψ) rather than Theta (θ) since Ψ_{jt} is not a true thermal resistance.

The measurement procedure for Ψ_{jt} is summarized from EIA/JESD 51-2 below:

Step 1. Mount a test package, usually containing a thermal test die, on a test board.

Step 2. Glue a fine gauge thermocouple wire (36 gauge or smaller) to top center of package.

Step 3. Dress the thermocouple wire along package to minimize heat sinking nature of thermocouple.

Step 4. Dissipate power in test die.

Step 5. Measure the test die junction temperature and thermocouple temperature.

Step 6. Divide the thermal gradient between the junction temperature and surface temperature by the dissipated power.

Why is Ψ_{jt} not a true thermal resistance? In the above procedure, the heat energy generated by the test die is allowed to flow normally along preferential thermal conduction paths. The quantity of heat flowing from the die to the top of the package is actually unknown in the measurement, but is assumed to be the total power of the device for the purposes of Ψ_{jt} calculation. Clearly, this assumption is invalid, but when calculated this way, Ψ_{jt} becomes a very useful number because the experimental configuration is much like the application environment of the IC package. As such, the amount of energy flowing from the die to the top of the package during test is similar to the partitioning of the energy flow in an application environment. In comparison to Equation 4, the actual junction temperature can be very closely estimated using Equation 8:

$$T_{junction} = T_{case} + \left(\Psi_{jt} \times Power\right) \tag{8}$$

For plastic packages, Ψ_{jt} is typically 0.5-2.0°C/W compared to θ_{jc} values of 4-15°C/W. Thinner packages have smaller Ψ_{jt} values than thicker packages. Packages with embedded heat slugs have Ψ_{jt} values close to zero. You should be aware that Ψ_{jt} varies with both board construction and air flow conditions as shown in Table 3. These values were obtained through modeling.

Table 3. Ψ_{jt} for Typical 128 TQFP Package

Air Flow	1s PCB	2s2p PCB
0 LFM	0.7 °C/W	0.5 °C/W
250 LFM	1.8 °C/W	1.4 °C/W

3.1 Case Temperature Measurement

The case temperature is defined as the hottest temperature on the top of the device. In most instances, this is at the center of the top surface or lid of the device. The case temperature measurement can be performed with (in order of accuracy) an IR camera, a fluor-optic probe, a thermocouple, or IR gun with a maximum field view of 4-mm diameter just to name a few techniques. When a thermocouple is chosen as the technique to perform the measurement, a fine gauge wire (36 to 40 gauge, J or K wire) should be used to minimize the local cooling from the thermocouple. You should be aware that if the case temperature is measured by a gauge thermocouple larger than 36, the thermocouple sinks heat away from the surface, cooling the spot that is being measured, invalidating the calculation of Equation 8. The impact of using a heavy gauge thermocouple to measure the package top surface can be very substantial, reducing the delta between the ambient and actual surface temperature by 50% or more. There can be error even when a 36 gauge or smaller thermocouple is employed.

If using a thermocouple, it should be attached to the center of the package surface (± 1 mm) with a bead of thermally conductive epoxy no larger than 2 x 2mm on a side. Taping the thermocouple to the package surface is not recommended. To minimize the heat sinking nature of the thermocouple, the wire should be dressed along the diagonal of the package, down to the PCB surface, and over a minimum distance of 25 mm before lifting from the PCB. The thermocouple wire can be tacked to the PCB for this routing purpose by using a tape. Use of improper thermocouple wire gauge can create errors in the measurements of 5-50% .

When using either an IR camera or IR gun, be sure to correct the reading for the emissivity of the surface being it is investigated. See your instrument's documentation for details.

Measuring case temperatures with heat sinks applied represents special challenges since the heat sink covers the surface to be measured. If you wish to measure the case temperature with a heat sink applied, the following procedure is recommended.

Step 1. Drill a hole with a diameter of 1 mm or less in the heat sink so the hole is at the center of the package when the heat sink is attached. Be sure to drill the hole through the heat sink before attaching the heat sink to the package. If a pressure sensitive adhesive is used to attach the heat sink, drill through this adhesive. Be sure there are no burrs or other material that would interfere with the mating surfaces.

Step 2. Attach the heat sink to the package. If an epoxy is used for the heat sink attach, fill the hole drilled in step 1 with a wax, foam, or other material that ensures the hole is not filled by the epoxy. Be careful not to contaminate the heat sink attach surface with this material.

Step 3. Fill the hole with thermal grease. If the hole was plugged to avoid epoxy filling, be sure to unplug the hole.

Step 4. Thread a fine gauge thermocouple of the type described above into the hole and secure with a drop of epoxy or tape.

3.2 Psi-jt vs. Theta-jc When Using Heat Sinks

Ψ_{jt} should not be used when application of a heat sink is intended. Instead, Equation 5 and Equation 6 should be used.

4 Theta-jb (θ_{jb}) Junction-To-Board

The junction-to-board thermal resistance, or junction-to-pin thermal resistance, attempts to represent the thermal resistance between the package and the board with one number. In reality, the resistance between the junction and board is distributed, with different resistance paths such as the junction-to-pin-to-board and the junction-through-plastic-through-air-to-board. Nevertheless, a single thermal metric like θ_{jb} is useful for a first-pass estimation of junction temperature based on the following simple 3-resistor thermal approximation. In this model, the resistance from the junction-to-board is simply the measured or modeled θ_{jb} value. The resistance between the junction and case surface is simply the measured or modeled θ_{jc} value. The ambient resistance, R_a, is calculated from the convective heat loss and radiation loss from the top of the package.

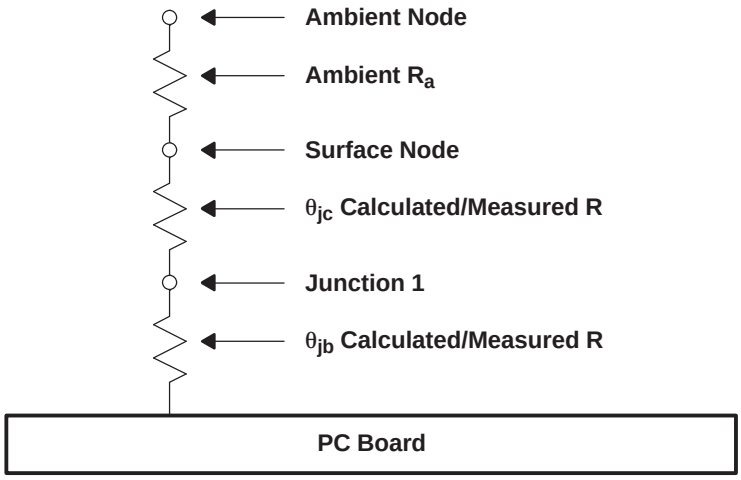

Figure 5. Resistance From Junction-to-Board

For a complete system simulation, the board should further contain thermal conduction resistances associated with the board material, traces, thermal vias, etc., to allow calculation of junction temperatures for each package in the system as shown in Figure 6. The thermal resistance of the PCB to ambient should be represented by many distributed resistances that are collected together into the PCB-to-ambient resistance for this diagram.

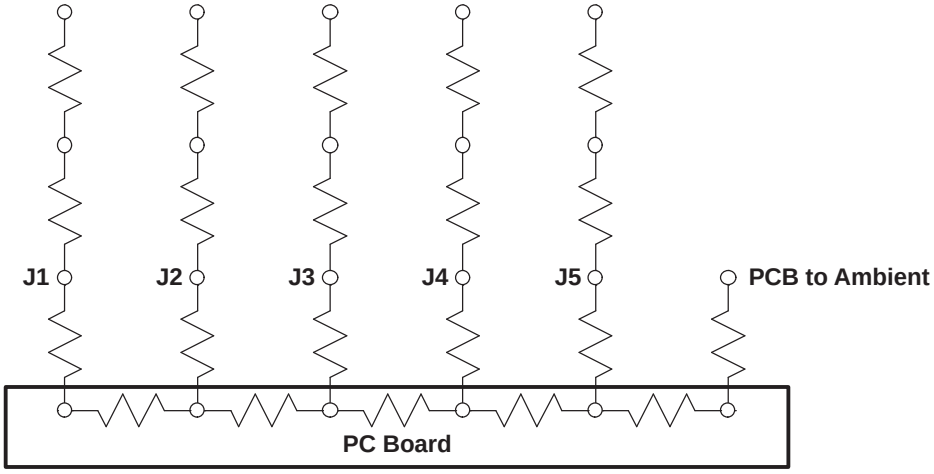

Figure 6. Thermal Conduction Resistances

The problem in using θ_{jb} to calculate a system junction temperature in a more detailed model than that shown above is in determining how to redistribute the single thermal resistance node which terminates θ_{jb} over the package foot print on the system PCB. In the case of an area array package, the chip, package, and board are so tightly coupled thermally that representing the package thermal connection as a point is erroneous. A common solution is to *short* the PCB surface under the package together with a plate of very high thermal conductivity material. This introduces errors. Another solution is to include a solid block of material the size of the package footprint between the power source and the PCB. The conductivity of this block is calculated to give the proper θ_{jb} thermal resistance between the power source and the system board.

Further work to represent a package using a small number of *virtual* thermal resistances called compact models has been done in Europe under the auspices of the EC's ESPIRIT group [2]. The compact models use a more elaborate thermal resistance network to more accurately represent the package thermal performance. Compact models are now commonly implemented in most system level thermal modeling tools and are available from TI upon request.

4.1 θ_{jb} Measurement Method

The primary method to measure θ_{jb} is as follows:

Step 1. A test package containing a thermal test die is mounted on a test board.

Step 2. A fine wire thermocouple (36-40 gauge) is glued or soldered to the device pin closest to the chip. In the case of BGA packages, the thermocouple is soldered or glued to the trace exiting from under the package edge that is closest to the chip.

Step 3. The board is clamped in a special double cold plate fixture with insulation between the package and the cold plate surfaces, but with thermal contact between the cold plate and the board. The cold plate heat sinks the PCB.

Step 4. Power is dissipated in the die.

Step 5. The temperatures of the die and pin are monitored.

Step 6. When steady state is achieved, the delta between the junction and pin temperatures is divided by the total power dissipated.

This procedure is defined more precisely in EIA/ JESD 51-8.

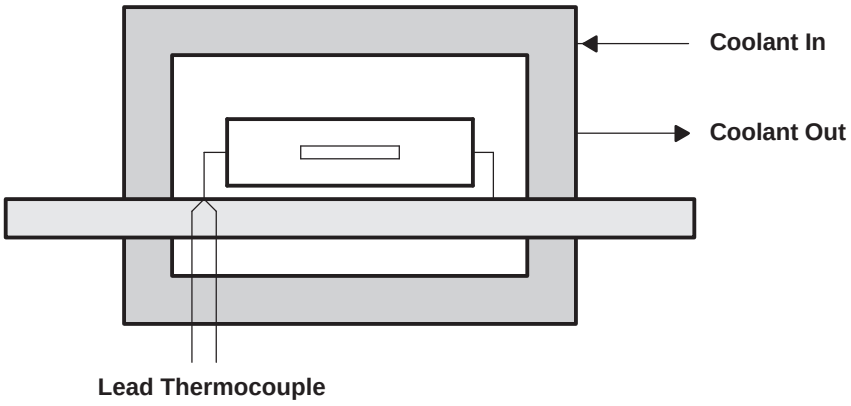

Figure 7. θ_{jb} Measurement Method

5 Psi-jb (Ψ_{jb}): Junction-to-Board

Ψ_{jb} is very similar to Ψ_{jt} in concept. It refers to the measurement of the difference between the junction temperature and the center package pin temperature, divided by the power dissipation of the device. As such, it is not a true thermal resistance, since the actual partitioning of power through this thermal resistance is unknown.

5.1 Ψ_{jb} Application

Ψ_{jb} can allow the system designer to measure the board temperature with a fine gauge thermocouple and back calculate the junction temperature using Equation 9. It should be noted that Ψ_{jb} is close to θ_{jb} as 75-95% of a device's heat is dissipated by the PCB.

$$T_{junction} = T_{PCB} + \left(\Psi_{jb} \times Power\right) \tag{9}$$

Measurement of Ψ_{jb} is defined by EIA/JESD 51-6. Care should be taken with the selection of the thermal couple type, gauge and dressing of the thermocouple across the PCB in a similar fashion to the thermocouple intended to measure case temperature for Ψ_{jt} measurements. As with Ψ_{jt} measurements, an IR camera or fiber optic probe can be used to measure the PCB temperature. However, an IR thermal gun is not appropriate due to the small spot size to be imaged.

6 Industrial and Commercial Temperature Ranges

Texas Instrument devices marked *Industrial Temperature Range* function at ambient temperatures between -40°C and 85°C when proper care is taken to ensure that the absolute maximum operating temperatures are not exceeded. Note that system level thermal design is required to specify that the maximum operating device temperatures are not exceeded even when the input ambient air temperature is between -40°C and 85°C. The minimum operating temperature is -40°C when the industrial temperature range is specified. There is no industry standard defining the meaning of Industrial temperature capable, so variations will likely exist from company to company.

Texas Instrument devices marked *Commercial Temperature Range* function at ambient temperatures between 0°C and 70°C when proper care is taken to ensure the absolute maximum operating temperatures are not exceeded. The minimum operating temperature is 0°C when the commercial temperature range is specified.

7 Miscellaneous Definitions

Junction Temperature— The hottest temperature of the silicon chip inside the package.

Recommended Operating Temperature— The junction temperature at which the device operates continuously at the designated performance over the designed lifetime. The reliability of the device may be degraded if the device operates above this temperature. Some devices will not function electrically above this temperature. Another wording sometimes used is Recommended Continuous Operating Junction Temperature.

Absolute Maximum Operating Temperature— The maximum junction temperature at which the device functions electrically. The lifetime of the device is reduced if the device operates continually at this temperature. Another wording sometimes used is Maximum Operating Temperature.

Absolute Maximum Junction Temperature— The temperature beyond which damage occurs to the device. The device may not function or meet expected performance at this temperature.

Maximum Case Temperature— Sometimes, rather than specifying Maximum Operating Temperature, a maximum case temperature is given. Running the device at the maximum case temperature (without a heat sink) results in the die running at the Recommended Operating Junction Temperature. Sometimes, this is written as T_{case}. T_{case} is normally measured at the center of the package top side surface.

Ambient Air Temperature— Multiple sources list different locations for determining the ambient air temperature. NEBS specifies the air temperature coming into the system box as ambient. AEC specifies the air temperature under the device as the ambient. JEDEC specifies the air stream temperature in advance of the PCB. Sometimes the ambient air temperature is taken above the device as an understanding of ambient. Each of these measurement locations yields a different temperature for the ambient air temperature. It is important to understand, in any case, that the critical factor affecting device reliability and functionality is the junction temperature, not the ambient temperature. Since the junction temperature and ambient temperature are interrelated, clarification of the ambient temperature assumption is crucial before any system level analysis is undertaken.

8 References

1. Mansuria, 1994 IEPS, pp. 122-130.
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