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(71) Applicant: **POWER INTEGRATIONS, INC.** [US/US];
5245 Hellyer Avenue, San Jose, CA 95138 (US).

(72) Inventor: **MAYELL, Robert**; 421 Valencia Drive, Los Altos, CA 94022 (US).

(74) Agent: **BEREZNAK, Bradley, J.**; The Law Offices of
Bradley J. Berezna, 465 S. Murphy Avenue, Sunnyvale,
CA 94086 (US).

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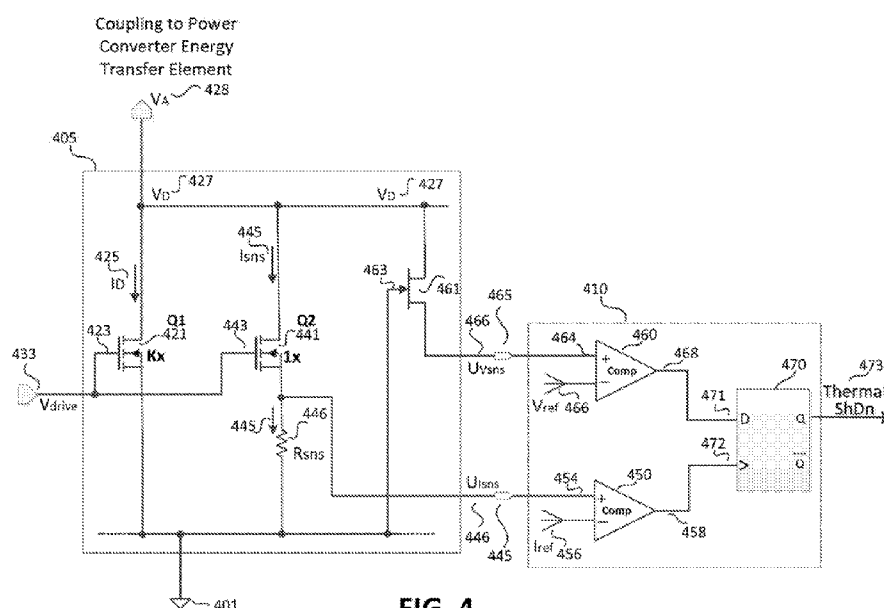


FIG. 4

(57) Abstract: An integrated circuit (IC) for sensing a temperature rise in a power transistor device, the temperature rise caused by a current flow in the power transistor device. The power transistor device and a sense-FET are disposed on a substrate. The sense-FET senses a fractional portion of the current flow and outputs a current signal. A JFET has its drain connected to the drain of the power transistor device. The gate of the JFET is connected to the source of the power transistor device, such that when the power transistor device is on, the JFET is also turned on, and a drain voltage signal of the power transistor device is output at a second node of the JFET. A detection circuit receives the drain voltage signal and the current signal and outputs an alarm signal when the drain-source resistance of the power transistor device exceeds a combined threshold limit.



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INTEGRATED CIRCUIT FOR FAST TEMPERATURE SENSING OF A SEMICONDUCTOR SWITCHING DEVICE

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This application relates generally to circuits for detecting temperature in semiconductor devices; more specifically, to circuitry for sensing temperature changes in a power MOSFET integrated circuit.

BACKGROUND

[0002] For the protection of power semiconductor switching devices, it is important to quickly detect temperature increases directly inside the switch (junction temperature) and not rely upon controller temperature measurements. For instance, if the power switch (MOSFET) and controller are on different semiconductor dies, there may be long delay of heat transfer and thermal equilibrium between the power switch and the controller. This could cause a catastrophic failure of the power MOSFET before any reaction from the controller protection circuitry.

[0003] Past approaches for sensing temperature include sensing the temperature on a heat sink attached to the power switching device. Another known method for temperature sensing is through an electrically- isolated polysilicon diode located in close proximity of to the power MOSFET junction. The forward voltage drop of the sense diode has a negative temperature coefficient such that the forward voltage drop is inversely proportional to the MOSFET junction temperature. Another past approach relies upon a voltage-variable resistor that exhibits a linear variation of resistance with temperature.

[0004] In one type of power MOSFET technology, the semiconductor substrate is typically referenced to the drain potential. This is the major thermal connection of the device. Controllers used with the MOSFET are normally low-side connected controllers, and, as such, their reference voltage is share with the source potential of the MOSFET. Since the source potential of the MOSFET is not

the major thermal connection to the device, it is difficult to get a good thermal coupling to the device by sharing a source connection. In one prior approach, in an example of a half-bridge switching configuration, the thermal connection is obtained via the high-side driver, which itself is referenced to the source of the high-side MOSFET, which is also the drain of the low-side MOSFET. Thus, the high-side driver can achieve a reasonably good thermal connection to the drain of the low-side MOSFET and, as such, monitor the low-side MOSFET temperature.

[0005] The aforementioned configuration has two major drawbacks. First, thermal detection is taken on the floating high-side driver, and thus, the only option for the high-side driver is a latching shutdown when the thermal threshold is exceeded. Secondly, while the thermal coupling from the low-side MOSFET to the high-side driver is acceptable for steady-state and slowly changing temperatures, when there is a sudden, rapid and large temperature change on the power MOSFET, thermal coupling is insufficient to quickly follow the change in temperature. As such, under transient conditions it is easy to exceed intended maximum temperatures on the power MOSFET prior to the high-side driver detecting the problem.

[0006] Another drawback is that under certain circumstances the customer would like to have a hysteretic thermal shutdown capability. However, this is not possible when there is no communicating signal from the low-side controller to the thermal detection circuit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Non-limiting and non-exhaustive embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to the following figures, wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the various views unless otherwise specified.

[0008] **FIG. 1A and 1B** are graphs of an example vertical MOSFET illustrating the variation of drain-to-source on-resistance, $R_{DS(on)}$, with respect to drain current (I_D) and junction temperature (T_J).

[0009] **FIG. 2A and 2B** are example power converter circuit diagrams that may advantageously utilize temperature detection and over temperature protection.

[0010] **FIG. 3** is an example circuit schematic diagram for sensing instantaneous values of a power MOSFET drain current and drain voltage.

[0011] **FIG. 4** is an example circuit schematic diagram that utilizes the circuitry of FIG. 3 to detect temperature.

[0012] Corresponding reference characters indicate corresponding components throughout the several views of the drawings. Skilled artisans will appreciate that elements in the figures are illustrated for simplicity and clarity and have not necessarily been drawn to scale. For example, the dimensions of some of the elements in the figures may be exaggerated relative to other elements to help to improve understanding of various embodiments of the disclosed devices. Also, common but well-understood elements that are useful or necessary in a commercially feasible embodiment are often not depicted in order to facilitate a less obstructed view of these various embodiments disclosed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] In the following description specific details are set forth, such as device types, voltages, component values, circuit configurations, etc., in order to provide a thorough understanding of the embodiments described. However, persons having ordinary skill in the relevant arts will appreciate that these specific details may not be needed to practice the embodiments described. It is further appreciated that well known circuit structures and elements have not been described in detail, or have been shown in block diagram form, in order to avoid obscuring the embodiments described.

[0014] Reference throughout this specification to “one embodiment”, “an embodiment”, “one example” or “an example” means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment or example is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, appearances of the phrases “in one embodiment”, “in an embodiment”, “one example” or “an example” in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment or example. Furthermore, the particular features, structures or characteristics may be combined in any suitable combinations and/or sub-combinations in one or more embodiments or examples. Particular features, structures or characteristics may be included in an integrated circuit, an electronic circuit, a combinational logic circuit, or other suitable components that provide the described functionality. In addition, it is appreciated that the figures provided herewith are for explanation purposes to persons ordinarily skilled in the art.

[0015] For purposes of this disclosure, “ground” or “ground potential” refers to a reference voltage or potential against which all other voltages or potentials of an electronic circuit or Integrated circuit (IC) are defined or measured.

[0016] In the context of the present application, when a transistor is in an “off state” or “off” the transistor does not substantially conduct current.

Conversely, when a transistor is in an "on state" or "on" the transistor is able to substantially conduct current. By way of example, a power transistor may comprise an N-channel metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistor (NMOS) with a high voltage being supported between the first terminal, a drain, and the second terminal, a source. The power MOSFET may comprise a power switch that is driven by an integrated controller circuit to regulate energy provided to a load.

[0017] In one embodiment, an apparatus and method for detecting the temperature of semiconductor switching devices such as controlled switches or diodes (e.g., Schottky diodes) is provided. Although specific examples shown and described below include a MOSFET switching device, it is appreciated that other switching devices may be utilized in accordance with the teachings of this disclosure.

[0018] In one example a power MOSFET switching device has a substrate referenced to the drain potential, with the drain being the major thermal connection of the device. A controller to control switching of the device may be a low-side connected controller and as such its reference voltage is shared with the source potential of the vertical power MOSFET switching device. The controller may be integrated together in the same integrated circuit die as the power MOSFET switching device, or it may be separated into a different integrated circuit die. The power MOSFET switching device and controller may be included in the same package, or housed in separate packages.

[0019] In one embodiment, an apparatus and method of detecting temperature in a power semiconductor switching device via a low-side connected circuit is provided. Temperature detection occurs directly using electrical signals measured on the power semiconductor switching device (e.g., MOSFET) rather than indirect die-to-die thermal coupling. As a result, this allows for instantaneous thermal detection and thus protects against transient conditions where there is

fast transient temperature rise. Additionally, the low-side reference provides the capability of hysteretic thermal shutdown features.

[0020] FIG. 1A is a general graphs for a semiconductor switching device (in one example MOSFET) illustrating the variation of drain-to-source on-resistance, $R_{DS(on)}$, with respect to drain current in a fixed junction temperature (T_j) and for different gate to source voltage values as a parameter. FIG. 1B shows the graph of drain-to-source normalized on-resistance, $R_{DS(on)}$ versus junction temperature (T_j). In a typical MOSFET the measured $R_{DS(on)}$ may include the channel, the accumulation layer of the formed JFET and parasitic effects from metallization, bond wires and packaging. In a high-voltage power MOSFET the resistance of channel/drift region dominates the $R_{DS(on)}$.

[0021] In graphs 100 of FIG. 1A the $R_{DS(on)}$ variation (e.g. $R_{DS(on)1}$, $R_{DS(on)2}$, $R_{DS(on)3}$,... in Ohm) is demonstrated on vertical axis 120 versus the drain current (e.g. I_{D1} , I_{D2} , I_{D3} ,... in Ampere) on horizontal axis 110. In a numerical example for different MOSFET types this graph may show around 10% direct effect of drain current I_D on $R_{DS(on)}$ for a drain current range up to 100A. The graphs 100 in FIG. 1A are illustrated for different examples of gate-source voltages V_{GS1} 131, V_{GS2} 132 and V_{GS3} 133, wherein expression 130 defines $V_{GS3} > V_{GS2} > V_{GS1}$ and graphs are for a fixed junction temperature $T_{j(Fix)}$ 135. The vertical line $I_{D(Fix)}$ 134, presents a fixed drain threshold current that may be used to measure the drain-source on-resistance, $R_{DS(on)}$ for the changes with temperature.

[0022] On the other hand, in graphs 150 of FIG. 1B the normalized values of $R_{DS(on)}$ on vertical axis 170 show a strong relation versus junction temperature T_j (e.g., in degrees centigrade, °C) on horizontal axis 160 varying from -50°C to 150°C. Two example graphs are introduced for Gate-Source voltages V_{GS1} 181 and V_{GS2} 182 wherein expression 180 defines $V_{GS2} > V_{GS1}$. The normalized value ($R_{DS(on)}=1$) 175 defines the switching device drain-source on-resistance at the reference temperature ($T_j=25^\circ\text{C}$) 165. As can be observed in FIG. 1B the $R_{DS(on)}$

almost doubles for temperature rise from $T_j = 25^\circ\text{C}$ to $T_j = 125^\circ\text{C}$ from point A 184 to point B 186 measured on graph of V_{GS2} 182. The temperature coefficient of $R_{DS(on)}$ is the slope of the curve in graphs of FIG. 1B which is always positive because of the majority-only carriers. The positive $R_{DS(on)}$ temperature coefficient may compound the conduction loss as temperature rises. The positive $R_{DS(on)}$ temperature coefficient is an advantageous feature when paralleling the MOSFETs. As the sense FET is in parallel with the main FET, even with unbalanced current distribution, the thermal stability may be ensured.

[0023] The drain- source on-resistance $R_{DS(on)}$ in a vertical MOSFET as explained above is a function of semiconductor material, channel size, operating condition (drain current and voltage) and strongly depends on junction temperature. When other factors such as gate-voltage (V_{GS}) and drain current (I_{DS}) are held constant, the direct relation of on-resistance $R_{DS(on)}$ with the junction temperature (T_j) in FIG. 1B can be utilized to directly detect the temperature rise during any normal operation or fault condition in comparison to a calibrated $R_{DS(on)}$ in a known temperature (e.g., at 25°C ambient).

[0024] FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B are examples of power converter topologies which include a switching device that may benefit from temperature detection and over temperature protection through $R_{DS(on)}$ monitoring according to the embodiments disclosed. FIG. 2A shows an AC/DC boost Power Factor Correction (PFC) converter 200 with a switching device M 221 with control 231 that is referenced to low-side ground reference 201. Control block 231 receives some control signals 233 including a feedback (FB) control signal and generates drive signal 223 to control switching of the switching device and regulate transfer of energy to the output load 251 through the output voltage V_O 252 and output current I_O 253 of the power converter. In one example, the power converter input terminals may be coupled to a sinusoidal input signal V_{AC} 205, which may be rectified and filtered through a rectifier and input circuitry 210 to apply an input

voltage signal V_{in} 215 to the boost components. The main boost components include boost inductor L_B 218, boost switching device 221 plus the control block 231, which, in one embodiment, are both integrated in a single IC 230, wherein the temperature detection circuitry disclosed herein may be incorporated into control block 231.

[0025] Persons of skill in the art will note that the chopped voltage across switching device 221 is rectified through the rectifier module 240, thereby generating the regulated output voltage V_o 252 and output current I_o 253 to the load 250.

[0026] FIG. 2B is another example topology of a half-bridge switching device 270 that may benefit from temperature detection circuitry of the present disclosure added to either the low-side control block 261 or high-side control block 262. The power converter shown in FIG. 2B receives the rectified and electromagnetic interference (EMI) filtered input voltage signal V_{in} 215 from the input rectifier and input circuitry block 210, which is applied across the half-bridge switching device 260. As shown, switching device 260 includes a low-side switch M1 271 with low-side control block, 261, which, through link 277 is referenced to the low potential side (e.g., source) of switch M1 271, and high-side switch M2 272 with high-side control block, 262, which, through link 276 is referenced to the low potential side (e.g., source) of switch M2 272. The low-side control block 261 and high-side control block 262 each may receive extra control signals 263 and 264, respectively. Control signals 263 and 264 may include the feedback FB control signal 268 from the output of the converter. Control blocks 261 and 262 generate drive signals 273 and 274 for low-side and high-side switches 271 and 272, respectively. Low-side control block 261 and high-side control block 262 may be functionally synchronized through communication link 265.

[0027] In one embodiment, mid-point potential V_A 278 of half-bridge switching device 270 is coupled to an energy conversion block 280 (which may be

of an isolated or non-isolated configuration) that produces/generates output voltage V_o 252 and output current I_o 253 across the load 250.

[0028] It is appreciated that the thermal detection circuitry disclosed herein may be added to low-side control block 231 of FIG. 2A or to the low-side control block 261, or high-side control block 262 of FIG. 2B. It should be further understood that the disclosed embodiments are not limited to the example topologies of FIGS. 2A and 2B; that is, a variety of different switching converters utilizing a low-side controller and power semiconductor switching device applications may benefit from the temperature detection circuitry disclosed here.

[0029] In a half-bridge configuration, for instance, there is a low-side MOSFET switch and a high-side MOSFET switch. It should be understood that the temperature detection method described herein could be used with either of these MOSFET switches, for example, if they are floating at a non-zero potential. As discussed above, it should be understood that in the case of a MOSFET switch, control is referenced to the source (or non-substrate) of the MOSFET. Similarly for high-side switch M2 272 and control block 262, it is understood that for a MOSFET switch control is referenced to the source (or non-substrate) of the MOSFET. Thus, in both cases, they may be referred to as the MOSFET Source referenced control.

[0030] In one embodiment, the $R_{DS(on)}$ of a power MOSFET switching device has a defined positive temperature coefficient. With constant V_{GS} and I_{DS} conditions, by measuring the drain-source on-resistance during operational switching condition at an unknown temperature $R_{DS(on)Tx}$ and comparing it to a stored calibrated value at a known temperature (e.g., 25°C) $R_{DS(on)T25}$ for the same device under the same conditions/parameters, it is possible to accurately and quickly infer the temperature inside the MOSFET relative to the calibrated temperature.

[0031] In one embodiment, the drain-source on-resistance value of a MOSFET device is measured during manufacturing test at a known temperature (e.g., 25°C) $R_{DS(on)T25}$ and is stored during calibration. Thus, if $R_{DS(on)}$ changes with temperature rise during normal or transient operation, the controller can measure the ratio of instantaneous resistance change versus the calibrated value and calculate the temperature rise, which is useful for thermal protection of the MOSFET device.

[0032] In one implementation, the drain voltage and current of the power MOSFET switching device is measured in each switching cycle. In one example, drain voltage is measured using a junction field-effect transistor (JFET) that has its drain connected to the drain of the power MOSFET, with the gate of the JFET connected to the source of the power MOSFET. When power MOSFET is on, the JFET source node voltage value follows that of the MOSFET drain, thereby providing an accurate reading of the drain voltage during on-time.

[0033] In one embodiment, the MOSFET drain current is obtained through a sense-FET which measures a predetermined fraction of current flowing in the main power MOSFET. Detecting the sense current therefore provides a measure of the power MOSFET drain current (I_{DS}) in each switching cycle. Thus, utilizing signals representing drain voltage and drain current of the power MOSFET switching device, it can be determined when the $R_{DS(on)}$ value has exceeded a certain threshold operating value, which, in turn, is directly related to a predefined target temperature limit for the switching power MOSFET.

[0034] FIG. 3 illustrates an example circuit schematic diagram for sensing instantaneous values of a power MOSFET drain current and drain voltage switching device. In circuit 305 drain current is sensed by output signal U_{Isns} 346 through a sense-FET Q2 343. Drain voltage is sensed by output signal U_{Vsns} 366 through a JFET 361. As shown, node V_A 328 is the coupling point to a power converter energy transfer element, which corresponds (i.e., is equivalent) to nodes

V_A 228 in FIG. 2A and V_A 278 in FIG. 2B. Circuit 305 includes a semiconductor switching device (a main power MOSFET) Q1 321 and a fractional-sized sense-FET Q2 341. Note that the respective size difference between main MOSFET Q1 321 and sense-FET 341 is given by the ratio $K:1$. The size ratio may be defined by the number of cells in each FET, which, in turn, has a reverse relation to the drain-source on-resistance, and is in direct relation (proportional) to the current in each FET, as shown by the following equations:

[0035] $K = N_{Q1\text{-cells}} / N_{Q2\text{-cells}} = R_{DS(on)Q2} / R_{DS(on)Q1} = I_1 / I_2;$

[0036] $I_2 = I_{sns} = (1/K)I_1;$

[0037] $V_D = I_1 R_{DS(on)Q1} = I_2 R_{DS(on)Q2} = (I_1 / K) R_{DS(on)Q2}.$

[0038] As shown, the drain of main MOSFET Q1 321 and the drain of sense-FET Q2 341 are coupled to the same bus voltage V_D 327. The gating signal 323 for main MOSFET Q1 321 and the gating signal 343 for sense-FET Q2 341 are provided by the same drive signal V_{drive} 333. This satisfies conditions for maintaining constant V_{GS} for both the sense-FET and the main MOSFET. Consequently, the current density in main MOSFET Q1 321 and sense -FET Q2 341 remains the same. The current ratio of I_D 325 flowing through main MOSFET Q1 321 and I_{sns} 342 flowing through sense -FET Q2 341 is proportional to their size $K:1$. It is appreciated that the drain-source resistance measurement of sense-FET Q2 341 is more accurate (less error) compared to main MOSFET Q1 321 due to its larger drain-source on-resistance.

[0039] A sense resistor 344 is shown coupled from the source of sense-FET Q2 341 to ground 301. The sense current I_{sns} 342 flowing through sense resistor 344 generates signal $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346, which is a representation of the current I_D 325 flowing through main MOSFET Q1 321.

[0040] In the embodiment of FIG. 3 drain voltage V_D 327 is sensed through a JFET 361 coupled to drain bus V_D 327. Gate 363 of JFET 361 is coupled to the source of main MOSFET Q1 321. The gate of JFET 361 is shown connected to

ground potential (zero voltage). Whenever main MOSFET Q1 321 turns on the gate-source voltage of JFET 361 becomes near zero, and is higher than the pinch-off voltage (V_P) of JFET 361. Thus, JFET 361 is also turned on, which couples the drain voltage V_D 327 to a tap terminal (JFET source) 365 for sensing the drain on-voltage drop by signal $U_{V_{sns}}$ 366. When main MOSFET Q1 321 is off the gate 363 of JFET 361 goes below the pinch-off voltage (V_P) of JFET 361. Thus, JFET 361 is in an off state, thereby blocking the drain voltage V_D 327 from the tap terminal 365. Thus, practitioners in the art will appreciate that the on-time instantaneous current, and the on-time instantaneous voltage drop across the drain-source resistance of the power MOSFET are provided via signals $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346 and $U_{V_{sns}}$ 366.

[0041] FIG. 4 is an example circuit schematic diagram of a threshold detection circuit 410 that may utilize the circuitry of FIG. 3 to detect a temperature rise that exceeds a predefined limit. The output signals $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346 and $U_{V_{sns}}$ 366 provided at terminals 365 and 345, respectively, are shown as inputs to threshold detection circuit 410. Detection circuit 410 includes a first comparator 450 which receives current signal $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346 at its positive input 454. Current signal $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346 is compared to a reference current signal I_{ref} 456 applied to the negative input of comparator 450. Whenever signal $U_{I_{sns}}$ 446 rises higher than current reference signal I_{ref} 456, output 458 of comparator 450 transitions to a logic high value. In one embodiment, reference current signal I_{ref} 456 is a predefined calibration current threshold. Whenever current signal $U_{I_{sns}}$ 346 exceeds the predefined calibration current threshold, output 458 of comparator 450 transitions high.

[0042] Detection circuit 410 also includes a second comparator 460 having a positive input 464 coupled to receive signal $U_{V_{sns}}$ 366. Signal $U_{V_{sns}}$ 366 is compared to a reference voltage V_{ref} 466 applied to the negative input of comparator 460. The reference V_{ref} 466 represents a threshold value for the $R_{DS(on)}$ of the power MOSFET that is directly related to its junction temperature.

Whenever signal $U_{V_{\text{sns}}}$ 466 goes higher than the reference voltage V_{ref} 466 output 468 of the comparator 460 transitions to a high logic value.

[0043] Output 468 of the comparator 460 is coupled to data input D 471 of a D-type flip-flop 470 and Output 458 of the comparator 450 is coupled to the clock input 472 of the flip-flop 470. The output of comparator 460 becomes logic high when drain voltage exceeds the reference voltage threshold which has been set up to indicate that $R_{\text{DS(on)}}$ at calibrated current has exceeded a predefined/prescribed threshold value of the drain voltage as an indicator of the temperature limit.

[0044] Continuing with the example of FIG. 4, the output of comparator 450 is shown coupled to the clock input of D-type ("D") flip-flop 470. Thus, D flip-flop 470 is clocked by the output from current comparator 450. D flip-flop 470 captures the value of the D input 471 at a definite portion of the clock cycle (such as the rising edge of the clock). That captured value becomes the Q output 473. At other times, the Q output 473 does not change. The D input 471 is output 468 from drain voltage comparator 460. As a result, Q output 473 transitions to a logic high value if the drain voltage provided by signal 366 exceeds voltage threshold 466 at the instant when current signal 346 exceeds the current calibration threshold 456. As a result, practitioners in the art will appreciate that Q output 473 of D flip-flop 470 is set to a logic high value when $R_{\text{DS(on)}}$ of the power MOSFET exceeds a combined threshold. In other words, the $R_{\text{DS(on)}}$ of the power MOSFET switching device is measured or detected at the moment when the current flowing through the power MOSFET has reached or exceeded the calibration threshold.

[0045] As discussed previously, the drain-source resistance $R_{\text{DS(on)}}$ of the power MOSFET is a direct function of its junction temperature; therefore changes in $R_{\text{DS(on)}}$ directly indicates the instantaneous temperature change of the power MOSFET device. In this manner, a logic high value at Q output 473 may be used

to indicate an alarm condition wherein a recommended or prescribed thermal threshold of the power MOSFET switching device is exceeded.

[0046] It should be understood that in other embodiments more than one threshold level may be detected. That is, multiple threshold voltage levels may be defined for various types of temperature detection or other types of control protection. Multiple sets of comparators and flip-flops may be utilized to generate the various output signals for temperature detection and/or control protection. By way of example, a first protection level may be used to change one or more control parameters of the power MOSFET switching device (e.g., a current limit, a switching frequency, a pulse width, or to temporary halt switching). A second protection level may be used to prevent the case of a fatal transient or temperature rise, with an alarm signal being used to latch up or permanently shut down the device.

[0047] Persons of skill in the art will understand that the disclosed subject matter may be implemented by different versions and varieties of semiconductor materials. For instance, the power MOSFET switching device may consist of any discrete or integrated Si, SiC, GaN or other types of high electron mobility semiconductor switches.

[0048] The above description of illustrated example embodiments, including what is described in the Abstract, are not intended to be exhaustive or to be limitation to the precise forms or structures disclosed. While specific embodiments and examples of the subject matter described herein are for illustrative purposes, various equivalent modifications are possible without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the present invention. Indeed, it is appreciated that the specific example currents, voltages, resistances, device types and sizes, etc., are provided for explanation purposes and that other values may also be employed in other embodiments and examples in accordance with the teachings of the present invention.

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. An integrated circuit (IC) for sensing a temperature rise in a power transistor device, the temperature rise caused by a current flow in the power transistor device, the IC comprising:
 - a substrate, the power transistor device being disposed on the substrate;
 - a sense-field-effect transistor (sense-FET) disposed on the substrate, the sense-FET sensing a fractional portion of the current flow and outputting a current signal at a first node;
 - a junction field-effect transistor (JFET), the drain of the JFET being connected to the drain of the power transistor device, the gate of the JFET being connected to the source of the power transistor device, such that when the power transistor device is turned on, the JFET is also turned on, and a drain voltage signal of the power transistor device is output at a second node;
 - a detection circuit coupled to receive the drain voltage signal and the current signal, the detection circuit outputting an alarm signal when the drain voltage signal exceeds a reference voltage signal and the current signal exceeds a reference current signal, which indicates that a drain-source resistance of the power transistor device exceeds a combined threshold limit.
2. The IC of claim 1 wherein the alarm signal indicates that the temperature rise exceeds a thermal threshold of the power transistor device.
3. The IC of claim 1 wherein the reference current signal is set to a value at which point the current flow in the power transistor device has reached a calibration current threshold.

4. The IC of claim 1 wherein the reference voltage signal is set to a value at which point the drain-source resistance has reached a calibration threshold value of the drain voltage signal indicative of temperature limit of the power transistor device.

5. The IC of claim 1 wherein the detection circuit comprises:

a first comparator having a first input coupled to receive the drain voltage signal, and a second input coupled to receive the reference voltage signal, the first comparator outputting a first logic signal when the drain voltage signal exceeds the reference voltage signal; and

a second comparator having a first input coupled to receive the current signal, and a second input coupled to receive the reference current signal, the second comparator outputting a second logic signal when the current signal exceeds the reference current signal.

6. The IC of claim 5 wherein the detection circuit further comprises a flip-flop having an input coupled to receive the first logic signal, a clock input coupled to receive the second logic signal, the flip-flop outputting the alarm signal responsive to the first and second logic signals.

7. The IC of claim 6 wherein the flip-flop is a D-type flip-flop.

8. The IC of claim 1 further comprising a sense resistor coupled between the first node and a ground potential.

9. The IC of claim 1 wherein the first node comprises the source of the sense-FET and the second node is the source of the JFET.

10. The IC of claim 1 wherein the gate of the JFET and the source of the power transistor device are both connected to a ground potential.

11. The IC of claim 1 wherein the drain of the power transistor device is coupled to a power converter energy transfer element.

12. The IC of claim 1 wherein the alarm signal is used to turn off the power transistor device.

13. The IC of claim 1 wherein the detection circuit receives the voltage signal and the current signal at a predetermined gate-source voltage, and a predetermined current, flow, in the power transistor device.

14. An integrated circuit (IC) for sensing a temperature rise in a switching device, the temperature rise caused by a current flow in the switching device, the IC comprising:

- a current sense device that senses a fractional portion of the current flow and outputs a current signal at a first node;

- a voltage sense device coupled to the switching device such that when the switching device is turned on, the voltage sense device is also turned on, and a voltage signal of the switching device is output at a second node; and

- a detection circuit coupled to receive the voltage signal and the current signal, the detection circuit outputting an alarm signal when the voltage signal exceeds a reference voltage signal and the current signal exceeds a reference current signal.

15. The IC of claim 14 wherein the alarm signal indicates that the temperature rise exceeds a thermal threshold of the switching device.

16. The IC of claim 14 wherein the reference current signal is set to a value at which point the current flow in the switching device has reached a calibration current threshold.

17. The IC of claim 14 wherein the current sense device is a sense-field-effect transistor (sense-FET), and the voltage sense device is a junction field-effect transistor (JFET).

18. The IC of claim 14 wherein the detection circuit comprises:

- a first comparator having a first input coupled to receive the voltage signal, and a second input coupled to receive the reference voltage signal, the first comparator outputting a first logic signal when the voltage signal exceeds the reference voltage signal;
- a second comparator having a first input coupled to receive the current signal, and a second input coupled to receive the reference current signal, the second comparator outputting a second logic signal when the current signal exceeds the reference current signal; and
- a flip-flop having an input coupled to receive the first logic signal, a clock input coupled to receive the second logic signal, the flip-flop outputting the alarm signal responsive to the first and second logic signals.

19. The IC of claim 14 further comprising a sense resistor coupled between the first node and a ground potential.

20. The IC of claim 17 wherein the first node comprises the source of the sense-FET.

21. The IC of claim 14 wherein the switching device is a power transistor device.

22. The IC of claim 14 wherein the switching device comprises one or more diodes.

23. The IC of claim 14 wherein the detection circuit receives the voltage signal and the current signal at a predetermined threshold operating condition of the switching device.

24. A method for sensing a temperature rise in a semiconductor switching device of an integrated circuit (IC), the temperature rise caused by a current flow in the switching device, the method comprising:

sensing a fractional portion of the current flow through the semiconductor switching device, a current signal being outputted at a first node in response thereto;

sensing a voltage drop on the switching device when the switching device is turned on, a voltage signal of the switching device being outputted at a second node in response thereto; and

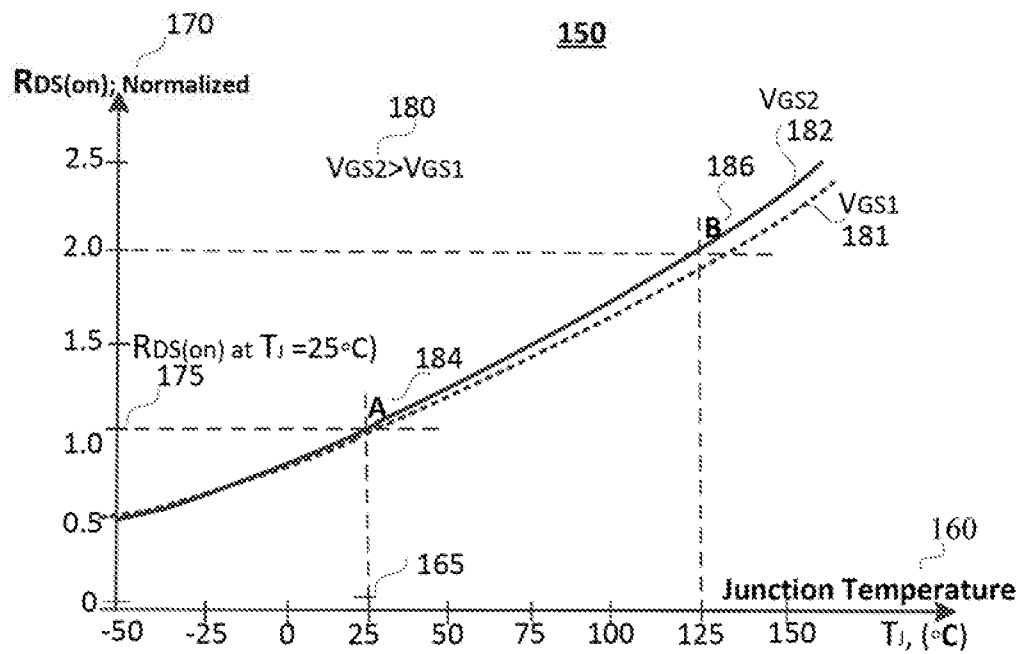
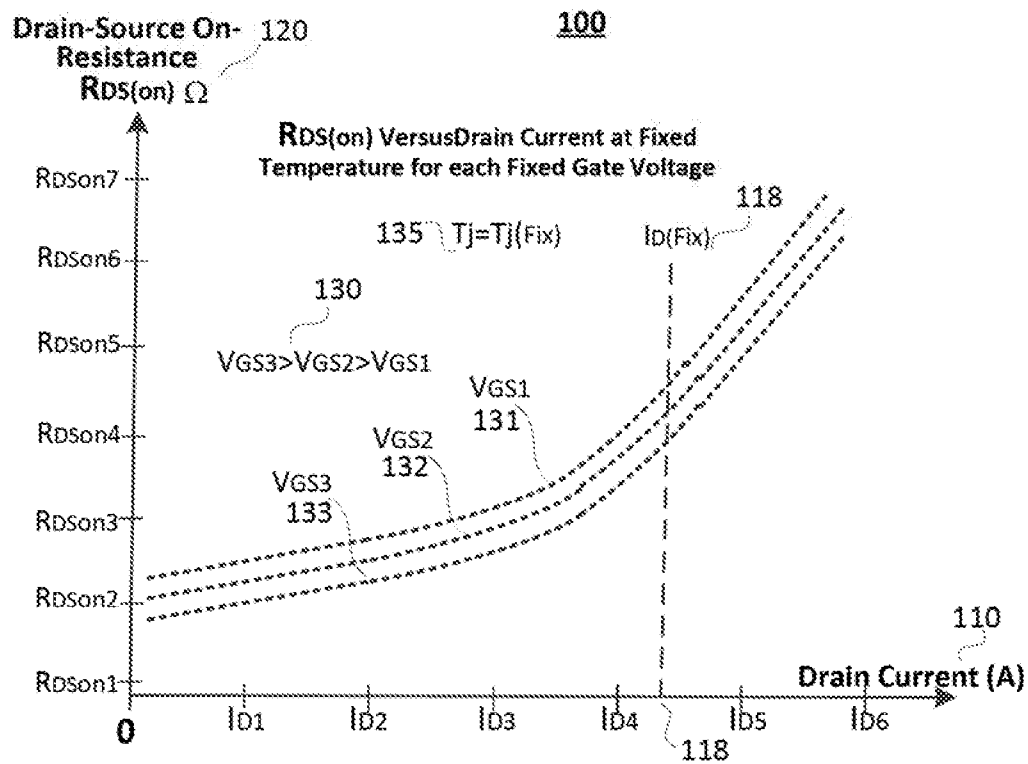
outputting an alarm signal by a detection circuit coupled to receive the voltage signal and the current signal, the detection circuit outputting the alarm signal when the voltage signal exceeds a reference voltage signal and the current signal exceeds a reference current signal.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the alarm signal indicates that the temperature rise exceeds a thermal threshold of the semiconductor switching device.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein the reference current signal is set to a value at which point the current flow in the semiconductor switching device has reached a calibration current threshold.

27. The method of claim 24 wherein the reference voltage signal is set to a value at which point the voltage signal has reached a calibration threshold value of the semiconductor switching device.

28. The method of claim 24 wherein the alarm signal is output when the detection circuit receives the voltage signal and the current signal at a predetermined threshold operating condition of the switching device.



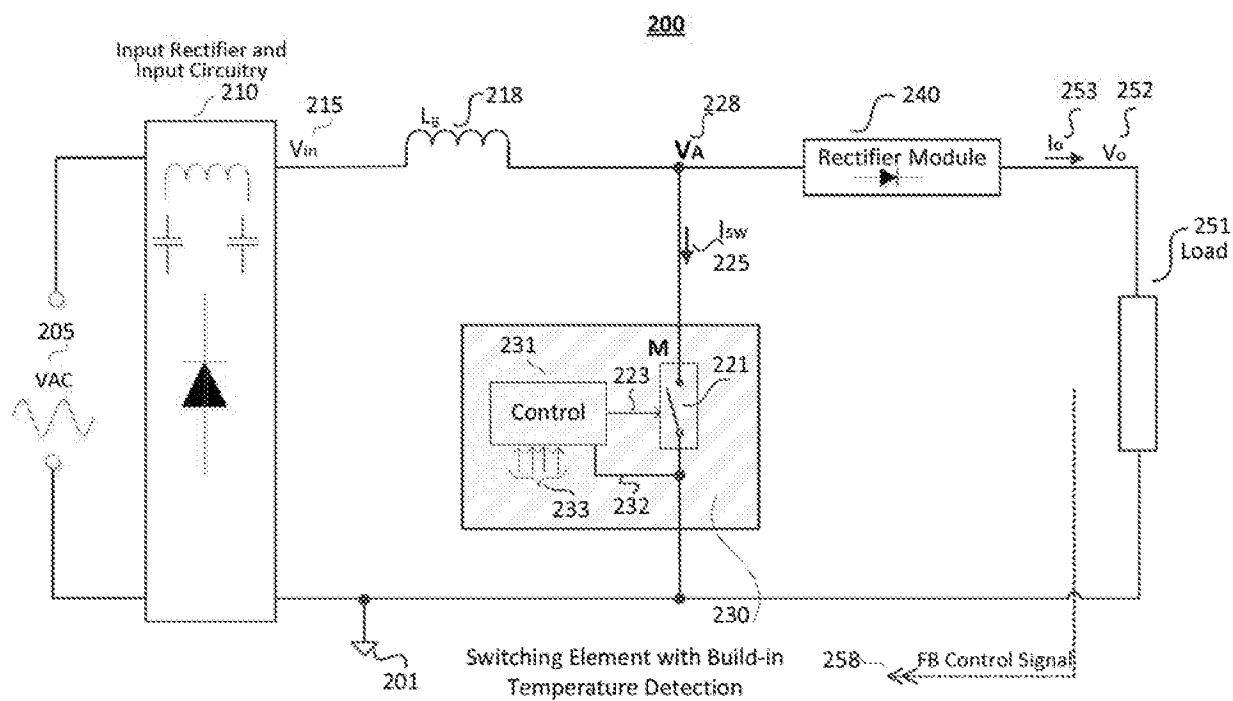
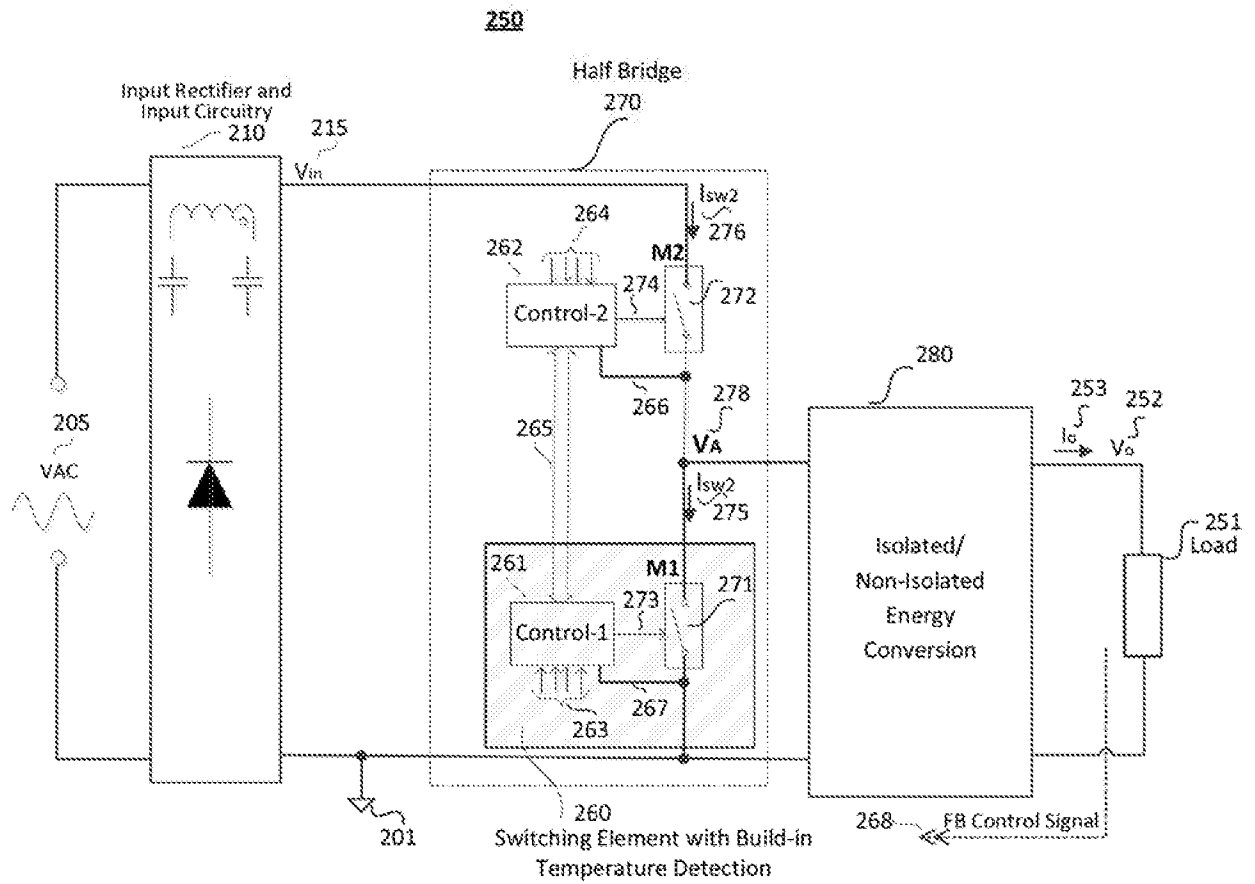


FIG. 2A

**FIG. 2B**

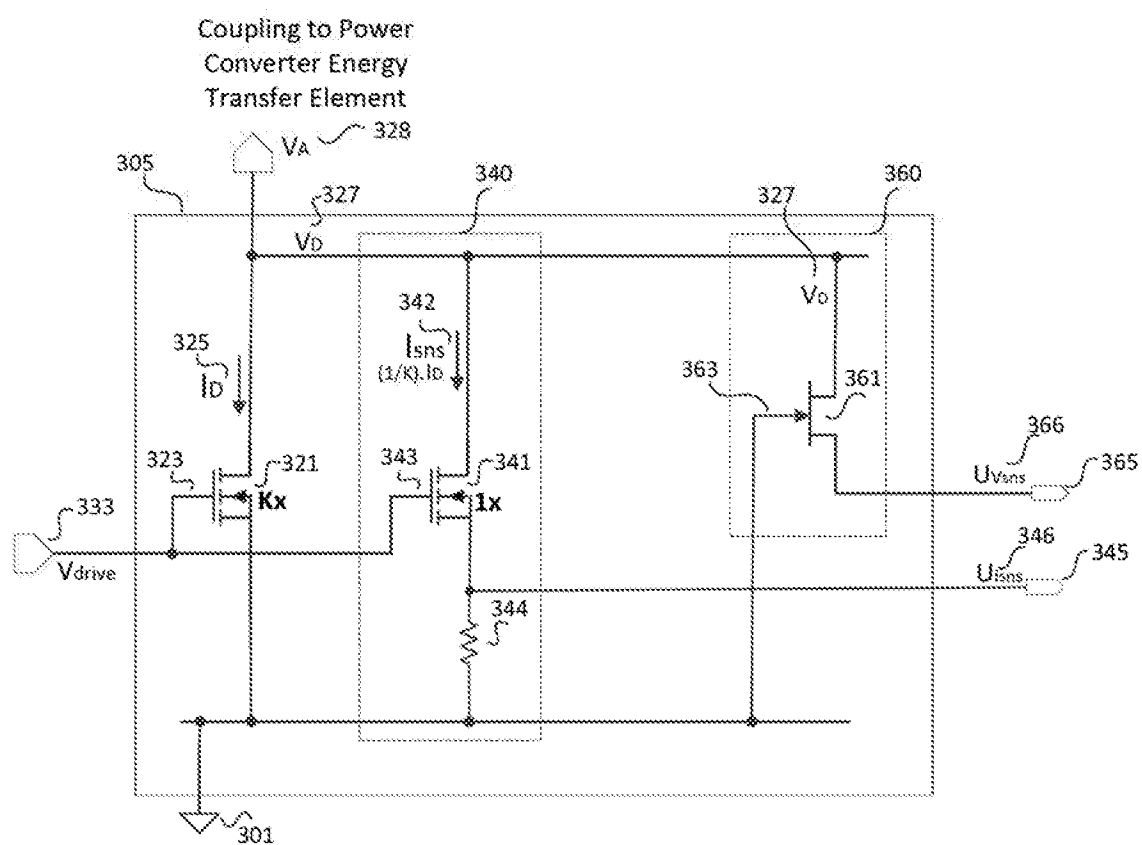


FIG. 3

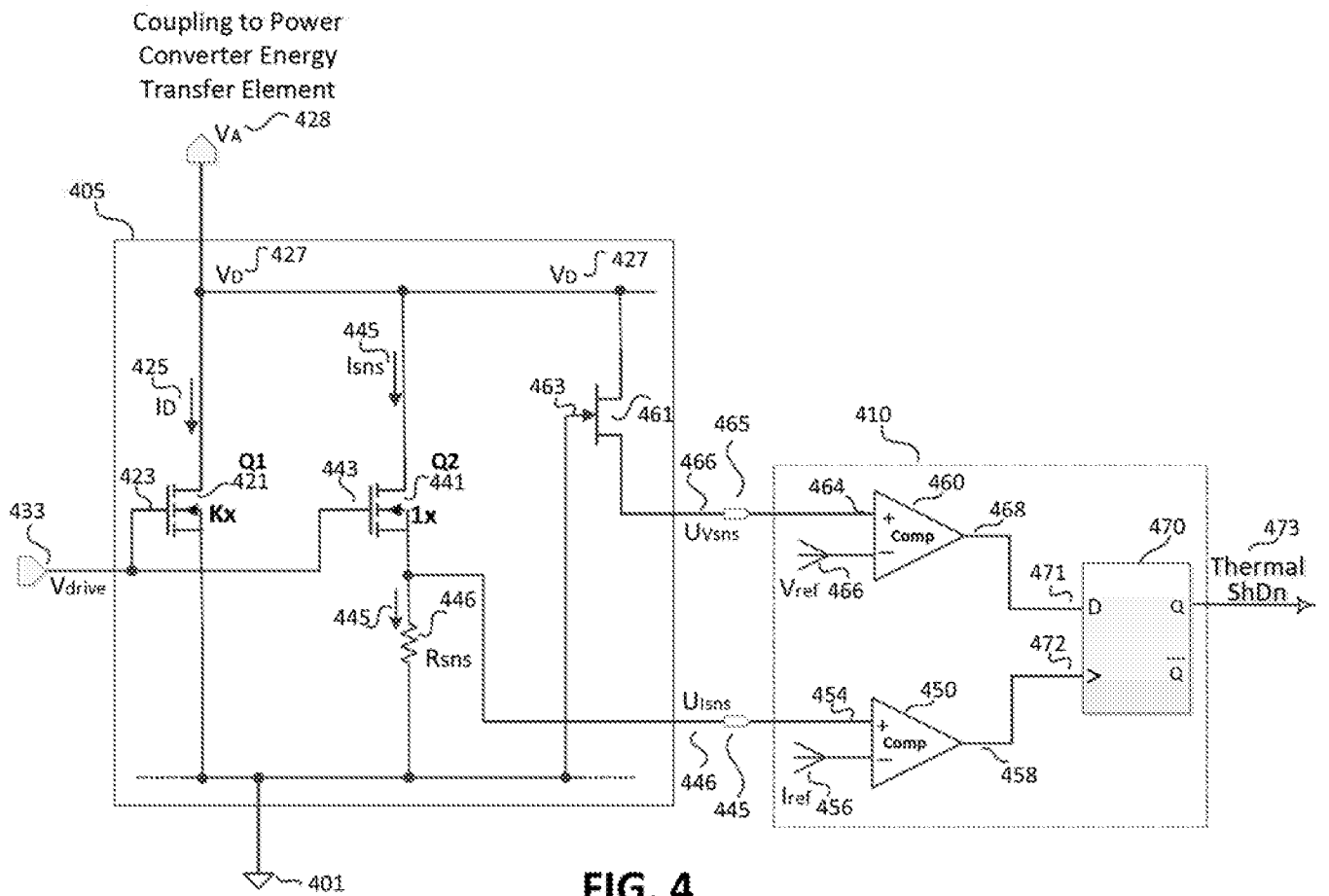


FIG. 4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/US2016/046071

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. H03K17/082 H03K17/18 G01K7/42
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H03K G01R G01K

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2013/332750 A1 (SOUMA OSAMU [JP]) 12 December 2013 (2013-12-12)	14-16, 18-28
A	the whole document	1-13
A	US 2004/227545 A1 (NADD BRUNO C [FR] ET AL) 18 November 2004 (2004-11-18)	1-28
A	NIU HE ET AL: "Sensing power MOSFET junction temperature using gate drive turn-on current transient properties", 2014 IEEE ENERGY CONVERSION CONGRESS AND EXPOSITION (ECCE), IEEE, 14 September 2014 (2014-09-14), pages 2909-2916, XP032680881, DOI: 10.1109/ECCE.2014.6953794 [retrieved on 2014-11-11] page 2909, paragraph 2.	1,14,24



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

3 April 2017

Date of mailing of the international search report

18/04/2017

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Jepsen, John

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2016/046071

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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