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(54) **ON CHIP TEMPERATURE MEASURING AND MONITORING CIRCUIT AND METHOD**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A device temperature measurement circuit, an integrated circuit (IC) including a device temperature measurement circuit, a method of characterizing device temperature and a method of monitoring temperature. The circuit includes a constant current source and a clamping device. The clamping device selectively shunts current from the constant current source or allows the current to flow through a PN junction, which may be the body to source/drain junction of a field effect transistor (FET). Voltage measurements are taken directly from the PN junction. Junction temperature is determined from measured junction voltage.

FIG. 1

FIG. 2

120

122

START JUNCTION
CURRENT

124

RAMP
TEMP

126

CHECK JUNCTION
VOLTAGE

128

LOG VOLTAGE
AND TEMP
POINTS

130

NO — MAX
TEMP? — YES

132

SHUT OFF
TEMP

134

OPERATE
CIRCUIT

136

SWITCH CLAMPING
FET OFF AND
STOP CIRCUIT

138

MONITOR JUNCTION
COOLING AND LOG
TEMP VS TIME
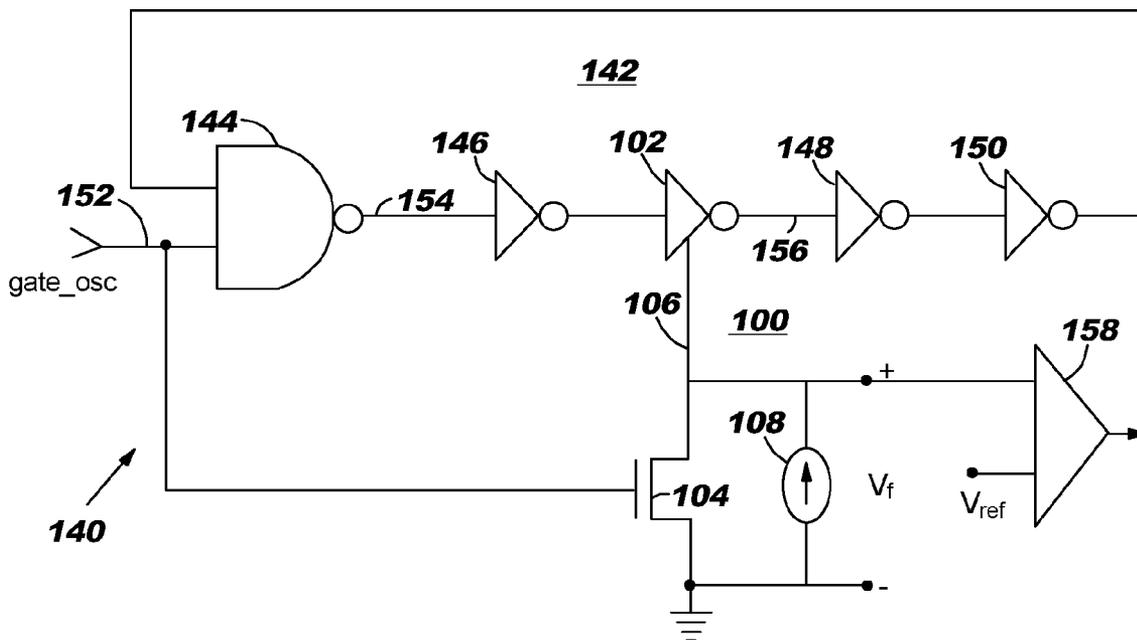
FIG. 3A

FIG. 3B

ON CHIP TEMPERATURE MEASURING AND MONITORING CIRCUIT AND METHOD
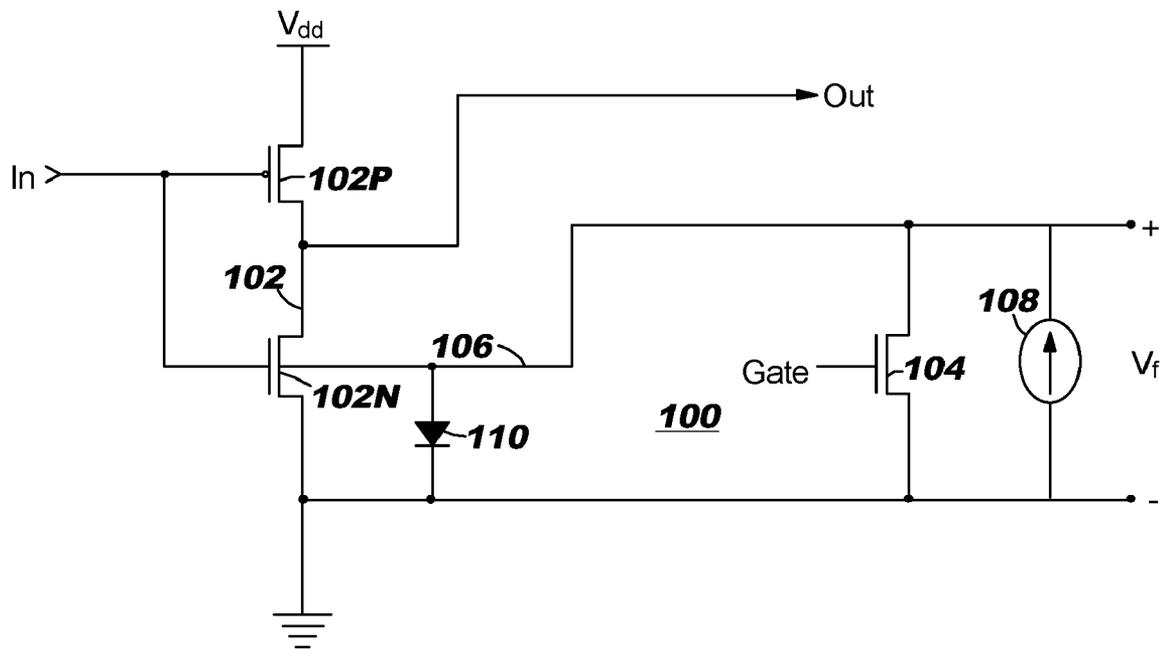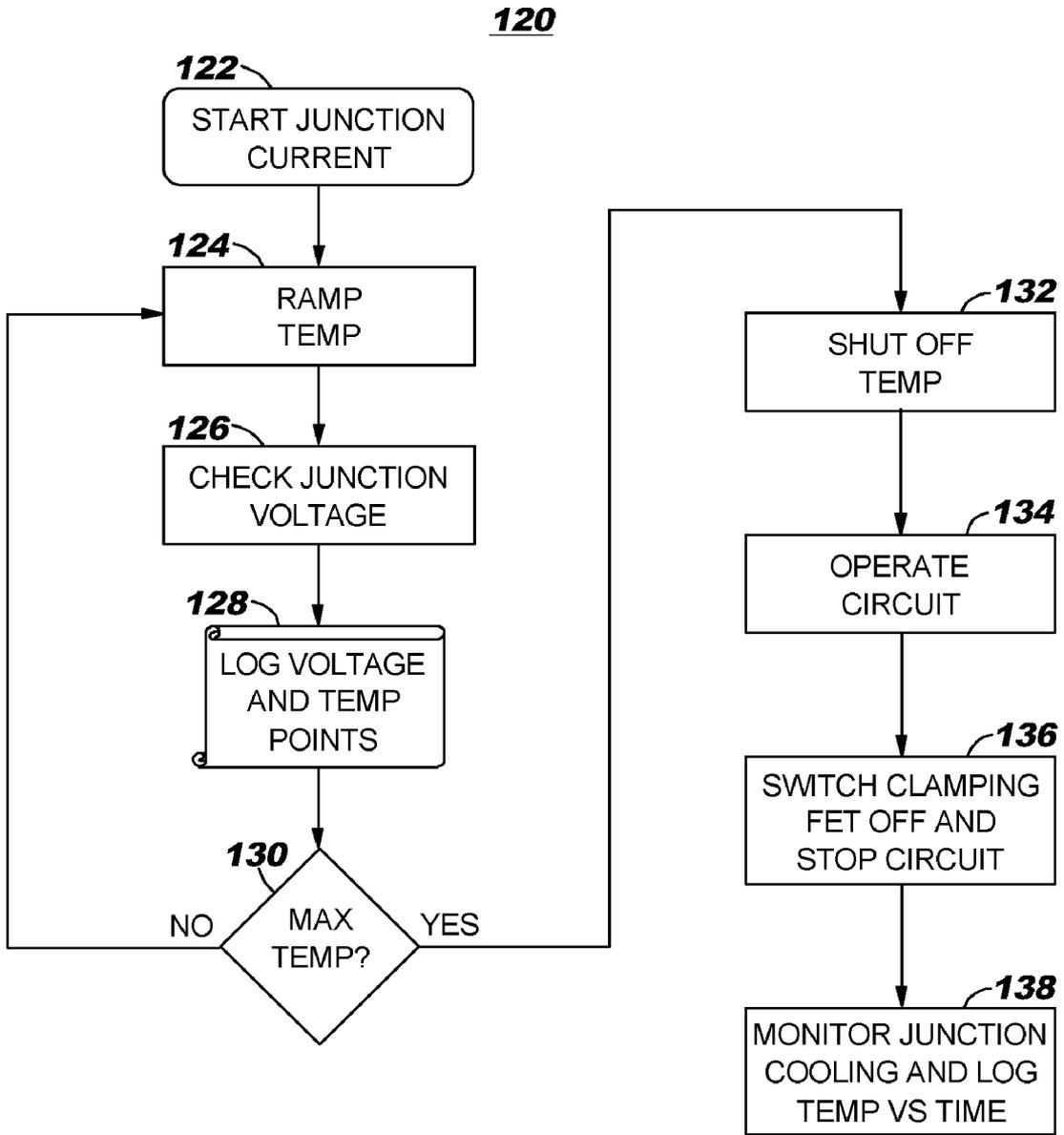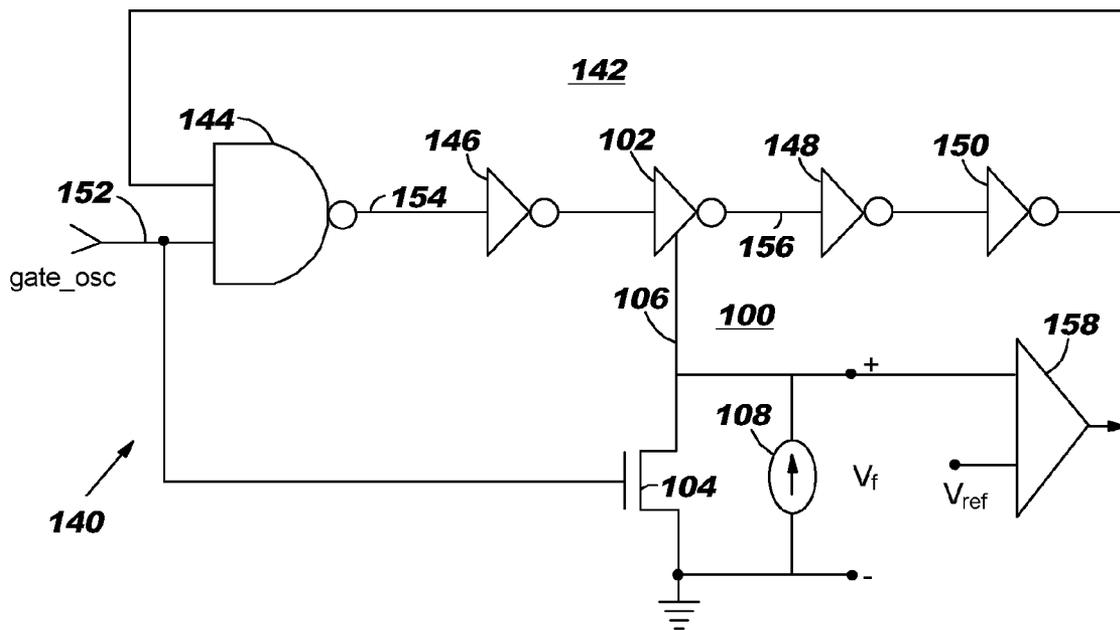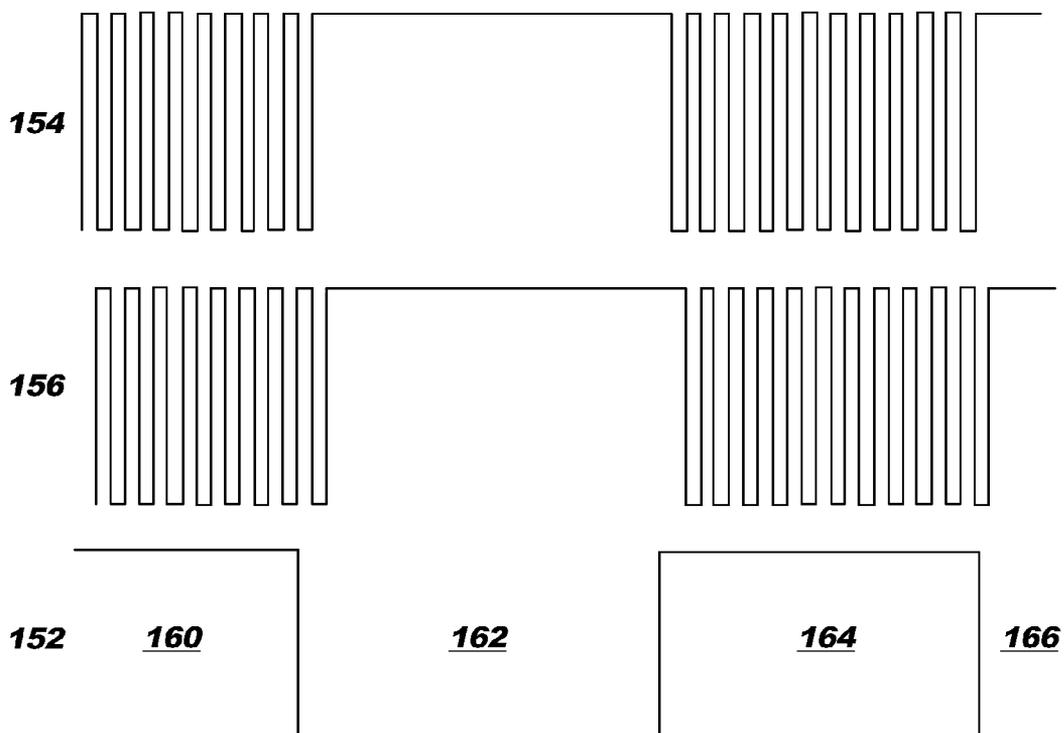
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention is related to integrated circuits (ICs) and more particularly to circuits and methods of measuring and monitoring device temperature on ICs.

[0003] 2. Background Description

[0004] It is well known that diode current can be approximated by $I=I_0(e^{qV/kT}-1)$, where I_0 is the diode turn on current, q is the charge magnitude, V is the junction bias voltage, k is the Boltzmann's constant and T is junction temperature. Similarly, field effect transistor (FET) characteristics, including threshold voltage (V_T), device drain to source current (I_{ds}) and leakage currents are related to the temperature of the material (e.g., semiconductor) embodying the FET by well known relationships. In a typical integrated circuit (IC), individual circuit device currents combine to drive capacitive loads at circuit nodes. So, if local (device or junction) temperature is known, device current and, correspondingly, circuit performance can be calculated very precisely. Consequently, an accurate device model requires an accurate device current description.

[0005] Current through semiconductor (e.g., silicon) junctions and devices generates heat locally. On a typical IC chip, each such junction or device may act as a local heat source and, more particularly, as a point heat source. How heat is conducted away from each point source depends upon its surrounding and thermally connected structures. For example, how the point source cools may depend in part on whether the circuit is in bulk silicon (Si) or silicon on insulator (SOI), whether the heat source is a single isolated device on a silicon island or is one heat source amongst a group of heat sources, whether metal directly contacts the heat source and etc. Glass (Si/SiO) is a poor heat conductor. So, circuits and even individual devices on a silicon island may be thermally insulated from each other, even though they reside on the same chip. Unfortunately, heat dissipation in modern SOI is not well understood. Previously, only crude imprecise temperature measurements have been available, e.g., chip level thermal measurements or using thermal imaging to characterize circuit-wide temperatures. Measuring gate resistance has provided the temperature of a structure one or two layers above the device active region, the region of concern and, still provides a somewhat distorted reflection of the channel temperature. So, for example, each junction/device is simulated, normally, at the same temperature as every other junction/device on the same circuit or a chip.

[0006] Further, device temperature may vary depending upon its immediate history. For example, a device in memory select logic may be switched on after several cycles of dormancy and so, may add little to ambient temperature. By contrast a device in a multiplexor may be switching aperiodically, making a variable contribution to ambient; an inverter in a clock buffer may be switching every cycle, cumulatively contributing to ambient and, itself being at a significantly higher temperature than ambient.

[0007] Consequently, because so little information is available about instantaneous thermal conditions at and for any particular device, normally, device current is modeled at one or more particular temperatures, e.g., nominal and both expected extremes. In addition, because it has been difficult, if not impossible, to characterize heat variations other than for large areas, individual device temperature and thermal time constants are not well known. However, without an accurate description of these parameters, e.g., a temperature to time relationship, it has not been possible to construct thermally accurate device models, much less monitor local circuit/device temperature during actual operation, e.g., to signal a shut down when device temperature exceeds an acceptable limit.

[0008] Thus, there is a need for an accurate characterization of IC structure temperatures and for a way to monitor junction and device temperatures during chip operation.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] It is a purpose of the invention to improve semiconductor device models;

[0010] It is another purpose of the invention to accurately model device temperature in integrated circuits (ICs);

[0011] It is yet another purpose of the invention to accurately determine device operating temperature;

[0012] It is yet another purpose of the invention to monitor device temperature in real time and on the fly.

[0013] The present invention relates to a device temperature measurement circuit, an integrated circuit (IC) including a device temperature measurement circuit, a method of characterizing device temperature and a method of monitoring temperature. The circuit includes a constant current source and a clamping device. The clamping device selectively shunts current from the constant current source or allows the current to flow through a PN junction, which may be body to source/drain junction of a field effect transistor (FET). Voltage measurements are taken directly from the PN junction. Junction temperature is determined from measured junction voltage.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] The foregoing and other objects, aspects and advantages will be better understood from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention with reference to the drawings, in which:

[0015] FIG. 1 shows an example of a device temperature measurement circuit as applied to a typical inverter;

[0016] FIG. 2 shows an example of how to determine a relaxation thermal time constant for a suitable device model;

[0017] FIG. 3A shows an example of a ring oscillator that includes a device temperature measurement circuit substantially as described in FIG. 1;

[0018] FIG. 3B shows a timing diagram for a simple example of using the circuit of FIG. 3A for measuring and monitoring chip/circuit temperature, e.g., in a microprocessor.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Turning now to the drawings and, more particularly, FIG. 1 shows an example of a device temperature

measurement circuit **100** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, as applied to a typical inverter **102**. In particular, a preferred embodiment device temperature measurement circuit **100** measures the temperature of the particular device itself, which may be well above ambient. Further, the present invention has application both to characterization of temperature related device characteristics and to device temperature monitoring. This particular example is described with reference to application in a typical insulated gate complementary field effect transistor (FET) circuit (inverter **102**) in what is commonly referred to as CMOS; and, more particularly, with reference to silicon on insulator (SOI), wherein devices are formed in P-type and N-type semiconductor (silicon) surface islands on an insulator (oxide) layer. However, the present invention has application to characterization and modeling in any suitable technology with an isolatable, contactable body, e.g., Silicon on sapphire. Further, a preferred embodiment device temperature measurement circuit **100** can be in a separate characterization circuit or, included in an actual circuit and used for auto-sensing, e.g., where it may be advantageous to monitor a critical functional device for excessive heating.

[0020] In this example, the inverter **102** includes an N-type FET (NFET) **102N** and a P-type FET (PFET) **102P**. A clamping NFET **104** is connected to the body **106** of inverter NFET **102N**. A constant current source **108**, preferably in the range of 10 μA -100 nA and located on chip, is connected in parallel with the clamping NFET **104** to the body **106** of inverter NFET **102N**, the device being characterized/monitored for temperature. Constant current source **108** may be, for example, an NFET current-mirror circuit. A diode **110** represents the natural PN junction between the body and the source of the NFET **102N** in this example. Essentially, inverter NFET **102N** heats up during use and that heat is reflected in the forward bias voltage (V_f) of diode **110**. By forcing a known current through the diode **110** with NFET **102N** off and measuring the voltage across the diode **110** (V_f) at various temperatures, a voltage to temperature relationship is defined for the diode. Thereafter, the junction temperature may be determined from the diode voltage at the same current. During normal operation, clamping NFET **104** is switched on, shunting the current from current source **108** and clamping the body **106** of inverter NFET **102N**, more or less, to ground. Junction temperature may be monitored, periodically, by switching off both NFETs **102N**, **104** and measuring junction voltage. Of course, it is understood that the present invention has application to any suitable circuit including, for example, complex logic circuits such as adders, multiplexers, repeaters, etc.

[0021] FIG. 2 shows an example **120** of how to determine a relaxation thermal time constant for a suitable device model according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. First, beginning in step **122** chip junctions are calibrated, for example, using a hot-chuck or temperature chamber. Next, in step **124** the temperature of the chip, wafer, etc., is elevated or ramped with the inverter NFET **102N** and clamping NFET **104** held off. In step **126**, the junction voltage across the junction diode **110** is measured at multiple temperatures, e.g., by measuring voltage across the current source **108** and, correspondingly, the voltage across clamping NFET **104**. After each measurement in step **128** the voltage-temperature for the junction is logged in a calibration table to very precisely relate junction temperature and voltage for that particular device. In step **130**, if the

maximum temperature has not been reached, calibration is still underway and returning to step **124** ramping continues. Once the maximum test temperature is reached in step **130** and calibration and resulting calibration table are complete. The clamping NFET **104** is switched on in step **132**, and the hot chuck or temperature chamber is allowed to cool to room temperature.

[0022] The resulting voltage-temperature calibration table can be used with a preferred embodiment device temperature measurement circuit (e.g., **100**) to generate a temperature based relaxation curve and determine a relaxation thermal time constant for the particular device, e.g., **102N**. Essentially, the circuit (inverter **102**) is operated at its highest expected capacity with the switch dormant and temperature is monitored over a selected cooling period. The relaxation thermal time constant may be used to model the device or similar devices. So, turning on the clamping NFET **104** shunts current from current source **108** and provides a ground bias to the body **106** of inverter NFET **102N**. Then, in step **134** the inverter **102** is switched, e.g., at maximum operating frequency. After sufficient time for the junction to reach an expected maximum operating temperature, in step **136** the switching inverter **102** is stopped and the clamping NFET **104** is switched off. Finally, in step **138** the junction voltage measured at regular intervals using an on-chip A/D converter. The digital output of the A/D converter (not shown) can be stored or sent off chip where the measurements are logged. Thereafter, the logged voltage measurements may be converted to temperature using the voltage-temperature calibration table. The converted information may be used in the junction model for a much more precise accurate device model.

[0023] FIG. 3A shows an example of a simple circuit implementation **140** of a preferred embodiment device temperature measurement circuit, e.g., **100** in FIG. 1, in a ring oscillator **142**. The ring oscillator **142** of this example includes 5 inverting stages **144**, **146**, **102**, **148** and **150**. One stage **144** is a NAND gate and the remaining stages **146**, **102**, **148** and **150** are inverters. An enable or gating signal (gate_osc) **152** is a common input to the NAND gate **144** and the gate of clamping NFET **104**. The NAND gate output **154** is in phase with measurement circuit inverter output **156**. The voltage (V_f) may be provided to an over-temp circuit **158** for selectively generating an alarm when an over-temperature condition is detected. Over-voltage circuit **158** may be, for example, a simple comparator for comparison against a reference voltage (V_{ref}) or, as noted hereinabove, an A/D converter.

[0024] FIG. 3B shows a timing diagram for a simple example of using the circuit of FIG. 3A for measuring and monitoring chip/circuit temperature according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, e.g., in a microprocessor. First, in period **160** with the gating signal **152** high, the clamping NFET **104** is on, shunting current from current source **108**; and, NAND gate **144** inverts the output of inverter **150**. So, the oscillator **142** is free running. After sufficient time for the inverter junction to heat to its steady state operating temperature, in period **162** the gating signal **152** is dropped, which turns clamping NFET off and simultaneously forces the output **154** of NAND gate **144** high, stopping the oscillator. The output **156** of inverter **102** is high and a voltage (V_f) develops across the junction at **106** in response to the current from current source **108**. As noted

above, the voltage (V_f) may be provided, for example to a comparator **158**. The comparator may trigger an over temperature alarm (also not shown), whenever the voltage (V_f) indicates that the temperature exceeds a maximum allowed value. Thereafter, e.g., if no alarm is triggered or if the alarm does not result in halting the oscillator **100** (e.g., for cooling), in period **164** the gating signal **152** may be raised so that the oscillator resumes oscillating. The measurement may be repeated in **166** at some selected future time, e.g., periodically or upon request.

[0025] Advantageously, the forward voltage (V_f) of the P-N junction (and therefore its temperature) may be sensed immediately and on the fly. Thus, the temperature of the device itself (which may be well above ambient) is being individually determined and time sensitive temperature data is not lost, e.g., due to line charging delays from using an external current source or from transient settling time delays. Sensing can be either off-chip or on-chip using an analog comparator or, an A/D converter in combination with a digital compare and a scannable typical threshold value. The result is much more accurate than measuring neighboring device temperatures and trying to extrapolate temperature for the actual device of interest. Instead, application of the present invention measures the actual device temperature in the actual logic gate. Temperature can be monitored in any circuit, even on a device embedded in an IC chip mounted in a module in active operation, e.g., a microprocessor in a computer.

[0026] While the invention has been described in terms of preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modification within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

1. An integrated circuit (IC) comprising:

a plurality of devices connected together and forming circuits;

a switchable current source selectively providing a known current to a PN junction in at least one of said plurality of devices, said switchable current source comprising:

a constant current source, and

a clamping device selectively shunting current from said constant current source; and

a voltage measurement circuit measuring voltage across said PN junction, measured said voltage corresponding to PN junction temperature.

2. (canceled)

3. An IC as in claim 1, wherein said voltage measurement circuit comprises an analog to digital converter.

4. An IC as in claim 1, wherein said voltage measurement circuit comprises a comparator.

5. An IC as in claim 4, wherein a reference voltage is provided to said comparator for comparison against said voltage across said PN junction.

6. An IC as in claim 1, wherein said plurality of devices includes a plurality of field effect transistors (FETs) and said PN junction is a FET body to source/drain junction.

7. An IC as in claim 6, wherein said IC is on a silicon on insulator chip and said plurality of FETs comprises a plurality of P-type FETs (PFETs) and a plurality of N-type FETs (NFETs) connected together in CMOS circuits.

8. (canceled)

9. An IC as in claim 7, wherein said voltage measurement circuit comprises an analog to digital converter.

10. An IC as in claim 7, wherein said voltage measurement circuit comprises a comparator.

11. An IC as in claim 10, wherein a reference voltage is provided to said comparator for comparison against said voltage across said PN junction.

12-31. (canceled)

32. An integrated circuit (IC) comprising:

a plurality of devices connected together and forming circuits;

a switchable current source selectively providing a known current to a PN junction in at least one of said plurality of devices, said switchable current source comprising:

a constant current source, and

a clamping device in parallel with said constant current source and selectively shunting current from said constant current source through said clamping device; and

a voltage measurement circuit measuring voltage across said PN junction, measured said voltage corresponding to PN junction temperature.

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