# Grand Challenges in RF & Plasmas For Next-Generation Semiconductor Manufacturing

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01	Introduction to Lam Research and Challenges in Etch
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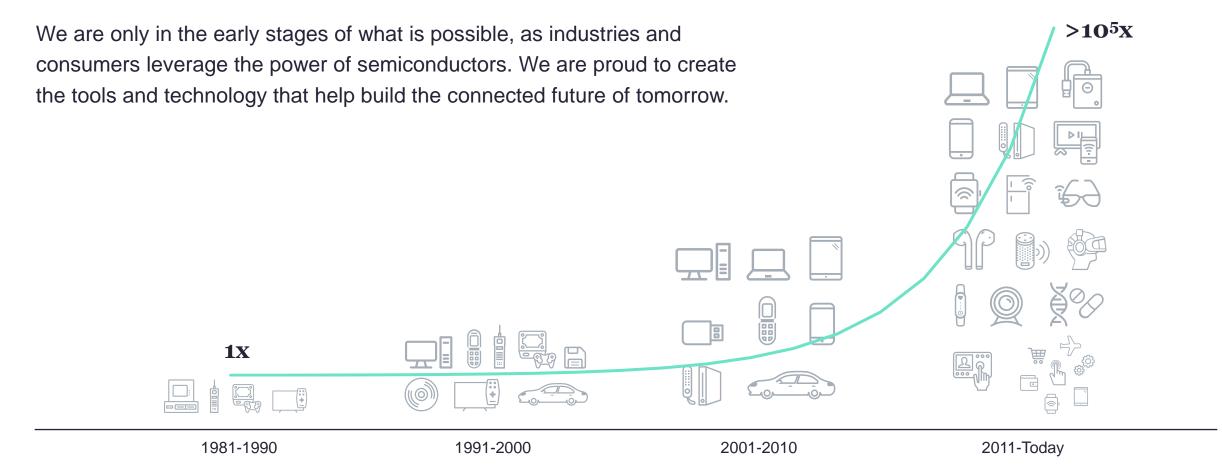
Careers at Lam Research



# Introduction to Lam Research & Challenges in Etch



## Semiconductor demand is intensifying as electronics are increasingly integrated into every aspect of our lives

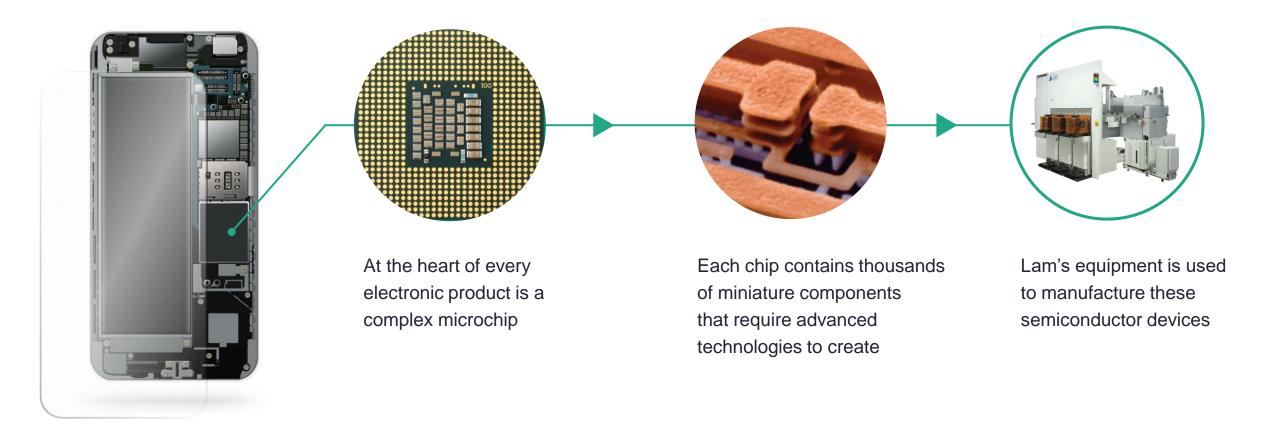


**GROWTH IN MEMORY BIT DENSITY AND LOGIC TRANSISTOR COUNTS** 



Figure not to scale

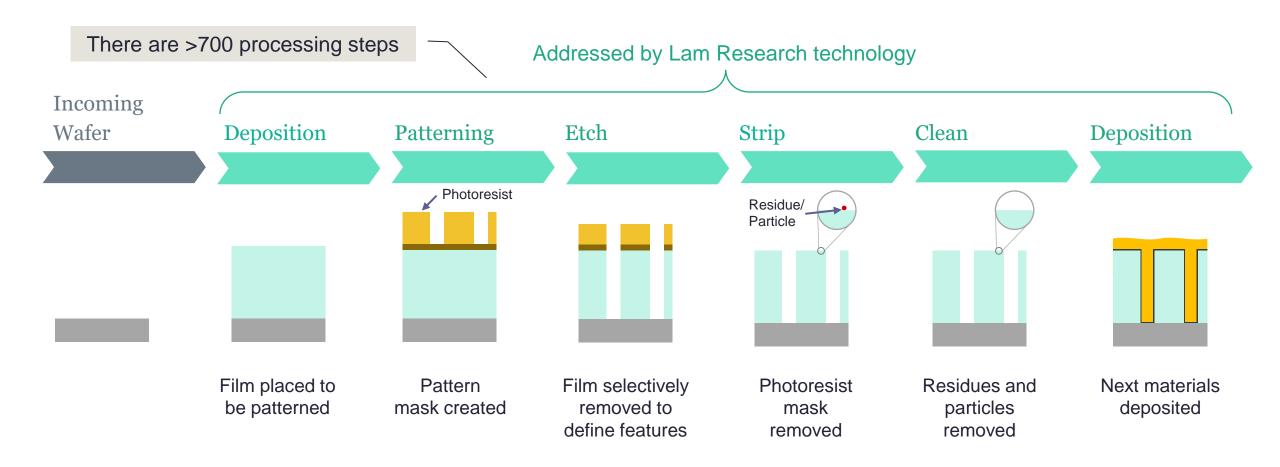
## We are leading the way



Our wafer fabrication equipment is behind virtually every chip on the market.



## We play a crucial role in the wafer fabrication process

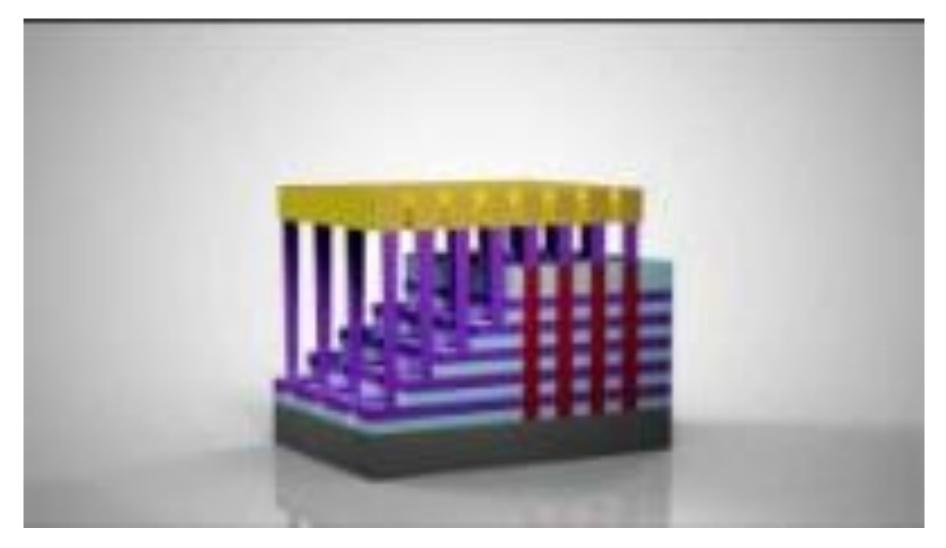




## Challenges 10 years ago ... and today

#### PREVIOUS INFLECTION **CHALLENGE UPCOMING INFLECTION NEW CHALLENGE** Logic Lateral precision Performance • Selectivity >3:1 Selectivity >50:1 Battery life Planar FET 3D FinFET GAA DRAM Aspect ratio >60:1 Aspect ratio >100:1 • Parasitic capacitance Profile control Multiple layers/materials Battery life • Profile control to >89.96° Planar DRAM 3D DRAM Vertical DRAM Flash Aspect ratio >60:1 Aspect ratio >100:1 Data integrity Multiple layers/ Stacking Density materials Planar NAND 3D NAND 3D NAND + **Patterning** • CDU <2 nm $(3\sigma)$ • CDU <0.7 nm (3 $\sigma$ ) Density • LWR <4 nm • LWR <2 nm • CD <30 nm • CD <10 nm **EUV & Multiple patterning** Single patterning Multiple patterning

## 3D NAND as an example of technology inflections



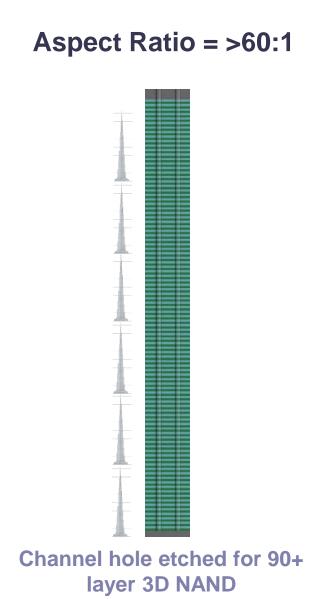


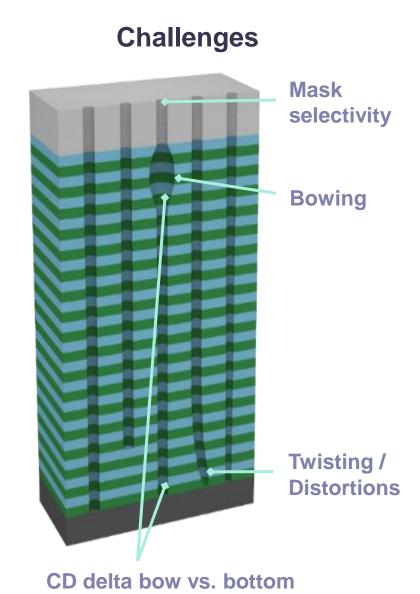
## Aspect Ratio is VERY high



The Burj Khalifa, tallest structure in the world

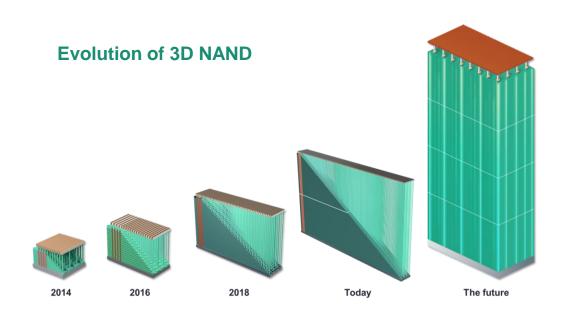




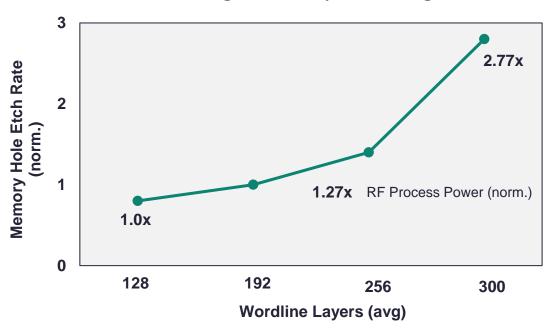


## RF Power Scaling for High Aspect Ratio Etching

Memory Channel Etch in 3D NAND requires etching through 100s of layers of silicon dioxide and silicon nitride. A single wafer can have over a trillion channels that have to be etched with near perfect precision



RF Power Scaling for Memory cell etching in 3D NAND



Source : Belau(Lam) et al. (2017), US Patent 10847374B2

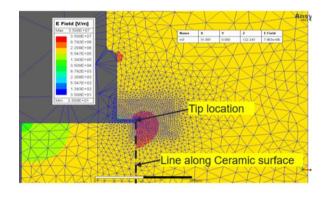
The advancement to a 1000-layer NAND demands break through etch technologies. With scalable high-power solutions, unique pulsed plasma technology and Cryogenic etching, Lam is ideally positioned to lead the industry on this critical journey



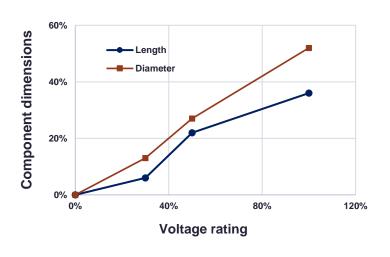
## Challenges in RF Power Scaling for HAR Etching

Meeting the power scaling demands of 3D architectures places significant limitations on the RF design of critical power delivery subsystems.

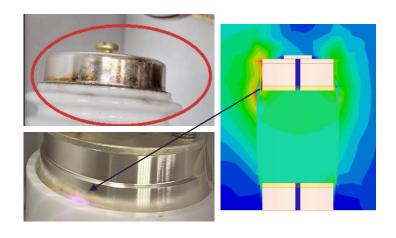
#### Creepage distance



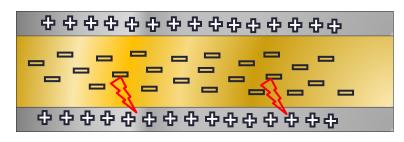
#### Component size



Arcing / Component Reliability



Cooling Solutions (Triboelectric effects)



□ Conventional RF power delivery designs are reaching their limits, demanding radical new architectures and component technologies for future scaling

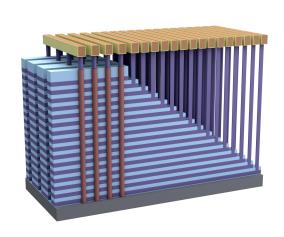
**EM Interference** 





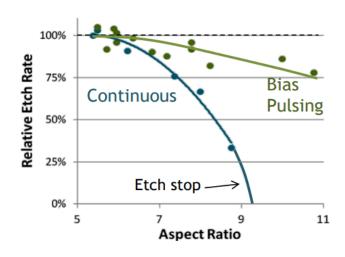
## Achieving Profile Control in High Aspect Ratio Etch

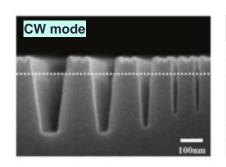
Maintaining consistent etch profiles and minimizing charging damage in 1000-layer 3D NAND will demand advanced pulsed RF techniques capable of delivering unprecedented precision in pulse shaping and timing control throughout the entire etch process.



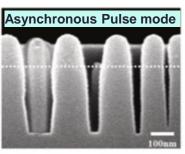
3D NAND Aspect ratio > 40:1

#### Aspect Ratio Dependent Etching (ARDE)

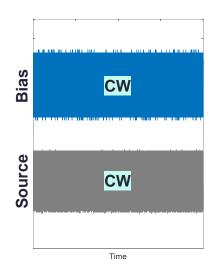


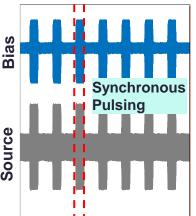


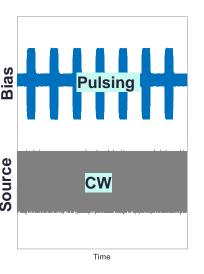
AR dependent (CW)

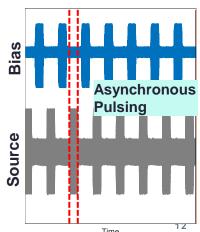


AR independent (Pulsing)







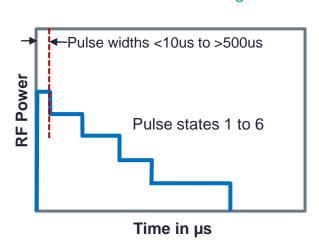




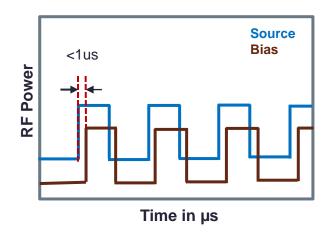
## Addressing Profile Control Challenges with Advanced Pulsing Schemes

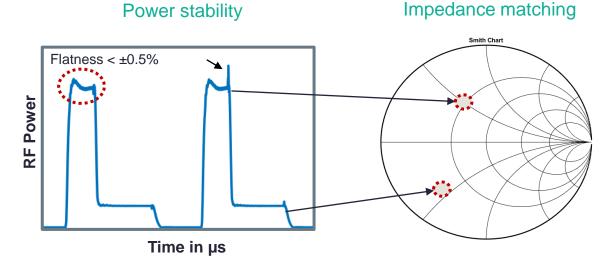
As semiconductor etching technology advances to meet the demands of smaller nodes, higher aspect ratios and stricter process control, RF pulsing techniques have become increasingly sophisticated

#### Multi-state Pulsing



#### Sub µs Timing control





Complex waveform generation and control

Sophisticated high-speed digital and analog control circuitry

Advanced RF power amplifier design and feedback control loops

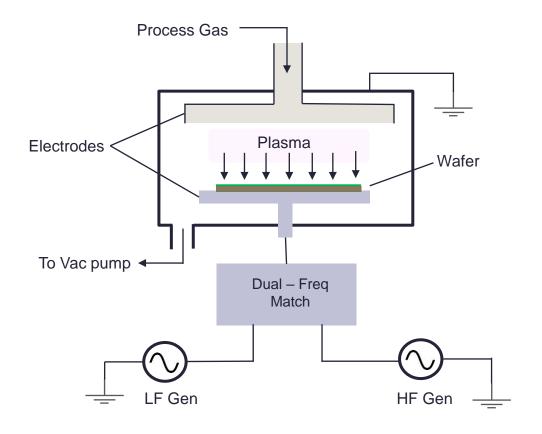
Ultra-fast and wide-band impedance matching networks



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## Uniformity & Repeatability Challenges in Advanced Etch

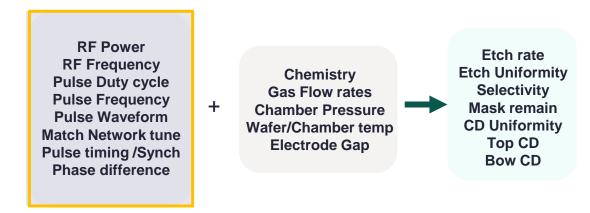
In advanced semi conductor etching, achieving exceptional uniformity and repeatability across the wafer is paramount to ensure consistent device performance and yield at nanoscale dimensions.





Dual Frequency plasma systems provide critical tuning capabilities enabling a greater degree of control over ion energy and plasma density, essential for optimizing and maintaining uniformity

#### **Key RF process variables in Dual-Frequency CCP Etch chambers :**

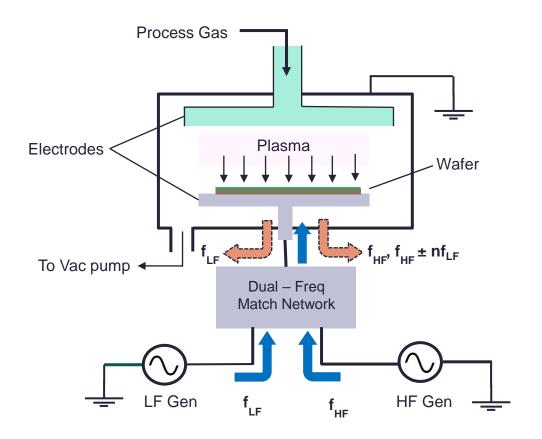


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Source: Lam Generated

## Challenges in Dual Frequency Plasma Systems

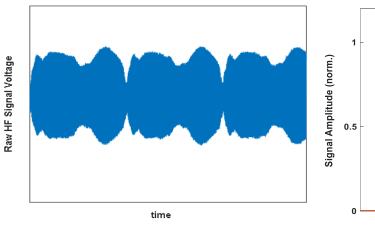
While dual-frequency plasma etch systems offer enhanced control over ion energy and plasma density, they also introduce unique challenges related to plasma non-linearities which can degrade efficiency and process performance



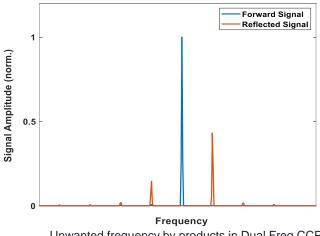
Unwanted frequencies generated due to non-linear mixing of input frequencies in dual frequency CCP plasma chambers can lead to :

- Etch Non-Uniformity
- Inefficient Power Delivery
- Thermal Overload

- Reduced process repeatability
- Narrower process window
- Increased risk of Hardware failure







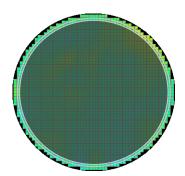
Unwanted frequency by products in Dual Freq CCPs

Sophisticated real-time feedback, powered by advanced sensing technologies is crucial to minimize the effects of these unwanted frequency components through dynamic frequency and power adjustment

Source: Lam Generated

## Wafer Edge Uniformity

Wafer edge uniformity is not just a technical challenge; it is a direct and significant driver of semiconductor manufacturing cost and profitability

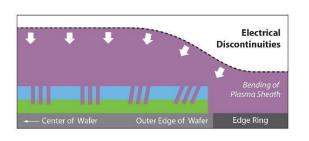


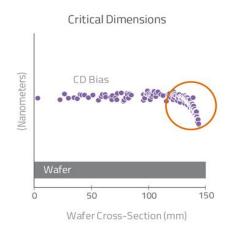
Outer 8 mm: ~10% of die

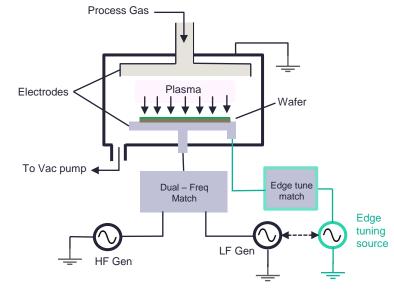
Outer 12 mm: ~20% of die

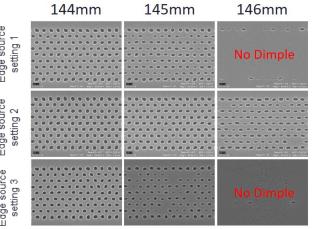
Edge non-uniformity and variability is primarily due to discontinuities at the edge

- Chemical discontinuity
- Thermal discontinuity
- Electrical discontinuity









While a separate bias source can be employed for edge uniformity tuning, achieving truly independent control is very challenging due to the tight EM coupling at the wafer



HV CD-SEM Images of patterned wafers at three different edge source settings. Bottom dimple is observed only in setting 2 at 146mm

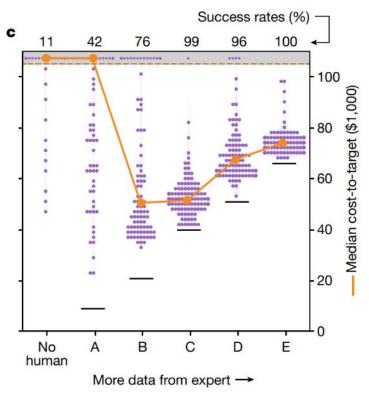
## o2 Speed-to-solution



## Faster development by AI-assisted approach

#### AI-human collaboration is the key

Our paper suggests that the "human first-computer last" approach improves the development speed and cost (Karen et al., *Nature* **616** (2023) 707)



#### AI-assisted process development

### Current approach (human only)



- Make hypothesis
- Design experiments
- Choose recipes
- Run experiments
- Perform metrology
- Data analysis
- \$1000/recipe
- 1 day/ batch

#### Future (human + Al)



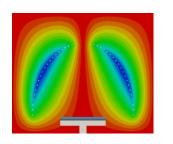


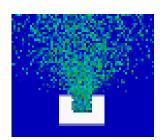
## Plasma modeling: speed-to-solution at Lam

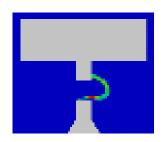
VizGlow™ as Lam in-house SW

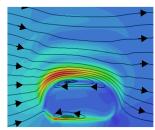
Lam acquired Esgee Technologies and VizGlow™ in 2022

Extensively used for modeling-driven HW design

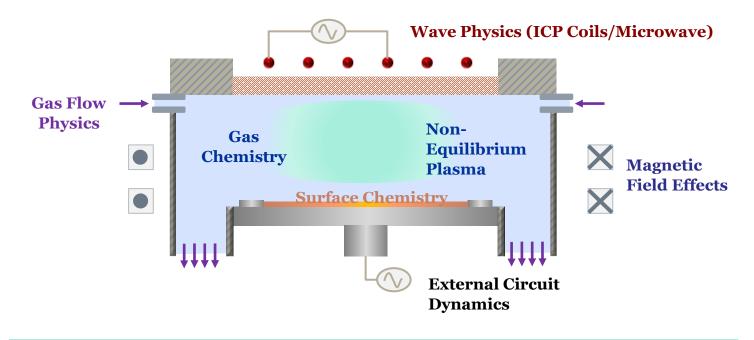








#### Overview





**Capacitively Coupled Plasmas (CCP)** 

**Inductively Coupled Plasmas (ICP)** 

**Direct Current Plasmas (DC)** 

**Atmospheric Pressure Plasmas (APP)** 

**Microdischarges (MD)** 

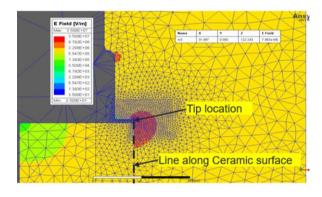
**Microwave Plasmas (MWP)** 



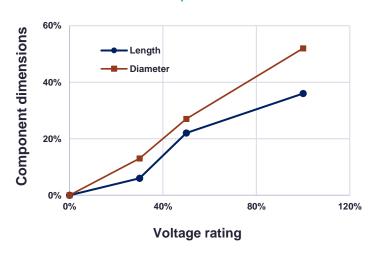
## Modeling: Addressing the Challenges of Advanced Etch

Meeting the power scaling demands of 3D architectures places significant limitations on the RF design of critical power delivery subsystems.

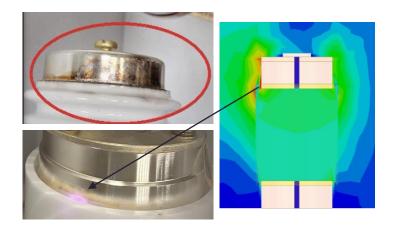
#### Creepage distance



#### Component size



Arcing / Component Reliability



- Cooling (Triboelectric effects)
- -----





- ☐ Advanced modeling and simulation tools are no longer optional; they are crucial for efficiently designing, optimizing and validating transformative technologies
- ☐ In semiconductor etch systems, the continuous flow of coolants through insulated lines can induce electrostatic charge build up resulting in arcing and damage to coolant lines.

#### **EM Interference**





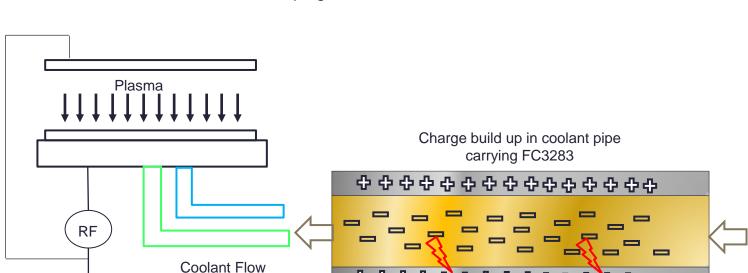
## Modeling The Triboelectric Effect

#### **Background**

- Friction between dissimilar materials causes charge build-up
  - -Nature of the coolant flowing through the tubing generates charge buildup
- This charge build-up over time causes arcing

#### Research in other industries

- Petro-chemical, consumer electronics
- Flow of gasoline through pipes caused arcing and resulted in catastrophic explosions
  - -Research to prevent such scenarios resulted in developing models



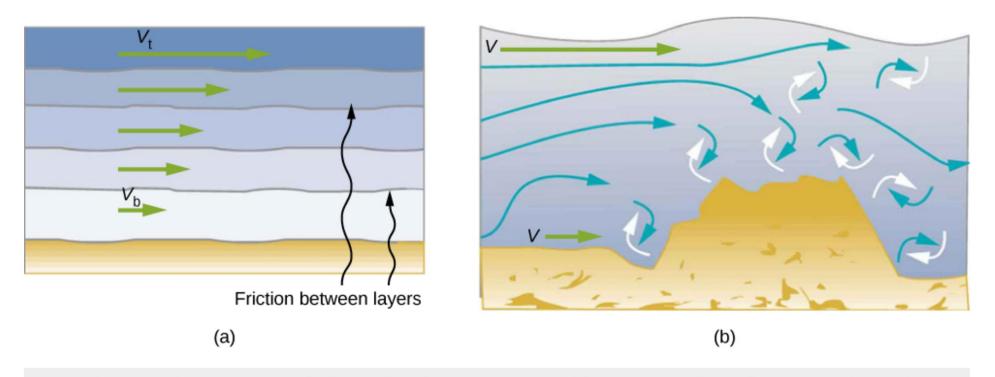




Damaged coolant lines



## Turbulent Kinematic Viscosity (Dt) captures eddy action

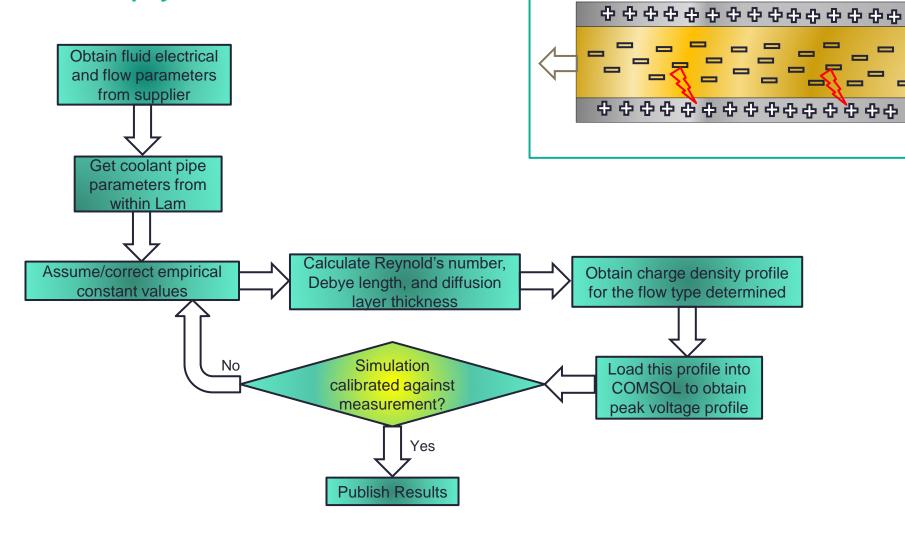


**Figure 14.34** (a) Laminar flow occurs in layers without mixing. Notice that viscosity causes drag between layers as well as with the fixed surface. The speed near the bottom of the flow  $(v_b)$  is less than speed near the top  $(v_t)$  because in this case, the surface of the containing vessel is at the bottom. (b) An obstruction in the vessel causes turbulent flow. Turbulent flow mixes the fluid. There is more interaction, greater heating, and more resistance than in laminar flow.

Friction not only exists between fluid and pipe but also between internal layers of the fluid itself

### Tribo-electric Model Overview

Flow Chart to model the physics of flow electrification





## Flow chart details with equations

#### 1) Get the following parameters of the coolant from supplier

• Relative permittivity ( $\varepsilon_r$ ), Electrical conductivity ( $\sigma$ ), Kinematic Viscosity ( $\nu$ ), Density of fluid ( $\rho$ )

#### 2) Obtain the following coolant pipe information from within Lam

• Pipe radius (a), Pipe length (L1), Velocity of fluid flow (Um), Temperature of fluid flow (T)

#### 3) Derive empirical constants using experiment and modeling

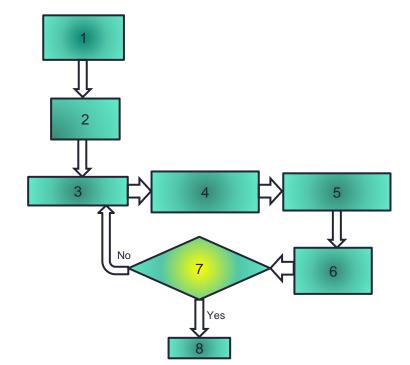
- · initially assume values come back and correct
- *m*, *k*, *n*, *At2*, and Diffusion coefficient (*D*) which is dependent on Temperature and velocity of fluid flow

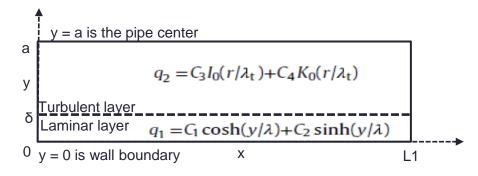
#### 4) Calculate the following parameters to determine flow type

- Reynold's number  $Re = \frac{2aUm}{v}$ 
  - If Re >3500 flow is turbulent otherwise it is laminar flow
- Schmitt's number  $S = \frac{v}{D}$ 
  - Which gives diffusion sublayer thickness  $\boldsymbol{\delta}$
- Debye length  $\lambda = \left(\frac{D\varepsilon_0\varepsilon_r}{\sigma}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$
- 5) Obtain charge density distribution for the flow type determined [1]
- 6) Load charge density into Poisson's to get Voltage, E-fields

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{p} = \rho_{v} = q_1, q_2$$

#### 7) Simulation vs Measurement calibration



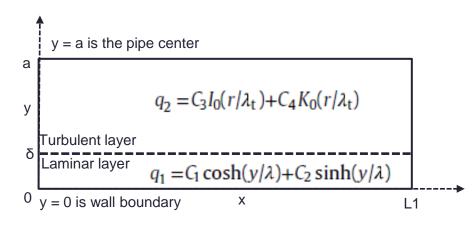


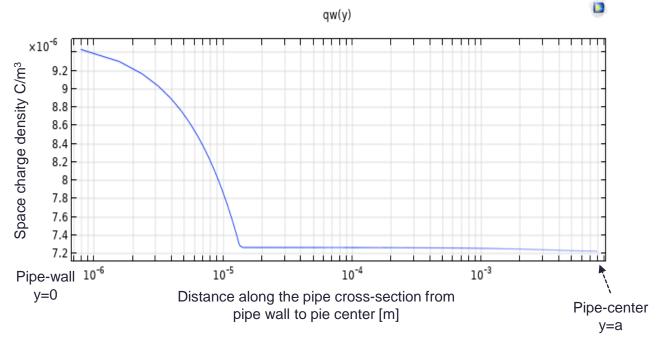
## Fluid dynamic parameters for FC3283

Parameters	Fluorinert FC-3283
Radius of pipe, a [m]	0.00787
Length of pipe, L1 [m]	0.6096
Average Velocity, Um [m/s]	1.45
Density, ρ [kg/m³]	1820
Relative permittivity, $\epsilon_{\rm r}$	1.89
Conductivity of fluid, $\sigma$ [S/m]	1e-13
Molecular diffusion coefficient, Dm [m²/s]	1e-9
Kinematic viscosity, v [m²/s]	0.75e-6

Derived Parameters	Fluorinert FC-3283
Reynold's number : Re	30,431
Schmitt's number	750
Diffusion sub-layer thickness: δ [m]	1.35e-5
Debye Length: λ [m]	4.1e-4

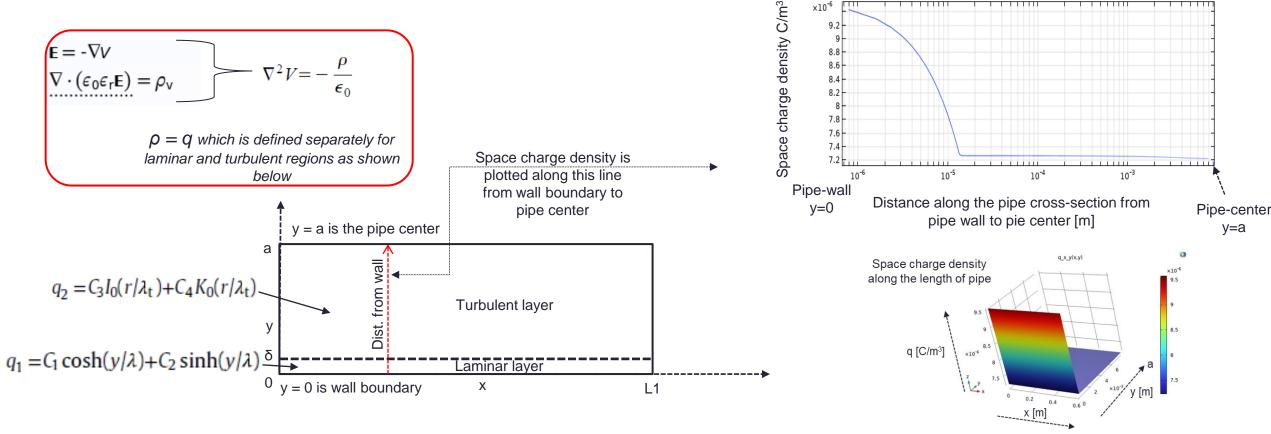
- Our fluid parameters indicate turbulent regime since Re>3500 and the flow region should have both laminar and turbulent layers
- This space charge density profile is applied along the entire length of the pipe in COMSOL electrostatics module





## Poisson Equation to get voltage distribution in COMSOL

Stationary Study

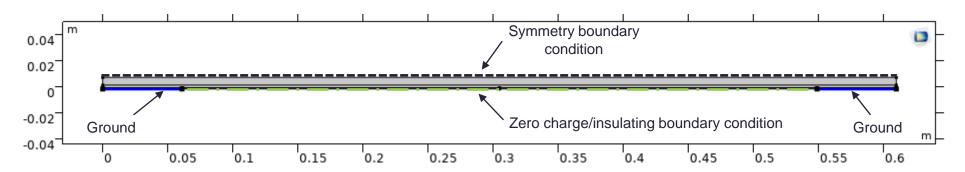


Fluid dynamics and electrostatic equations are combined to determine the triboelectric effect of coolant pipes

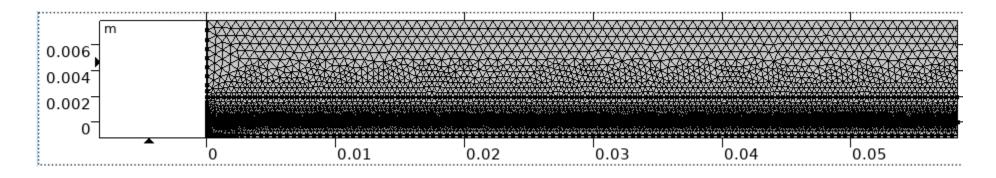


qw(y)

## Boundary Conditions and Meshing in COMSOL model



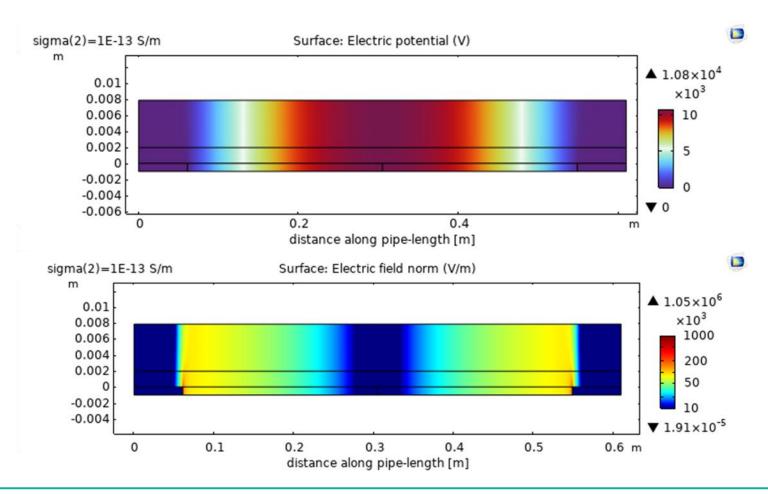
Boundary conditions applied in COMSOL model



Diffusion layer near the wall is very narrow, and for accurate representation of the fluid dynamics within this layer, mesh element should be of the order of Debye Length



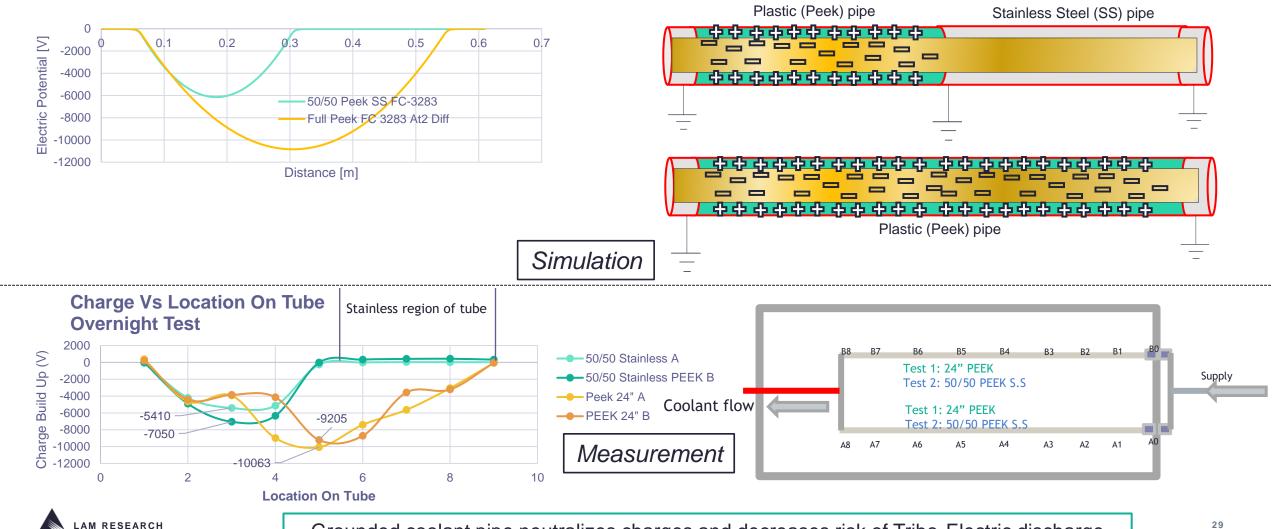
## Results in COMSOL model



Max voltage is at the center of the tube and Max E-field is between the grounded stainlesssteel part and the dielectric tube

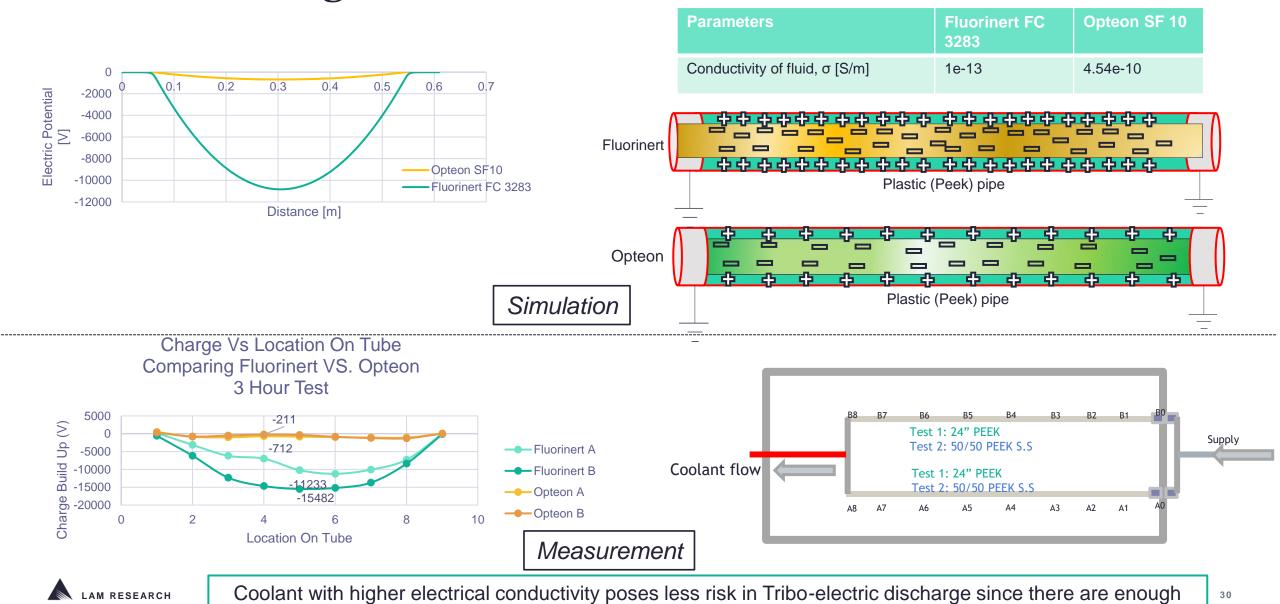


### Simulation vs Measurement



Grounded coolant pipe neutralizes charges and decreases risk of Tribo-Electric discharge

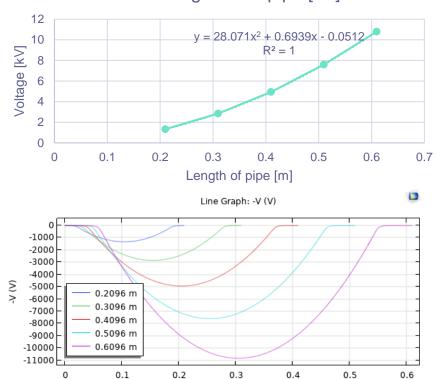
## Coolant Change: Simulation vs Measurement



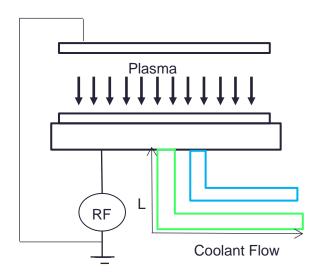
charge carriers to neutralize the arc risk

## Peak Voltage Dependence on Length of Pipe

#### Peak Voltage in the pipe [kV]



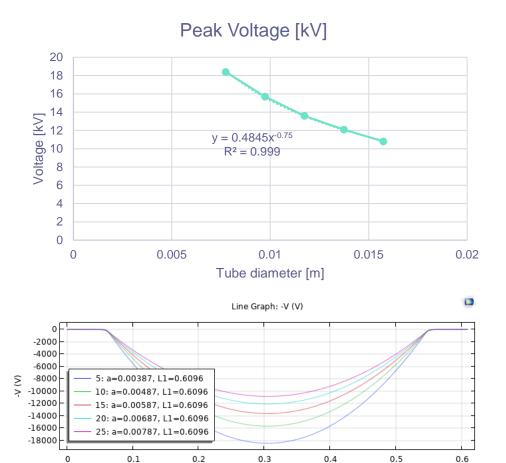
Arc length (m)



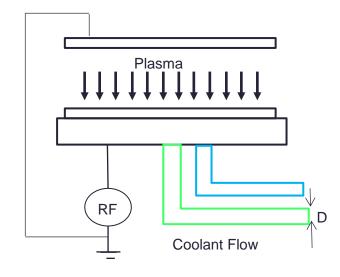
Peak voltage is directly proportional to the length of pipe and results reasonably agree with [3]



## Peak Voltage Dependence on Diameter of Pipe



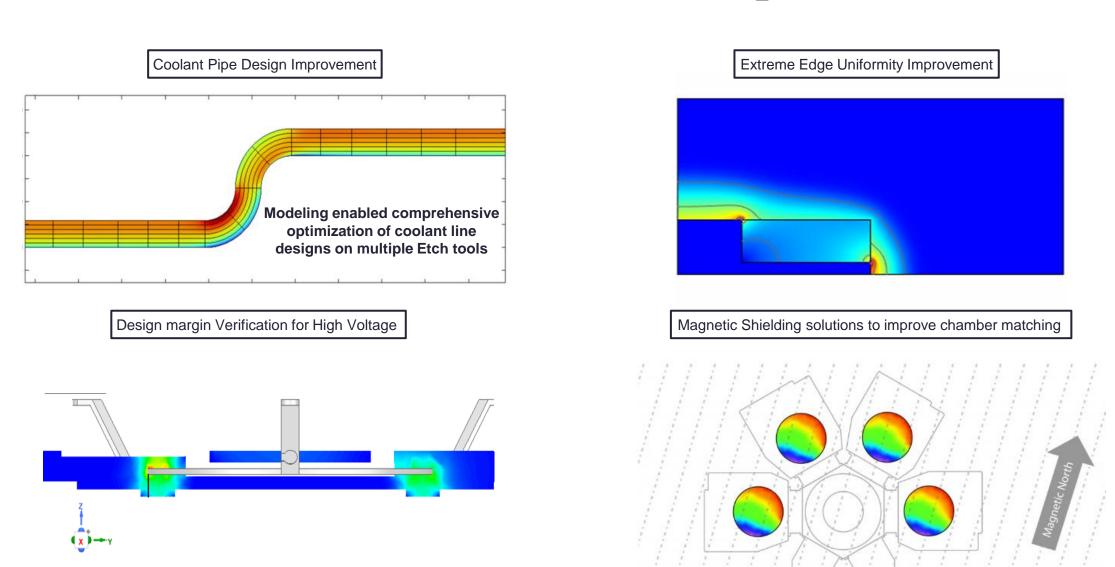
Arc length (m)



Peak voltage is inversely proportional to the tube diameter and results reasonably agree with [3]



## Model Based Solutions to RF related problems

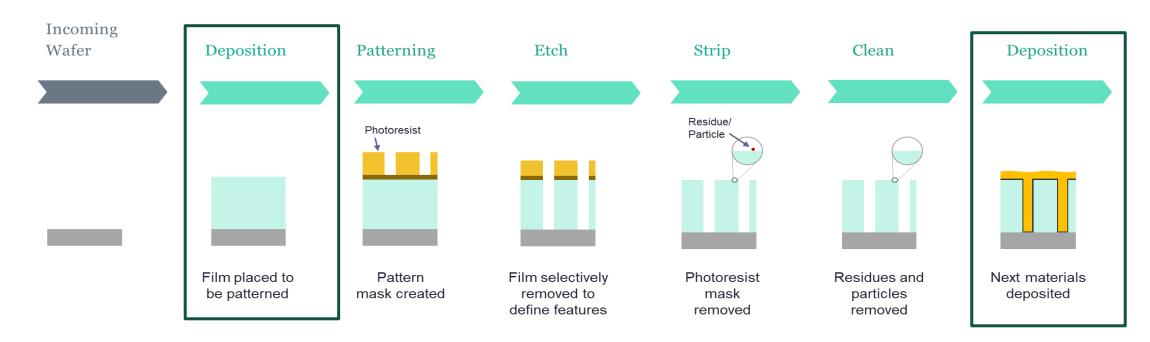


LAM RESEARCH

# Technology and challenges in deposition



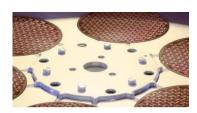
## Deposition Engineering at Lam Research



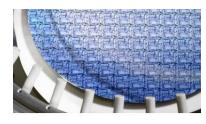
#### Lam's Deposition Product Portfolio



**ALTUS Product Family** 



Reliant Deposition Products



SPEED Product Family



Striker Product Family

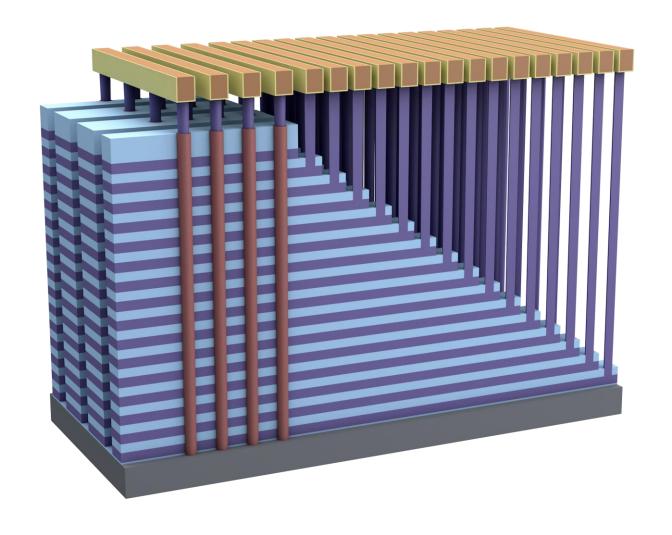


**VECTOR Product Family** 



Source: Lam Generated

## Deposition processes in 3D NAND





# Typical plasma-based deposition processes

Two main branches, similar physics executed differently

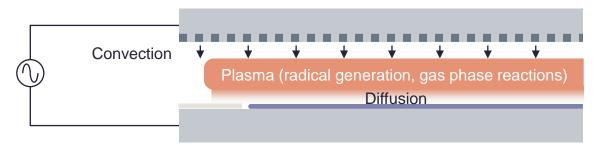
- PECVD plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition
- PEALD plasma enhanced atomic layer deposition

Many physical processes contribute to final film

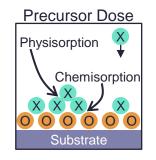
- Non-equilibrium chemistry
- Electrodynamics
- Fluid transport
- Thermal transport
- Surface kinetics

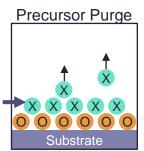
Gas pressure	~1 Torr to >10 Torr
Gas temperature	~200°C to >500°C
Inter-electrode gap	~5mm to 15mm
Gas mean free path	~10µm to 100µm
Gas species	He, Ar, N <sub>2</sub> , O <sub>2</sub> , H <sub>2</sub> , NH <sub>3</sub> , SiH <sub>4</sub> , TEOS,

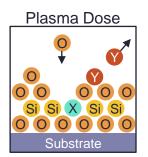
### Plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD)

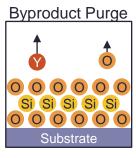


## Plasma-enhanced atomic layer deposition (PEALD)









# Plasma sources used in deposition

	Capacitively-coupled (CCP)	Inductively-coupled (ICP)	Wave-coupled (MW)
Frequency	Up to ~100 MHz	Up to ~100 MHz	Up to 100 GHz
Pressure range		1-10 Torr	
Uniformity	Excellent	Good	Poor
Max plasma density	Low ( $< \sim 10^{17} \text{ m}^{-3}$ )	Medium (< ~10 <sup>19</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> )	High (< ~10 <sup>20</sup> m <sup>-3</sup> )
Radical generation degree	Low	High	Medium to high
Ion-assisted or remote		Both possible with SHD	
Cost	Low	Medium	High



# CCP for PECVD/PEALD: ionization at (pre-)sheath

Parallel plate CCP

Top electrode

Plasma

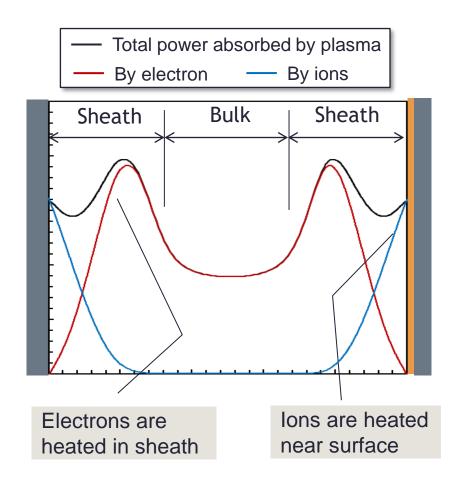
Wafer

Bottom electrode

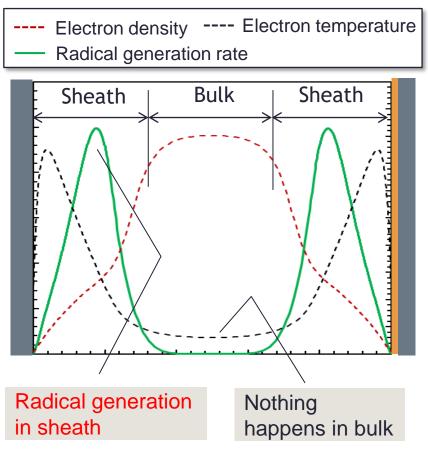
#### **ASSUMPTION**

- 13.56 MHz
- No wall, no edge effect
- Single positive ion species

RF power is absorbed in plasma sheath



Radicals are generated in plasma sheath





# Grand challenges: plasma instability

# Background

Plasmas react to changing boundary conditions due to deposition and may become unstable.

Wafers exposed to unstable plasmas need to be discarded.

Most are not understood at a predictive level, forces empirical hardware development

## Examples of plasma instabilities observed in PECVD/PEALD

#### **MICRO-ARCING ON WAFER**



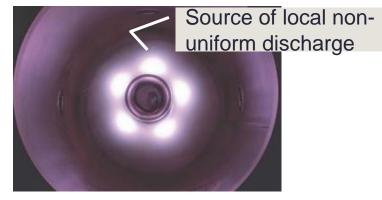
J.J. Ye, ASMC (2024)

#### **CATHODE SPOT**



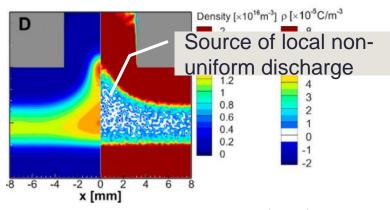
E. Yan, ECS Transactions, 18 (2009) 581

#### **PLASMOID**



Mackey et al., Appl. Math. Lett. (2005)

#### **HOLLOW CATHODE DISCHARGE**



H Park, Front. Phys., 11 (2023) 37994.



# Grand challenges: edge uniformity control

#### Problem statements

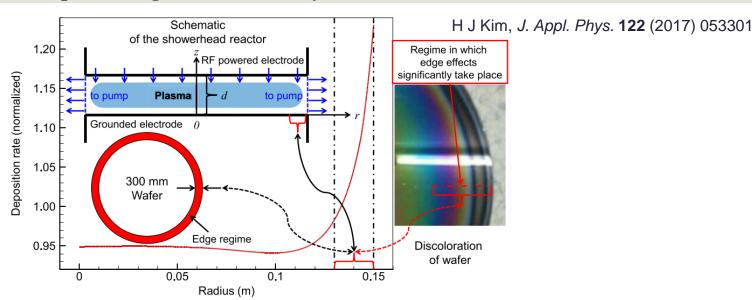
Most customers need thickness uniformity to be < 1%, which typically means a variation of < 1nm or just a few monolayers.

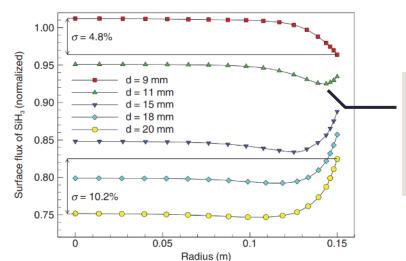
The non-uniformity problem is located near the edge of wafer and electrode due to inherent discontinuities.

Plasma, flow, and temperature are known to cause non-uniformity.

However, achieving precise control is challenging due to the non-linear interactions involved.

# Examples of edge non-uniformity





H J Kim, *Plasma Sources Sci. Technol.* **25** (2016) 065006

Modeling of radical flux on wafer at various electrode gap

There seems to be no solution to achieve <1% uniformity



# Grand Challenges: independent control of radicals/ions

#### Problem statements

Managing film stress is essential for controlling wafer bow, independent of film thickness

lons drive film stress, while radicals govern the deposition rate

Traditional dual frequency methods cannot independently control ions and radicals

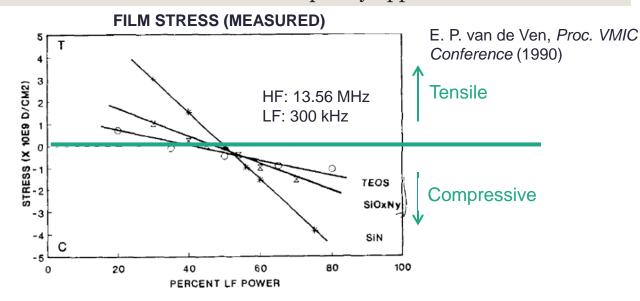
Radical/ion flux	Film stress
High	Tensile
Low	Compressive



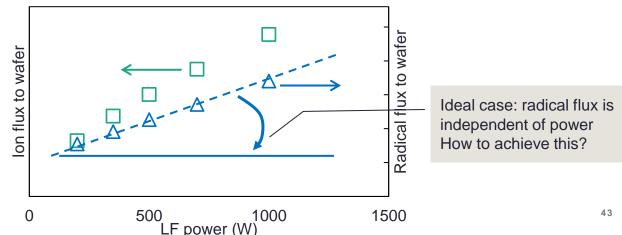


# LAM RESEARCH

## Limitation of conventional dual frequency approach







# Grand Challenges: in-situ plasma metrology

#### Problem statements

Abnormal plasmas and process drift needs to be detected and corrected

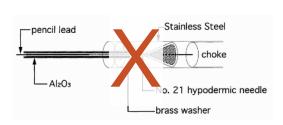
In-situ plasma monitoring is a key to enable AI-assisted automated detection and correction.

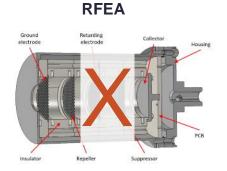
However, conventional plasma metrology is not capable of providing critical information.

## Unique challenges in plasma metrology for PECVD/PEALD

Categories	Requirement
Chemical resistance	F-based and CI-based chemistry
Thermal resistance	>500°C
Process transparency	No impact to process performance
Temporal information	> 100Hz sampling rate
Spatial information	Resolution higher than 5mm
Pressure	> ~1 Torr

#### LANGMUIR PROBE







# MASS SPECTROMETER Aperture and Cylinder lens Quadrupole

photon-stop



# Collaboration with academia: U Michigan

#### Collaborator

 Prof. John Foster, Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences, University of Michigan

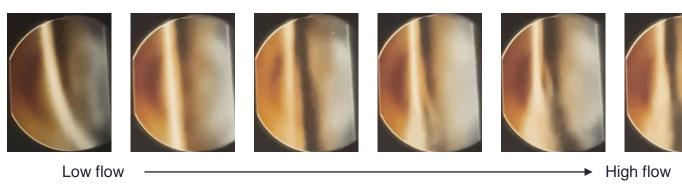
## Topic

 Identify methods of stabilizing atmospheric plasma jets in argon

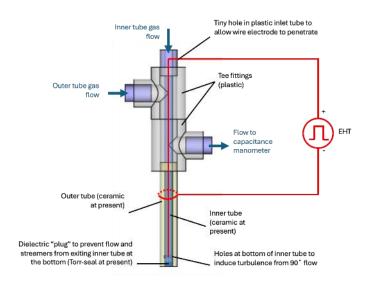
# Summary

- Developed unique jet geometry to induce turbulent transport
- Visible imaging has demonstrated significant reduction in filamentation at turbulent conditions

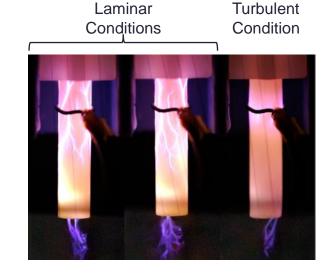
#### **SCHLIEREN IMAGING OF PLASMA JET**



#### SCHEMATIC OF PLASMA JET



#### **VISUAL APPEARANCE OF PLASMA JET**



# Collaboration with academia: NC State

#### Collaborator

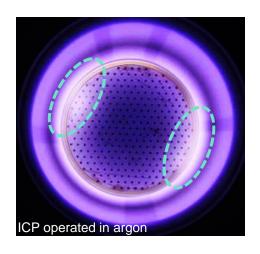
 Prof. Amanda Leitz, Department of Nuclear Engineering, North Carolina State University

## Topic

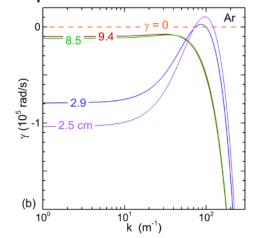
- Understanding of mechanisms of plasma instability
- Development of models to predict unstable conditions

## Summary

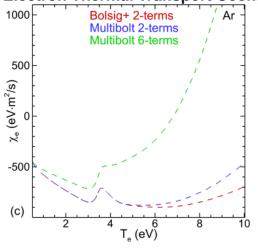
 Demonstrated importance of higher-order Boltzmann solvers for electron thermal transport



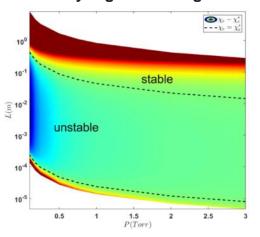
#### **Dispersion relation for striations**



#### **Electron Thermal Transport Coeff.**



#### Stability regions for argon ICP





# Collaboration with national labs: Sandia

#### Collaborator

Dr. Brian Bentz, Sandia National Laboratories

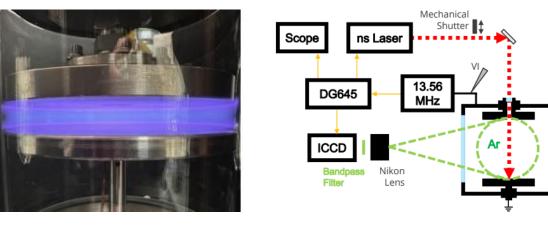
## Topic

 Fundamental mechanisms of in-situ secondary electron emission from surfaces exposed to plasma

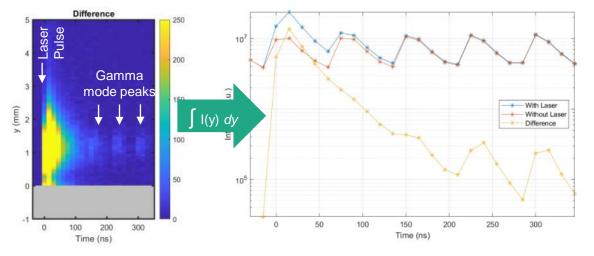
## Summary

- Completed experimental setup of phase-resolved OES with a UV laser
- Laser turns surface into a momentary photocathode, momentarily increasing ionization and light emission
- Damping of light reflects electron economy at surface

#### EXPERIMENTAL SETUP WITH PHASE-RESOLVED OES AND UV LASER



#### DIFFERENCE IN LIGHT INTENSITY BETWEEN WITH AND WITHOUT LASER





# Lam's product portfolio

Enabling technology with high productivity

# Deposition



Metal ECD

Ternary PLD

Metal ALD/CVD

Dielectric PECVD

Dielectric ALD

Dielectric HDP-CVD

# Etch



Conductor etch

Dielectric etch

Metal etch

Selective etch

TSV etch

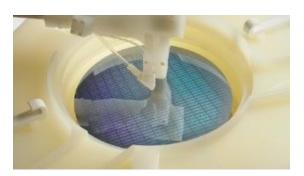
MEMS/Deep Si etch

# Strip



Stand-alone strip
Integrated strip

#### Clean



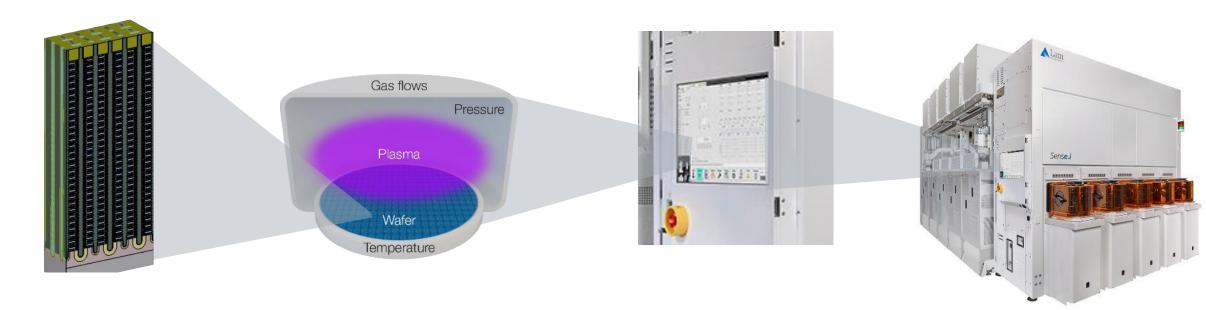
Spin wet clean
Plasma bevel clean



# O4 Careers at Lam Research



# Lam needs expertise in every high-tech discipline



#### **On-Wafer Process**

- Chemistry
- Chemical engineering
- Materials engineering
- Surfaces and interfaces

## **Sub-Systems**

 Circular chemical, energy, and water management

RF/Plasma technology

- i iessure control
- Temperature control
- Electrical Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering

#### **Software and Control**

- Algorithms
- Analytics
- · Computing and networking
- Data management
- Modeling and simulation
- Sensors
- Timing
- User experience

## **System**

- Adaptivity
- Architecture
- Automation
- Manufacturability
- Reliability
- Mechatronics
- Self-awareness
- Self-maintenance
- Serviceability





A global leader in wafer fabrication equipment and services since 1980

\$14.3B **REVENUE\***  \$1.7B R&D\*

~17,200 **EMPLOYEES\*** 



#### RECENT AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

**World's Most Admired Companies** Fortune

**America's Most Responsible Companies** Newsweek

**World's Top Female-Friendly Companies** Forbes

Best Places to Work For LGBTQ+ **Equality** 

Human Rights Campaign

100 Most Sustainable U.S. Companies Barron's

**Dow Jones Sustainability Index North America** S&P Global



\*Figures as of calendar year 2023.

# Our strengths set us apart



# Collaboration

Together we're stronger and smarter



#### Innovation

We solve the unsolvable



# Impact

We're a catalyst for global advancement

# Recent awards and recognition

World's Most Admired Companies

Fortune

America's Most Responsible Companies

Newsweek

World's Top Female-Friendly Companies

**Forbes** 

Best Places to Work for LGBTQ+ Equality

Human Rights Campaign 100 Most Sustainable U.S. Companies

Barron's

Dow Jones
Sustainability Index
North America

S&P Global



# Future opportunities at Lam Research

## Full-time Roles – Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level

- Process Engineers
- Product Engineers
- Electrical Engineers
- Mechanical Engineers
- Manufacturing Engineers
- Test Engineers
- Software Engineers
- Hardware Engineers

Majors Lam Research typically recruits for					
Chemical Engineering	Chemistry	Mechanical Engineering	Electrical Engineering		
RF Engineering	Materials Science	Industrial Engineering	Supply Chain		
Physics	Data Science	Al/Machine Learning	Business Functions		

### Internships – Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level

- Get hands on business experience that complements your academic studies and prepares you for real-world situations
- We hire interns each summer across our US offices (Tualatin, OR as well as Fremont and Livermore, CA)
- Relocation stipend is provided to students who go to school that is more than 50 miles from the office they will complete their internship in
- The intern program takes place during the summer with internships lasting ~12 weeks

## Interested in learning more?

• Check out our career page: www.lamresearch.com/careers/

Scan QR code to submit resume to recruiting team





# Q&A

