

# DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF MAGNETIC PINCH DIODE AS A HIGH BRIGHTNESS RADIOGRAPHIC SOURCE

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## *Abstract*

The Self Magnetic Pinch (SMP) diode has been developed from a low voltage (<2MV) to a high voltage (7-8MV) radiographic source as part of a program to build a Hydrodynamics research facility (Hydrus) at AWE Aldermaston.

Development of the initial AWE diode design has used the facilities and assistance of a number of UK and US laboratories and companies to carry out both experimental and theoretical investigations into the operation of the diode. Experimental campaigns have been carried out to both investigate the physics operation and to demonstrate performance on the RITS-3 and RITS-6 drivers at SNL, the Mercury and Gamble II drivers at NRL and the Mogul D and EROS drivers at AWE. Modelling of the diode has been carried out mainly using the Particle in Cell (PiC) code LsP.

It has been demonstrated that the diode has achieved the required radiographic performance for Hydrus and it will be used as the initial operational diode when the facility is commissioned. Research to develop a long term diode with improved performance is still continuing..

as a diagnostic for hydrodynamics experiments. A project is under way to improve the existing radiographic experimental facilities. This includes new multi-megavolt Pulsed Power drivers and diodes producing high intensity (hundreds of Rads at 1m), short duration (<100ns) pulses of radiation from small diameter (<2mm) sources.

Previous work had been done to establish radiographic requirements for these diodes [1]. The requirements have been stated in terms of output dose (in Rad at 1m) and radiographic source diameter (in mm). Two stages of requirements have been developed, day requirements which will be available for the commissioning of the facility and long term requirements which will be available for a future upgrade to the facility. The day 1 requirements have been further divided into Scaled and Full Scale experimental needs. The requirements are:

- a. Day 1, scaled: 250 Rads at 1m, <2.75mm
- b. Day 1, full scale: 600 Rads at 1m, <5mm
- c. Long term: 1000 Rads at 1m, <2mm.

The SMP diode has already been chosen to be used as the day 1 diode for both scaled and full scale experiments.

This paper describes the program of work which has taken place to inform that decision.

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Aldermaston currently use flash radiography

## **B. HIGH VOLTAGE OPERATION**

The SMP diode has been used for a low voltage (<2MV) radiographic source for

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## Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

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1. REPORT DATE <b>JUN 2007</b>	2. REPORT TYPE <b>N/A</b>	3. DATES COVERED <b>-</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Development Of The Self Magnetic Pinch Diode As A High Brightness Radiographic Source</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
		5b. GRANT NUMBER	
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
		5e. TASK NUMBER	
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>Naval Research Laborator,y Washington DC 20375, USA</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release, distribution unlimited</b>			
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>See also ADM002371. 2013 IEEE Pulsed Power Conference, Digest of Technical Papers 1976-2013, and Abstracts of the 2013 IEEE International Conference on Plasma Science. IEEE International Pulsed Power Conference (19th). Held in San Francisco, CA on 16-21 June 2013., The original document contains color images.</b>			
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15. SUBJECT TERMS			
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>	<b>SAR</b>
			18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>5</b>
			19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON

approximately 30 years at AWE on the Mevex and Mini-B drivers. Initial work in the program was based around demonstrating the diode operation at higher voltages. This began on the Single Pulse Forming Line (SPFL) machine Mogul D at AWE [2]. The envisaged pulsed power driver for use in the Hydrus facility is an Inductive Voltage Adder (IVA) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Proposed AWE Hydrus IVA machine**

As high voltage IVA drivers became available for use in the US, initially the RITS-3 (4-5MV) machine at SNL [3] and later the Mercury (6MV) machine at NRL [4]. The diode was tested on these drivers [5]. It proved to transfer to IVA drivers at higher voltage successfully, requiring only minor geometric changes to optimise its performance. Most recent high voltage demonstration shots have taken place on the upgraded SNL RITS-6 machine [6] at approximately 6.3MV where the diode produced 370Rad at 1m with a 2.7mm source diameter [7].

### C. PHYSICS INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations into the physics of the diode have been based in two areas:

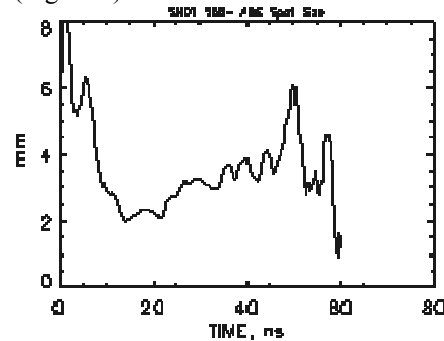
- a. Pinch physics – what causes the electron beam to pinch and how is this dependant upon the diode geometry and materials.
- b. Characterisation of plasmas created within the AK gap.

#### a. Pinch Physics

These investigations have taken place on the SNL RITS-3 driver and the AWE EROS driver.

The first stage of the work was to image the source to obtain its time resolved history. The SNL developed TRSD and AWE developed NSGC diagnostics were used to obtain this information [8]. The two systems complement each other with the TRSD producing one dimensional source diameter information

streaked in time throughout the radiation pulse and the NSGC giving two dimensional source diameter information at discrete time intervals. Between both systems, a time resolved history of the diode source diameter was achieved (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Time resolved history of SMP source diameter.**

This showed the diode to pinch to a small diameter within 10 – 15ns, it then remained at a small size until the pulsed power drive fell off, at which time the diameter began to grow. The second stage of the work was then to investigate how the geometry and materials used within the anode assembly affected the pinch. This work took place on the EROS driver at AWE [9]

A number of experiments took place in which the relative positions and dimensions of the foil and high Z converter target were varied. A lot of information concerned with the diode electrical behaviour (impedance) and radiographic performance (output dose, source diameter and uniformity) was gathered. It can be summarised by stating that the diode impedance and pinch behaviour appeared to be dominated by the thin aluminium foil positioned in front of the converter target. Good impedance and pinch behaviour took place as long as the foil was present.

#### b. Plasma Investigations

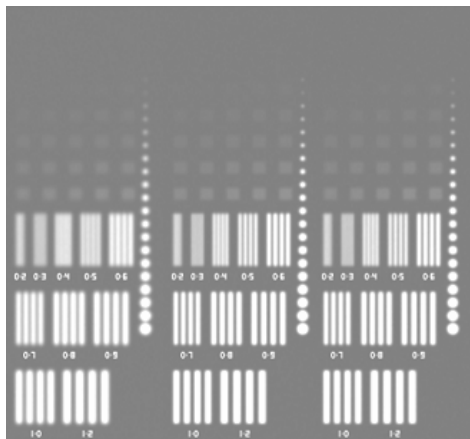
Expanding plasma within the anode cathode gap of the diode has historically been considered to be the mechanism which caused the diode to fail (characterised by collapsing impedance and low radiographic performance). A great deal of work has been carried out on a variety of drivers (RITS-3 and RITS-6 at SNL, Mercury at NRL and EROS at AWE) attempting to characterise the expanding plasmas. The work has been carried out in different phases.

Optical imaging of the plasma using both focussed fibre optics and with framing cameras to determine the source of the plasmas and their time evolution. (Figure 3)



AWE routinely use the Los Alamos developed Bayesian Inference Engine (BIE) code to forward model predicted radiographs. Improvements have been made to this code to allow the inclusion of a variety of line spread functions to more realistically model the radiographic source. Experimentally demonstrated radiographic sources as well as predicted ones have been used to predict the likely quality of radiographs that would be produced by the SMP diode within the Hydrus facility. The predicted radiographs also include best estimates for detector efficiencies and blurs as well as scatter backgrounds. Figure 8 shows predicted radiographs for three radiographic sources:

- The Hydrus required 14MeV, 600R, 5mm source
- A prediction of the SMP diode performance on the Hydrus IVA driver. 8MeV, 500R, 2.75mm.
- A demonstrated 7MeV, 375R, 2.75mm source.



(a) (b) (c)

**Figure 8. Predicted radiograph using SMP diode with different performance sources**

The predicted radiograph contains three types of test objects, tiles of different thickness, line pairs with different separations and holes of different diameters. Analysis of the radiograph shows that the even the lower performance 375R, 2.75mm source has equivalent radiographic performance as the required Hydrus source and the 500R, 2.75mm source exceeds the quality of the Hydrus required source.

**H. CONCLUSIONS**

As a result of a collaborative research program involving a number of US laboratories and companies, the SMP diode has been developed from a low voltage, low

aerial mass radiographic source to one that is capable of both scaled and full scale core punch radiography.

Performance of 350 – 400Rad@1m with a 2.7mm AWE definition spot size have been demonstrated at 6.3MV with performance predicted to improve to approximately 450 – 500 Rad@1m with a 2.5mm AWE definition spot size on the Hydrus IVA machine.

**I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Authors would like to thank the operations teams at the AWE EROS, SNL RITS-6 and NRL Mercury machines for assembling and firing the shots mentioned in this report.

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