

# DESIGN TIP

International Rectifier 233 Kansas Street El Segundo CA 90245 USA

## Estimating $T_J$ of SO-8 Power MOSFETs

by David Jauregui

### Background

It is a fundamental industry need to accurately measure junction temperature ( $T_J$ ) of power MOSFETs in an operating circuit. This need has led many designers to inquire how to accurately measure  $T_J$  for Power MOSFETs in SO-8 packages and question the  $R_{2JC}$  for these devices.<sup>1</sup> Several means to measure  $T_J$  for these power MOSFETs have been created throughout the industry. A common method used is the placement of a thermocouple on the top of the device. Another method is measuring the lead temperature and adding 10°C to 15°C to the measured temperature and assuming that was the  $T_J$ . An additional method would be the use of an infrared camera to measure case temperature.

### Method

In practice, the actual junction temperature of a power MOSFET in a SO-8 package is within 5°C of the measured case temperature of the device.<sup>2</sup> The case temperature ( $T_C$ ) can be best measured with an infrared camera. An alternative would be to use a small thermocouple and suitable meter. The most critical issue is the point of measurement, refer to Figure 1.

The hottest spot on an SO-8-packaged MOSFET is near the drain leads. Measuring at this location gives a close indication of the junction temperature. Technical details in the following paragraphs validate the method for use in thermal design verification.

### Validation

#### $R_2$ Measurements

To gain an intuitive understanding of why the  $\Delta T_{JC}$  is so small, one must look at how  $R_{2JC}$  relates to  $R_{2CA}$ ,  $R_{2JL}$ , and  $R_{2LA}$  for an SO-8 MOSFET.<sup>1</sup> Figure 2 depicts this relationship. Power dissipation ( $P_D$ ) conduction is split in two ways in Figure 2. The first path is through the leads of the device. This is how most heat is removed from the device in a practical application. The second path is through the case. Using an Ohm's Law analogy<sup>3</sup>, one can see that

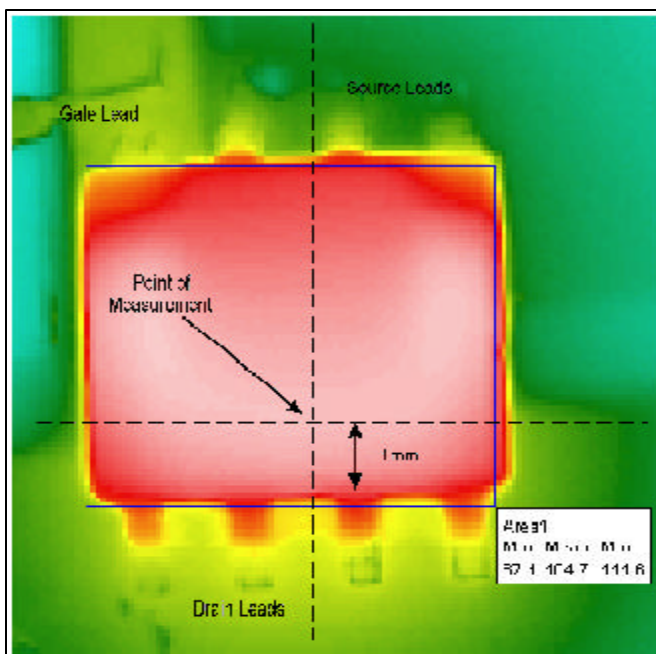


Figure 1. A critical issue in estimating junction temperature in an SO-8-packaged MOSFET is point of measurement. The hottest spot is near the drain leads on an SO-8 package.

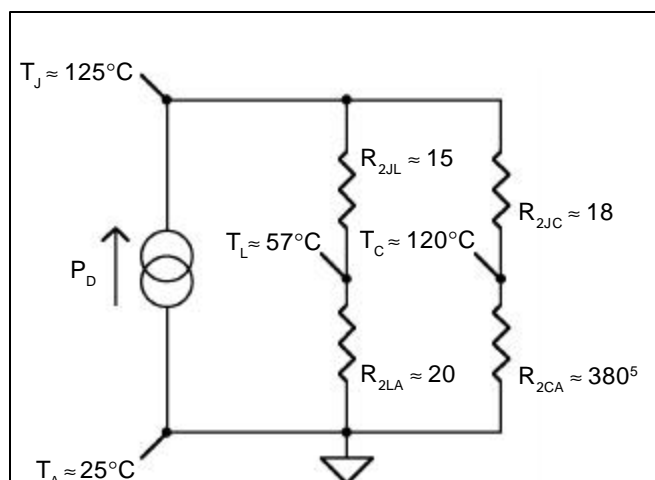
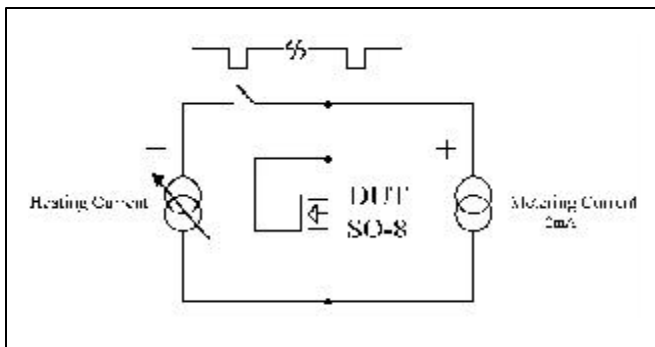


Figure 2. Typical  $R_2$ (°C/W) for SO-8 MOSFETs

the power that is dissipated through the case of the device will create a small  $\Delta T$  across  $R_{2JC}$ . In turn creating a very large  $\Delta T$  across  $R_{2CA}$ .

### $T_J$ and $\Delta T_{JC}$ Measurements

The  $\Delta T_{JC}$  of 5°C has been validated through the use of gate threshold voltage ( $V_{GTH}$ ) as a temperature sensitive electrical parameter (TSEP). The  $V_{GTH}$  of a MOSFET changes inversely with respect to its junction temperature. This is the foundation behind the circuit shown below.



The table below shows the results for some common International Rectifier SO-8 MOSFETs tested under similar conditions.

**$\Delta T_{JC}$  Results**

Device	$T_J$	$T_C$	$\Delta T_{JC}$	$P_D^4$
IRF7805	125°C	124°C	1°C	3.6W
IRF7807	124°C	121°C	3°C	3.5W
IRF7809	126°C	125°C	1°C	3.6W
IRF7811	126°C	124°C	2°C	3.9W

The variances in  $\Delta T_{JC}$  are due to instrumentation errors. These measurement errors account for the +/-1°C variation. For example:

- Infrared camera measurement error
- Metering current distribution over surface of die
- Voltage meter error
- Current meter error

### Conclusion

$R_{2JC}$  creates a difference in temperature that is typically less than 5°C without a heat sink, in still air. Therefore, adding 5°C to the measured case temperature of an SO-8 MOSFET is an effective means to get a close indication of the junction temperature.

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> $R_{2JC}$  - Thermal resistance junction-to-case (°C/W)  
 $R_{2CA}$  - Thermal resistance case-to-ambient (°C/W)  
 $R_{2JL}$  - Thermal resistance junction-to-lead (°C/W)  
 $R_{2LA}$  - Thermal resistance lead-to-ambient (°C/W)

<sup>2</sup> No heat sink on device. Still air conditions.

<sup>3</sup> Substitute temperature for voltage and  $P_D$  for current in Ohm's Law.

<sup>4</sup>  $R_{2JC} \neq (\Delta T_{JC} / P_D)$  for the thermal environment of this measurement.

<sup>5</sup> An exact value for  $R_{2CA}$  is difficult to measure. In order for this measurement to be true, the device must be thermally isolated so the heat is only dissipated through the top of the package. The value used in Figure 2 for  $R_{2CA}$  was derived through a series of tests.

First,  $R_{2CA}$  testing on an SO-8 MOSFET was done in free air. The resulting value was 190°C/W. Then, an imperfect form of isolation was used on the bottom of the case, leaving the leads exposed. The goal was to get an intuitive idea of how much of an increase in  $R_{2CA}$  would be created by isolating only the bottom of the device. The measured value for  $R_{2CA}$  was 310°C/W, an increase of 63%. It is intuitive that if the device had been isolated (case sides, bottom and leads) by a perfect material, then the final measured  $R_{2CA}$  would be at least twice the value of the  $R_{2CA}$  measured in free air.

International  
**IR** Rectifier

World Headquarters  
 233 Kansas Street  
 El Segundo, CA 90245 USA  
 Technical Assistance Center: 310-252-7105  
 Fax: 310-252-7903  
[www.irf.com](http://www.irf.com)