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Standard Guide for Measuring Widths of Interfaces in Sputter Depth Profiling Using SIMS¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1438; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides the SIMS analyst with a method for determining the width of interfaces from SIMS sputtering data obtained from analyses of layered specimens (**both organic and inorganic**). This guide does not apply to data obtained from analyses of specimens with thin markers or specimens without interfaces such as ion-implanted specimens.

1.2 This guide does not describe methods for the optimization of interface width or the optimization of depth resolution.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E673 [Terminology Relating to Surface Analysis](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 See Terminology E673 for definitions of terms used in SIMS.

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide will allow interface widths to be calculated from plots of SIMS secondary ion intensity versus time that are acquired during sputtering of layered specimens. It assumes that a primary ion beam with a stable current density is being used. Briefly, these plots are obtained in the following fashion: an ion beam of a particular ion species, ion energy, and angle of incidence is used to bombard a sample. The beam is rastered or defocused so as to attempt to produce uniform current density in the analyzed area, that is defined by means of mechanical or electronic gating. The intensity of one or more secondary ions is monitored with respect to time as sputtering continues.

4.2 The interface width is then determined from the secondary ion intensity versus time data according to an arithmetic model described in the Procedure section. A measurement of the thickness of the layer overlying the interface is required. This measurement may be performed by another analytical technique.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Although it would be desirable to measure the extent of profile distortion in any unknown sample by using a standard sample and this guide, measurements of interface width (profile distortion) can be unique to every sample composition (**1, 2, 32**).³ This guide, ~~that~~ describes a method that determines the unique width of a particular interface for the chosen set of operating conditions. It is ~~primarily~~ intended to provide a method for checking on proper or consistent, or both, instrument performance. Periodic analysis of the same sample followed by a measurement of the interface width, in accordance with this guide, will provide these checks.

5.2 The procedure described in this guide is adaptable to any layered sample with an interface between layers in which a nominated element is present in one layer and absent from the other. It has been shown that for SIMS in particular (**43, 54**) and for surface analysis in general (**65, 76**), only rigorous calibration methods can determine accurate interface widths. Such procedures

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The boldface numbers given in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this guide.