SPRAY COATING

The spray coating of substrates with a photoresist can then be an alternative to spin-coating if the substrate size or its surface does not allow spin-coating with the required homogeneity.

This chapter describes the technology of spray coating, the processes between the formation of droplets on the spray head and the finished resist film and provides explanations and answers to frequently asked problems in connection with the spray coating.

Basics of Spray Coating

Basic Principle

In the case of spray coating, the resist film is deposited from atomised photoresist with typical droplet sizes in the μm range. The droplets are formed via, for example, a nitrogen-filled nozzle and / or via ultrasonic atomisation and land on the substrate surface carried by an air or nitrogen flow where they combine to form a closed resist film.

Possible Advantages

In addition to a very high resist yield (at least theoretically), the spray coating offers the potential to coat arbitrarily shaped substrates in which spin-coating is not technically feasible or does not provide the results required with respect to homogeneity and edge coverage of the resist film over textures.

For example, it is theoretically possible, in the case of textured substrates, to provide the grooves, sidewalls and edges of the textures with a uniform resist film thickness.

Limitations

In practice, most of the resist droplets land in the exhaust and only a small portion on the substrate. The attainable resist yield achieves typical values of 5 - 15%, which are still significantly greater than with spin-coating.

Due to micro-turbulences above the surface of textured substrates, the resist film is not uniformly thick over the textures, but rather usually thinned at the top edges, and thickened in the grooves near the sidewalls.

The formation of thin (<1 μm) and closed resist films is difficult because the landing sites of the droplets follow a statistical distribution. Thus, a minimum critical droplet density is required to allow the aggregation of the droplets to a closed film.

Atomised Spray Formation

Equipment

The technically simplest way to produce an atomised spray is the atomisation of the resist from a nozzle as done with conventional airbrush guns. In order to prevent contamination of the resist with particles or atmospheric humidity condensing on the low pressure side of the spray nozzle, it is recommended to use pure nitrogen.

Another possibility is ultrasonic atomisation, in which the resist is atomised via a high-frequency mechanical vibration applied to the

Fig. 60: The schematic way from the atomised resist to a closed film on the substrate
resist and is conducted onto the substrate by a carrier gas.

**Resist**

Each technology for droplet generation requires a certain low resist viscosity of usually a few cSt. Varying the resist viscosity impacts the droplet generation rate as well as the droplet diameter distribution. When diluting resists with a solvent, one has to consider possible incompatibilities of certain solvents with the resist, as well as the fact that highly diluted photoresists generally reveal an accelerated ageing of the resist in the diluted state with particle formation as a consequence.

**Processes in Atomised Spray**

**Solvent Evaporation**

It's important that a certain percentage of the solvent evaporates out of the droplets during flight between spray nozzle and substrate to achieve a sufficient resist edge coverage onto textured substrates: The hereby increased resist viscosity prevents the resist from macroscopically converge on the substrate and withdrawing from the edges of textures. However, the viscosity of the resist film should allow a smoothing of the resist film in the µm-scale.

If, however, too much solvent evaporates during flight, the formation of a closed resist film is inhibited. In the worst case, the droplets lose too much solvent, form resin particles, which not stick to the substrate. The parameters temperature, droplet velocity (relative to the ambient air) and air solvent vapour saturation as well as the solvent composition and concentration determine the evaporation rate for each droplet as a function of its diameter and its surface solvent concentration. This surface concentration again depends on the temperature and solvent concentration dependant diffusion constant of the solvent from the droplet bulk to its surface.

In practice, the composition of at least two solvents with different vapour pressures (e.g. PGMEA with MEK or Acetone) is used for resist dilution in order to adjust the viscosity for each process.

**Transport of Droplets to The Substrate**

The free falling speed of µm-sized spheres in air is very low, for spherical droplets with the density of photoresist far less than 1 mm/s. For a coating, the droplet transport by a carrier gas is therefore required, which is attained by the nitrogen used for the atomisation at the nozzle, in case of ultrasonic atomisation by a corresponding carrier gas flow.

Immediately above the substrate surface to be coated, a laminar flow dominates in part parallel to the surface, in part through a texture-defined turbulent flow, which can make uniform coating of edges and trenches more difficult.

Fig. 62 shows how a closed, smooth resist film forms with time on a smooth substrate (a non-textured silicon wafer) during the spray coating.

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Fig. 61: Modelled cross sections of resist on a textured substrate. The bottom left image reflects optimum edge coverage, while the other two images show what happens if the resist viscosity is too low for too long time (centre) or, respectively, when the resist wetting and adhesion is not optimum (right).
Wetting, Edge Coverage and Roughness of the Resist Film

Wetting
An optimised substrate pretreatment is required to improve the wetting of the resist droplets on the substrate which is a precondition for the formation of a closed resist film.
A good wetting or adhesion can be attained using an optimised substrate pre-treatment.

Smooth Resist Surface and Optimised Edge Coverage: Always a Compromise
A resist film viscosity that is too low (or, respectively, a remaining solvent concentration that is too high) for a long time causes macroscopic resist flowing thereby reducing the edge coverage of the resist film in the case of textured substrates which can be covered here only very thinly or not at all by the resist. The resist film surface, however, becomes comparably smooth.
An excessively high viscosity of the droplets landing on the substrate (or the already formed resist film) prevents the resist from flowing thereby improving the edge coverage. The resist film surface, however, becomes rather rough - in extreme cases, the droplets keep sticking there in their original form on the substrate where they have landed.

Parameters for Influencing the Edge Coverage and Smoothness of the Resist Film
In order to find the optimum compromise between a smooth resist film, and (if required), a good edge coverage, the resist film viscosity and its time dependency after the droplets landed onto the substrate has to be adjusted. For this purpose, many parameters can be varied.
An improved edge coverage with the compromise of a tendency toward a less smooth resist film can be attained if the resist droplets landing on the substrate through an accelerated evaporation in flight be-
between the spray head and the substrate are sufficiently highly viscous which is possible via:

• A low initial fraction of high-boiling solvents (such as PGMEA) in the spray resist

• Smaller droplet diameters (e.g. via a higher initial solvent concentration or by adjusting the spray nozzle settings)

• Increasing the distance (and thus the droplet flight time) between the spray nozzle and the substrate surface

Alternatively or in addition an accelerated evaporation from the just-formed resist film can improve the edge coverage via:

• A substrate heated to approx. 40-60°C

• A reduced spray rate gives the growing resist film more time for solvent evaporation

The opposite measures can help to improve the smoothness of the resist film - but at the expense of a tendency towards an inferior edge coverage.

**Suitable Spray Resist**

By means of a suitable solvent composition, it is principle possible to apply a spray resist made from any resist, which is why, in the case of the resist selection, one should primarily evaluate which positive, image reversal or negative resists are required with which resolution for which application of the developed resist film.

The optimal composition with high-boiling and low-boiling solvents depends, on the one hand, on the substrate and on the criterion of whether a smooth resist film or maximum edge coverage is most important and on the other hand, on equipment-driven parameters such as the technology used for atomised spray generation, spray rate and the distance between the spray nozzle and the substrate.

With resists such as the AZ® 4999 or the TI spray, there are some ready-to-use spray resists suitable for most applications. Adjustments to the solvent composition for an optimisation of the coating result may nevertheless be advisable. We will gladly advise you.
### Positive Developer

**AZ® 1500**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 0.5 µm

**AZ® 4500**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 3 - 5 µm

**AZ® P4000**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 1 - 2 µm
- **Recommended Developers**: AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF

**AZ® PL 177**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 3 - 8 µm

**AZ® 4999**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 1 - 15 µm

**Spray coating**
- MC Dip Coating Resist
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 2 - 15 µm

**Dip coating**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 2 - 15 µm

### Positive (chem. amplified)

**AZ® XT**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 3 - 5 µm

**AZ® 701 MR**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 0.8 µm

### Image Reversal

**AZ® 5200**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 1 µm

**Ti**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 3 - 4 µm

### Negative Resist sidewalls in combination with no thermal softening for lift-off application

**AZ® nLOF 2000**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 1.5 - 3 µm

**AZ® nLOF 5500**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 0.7 - 1.5 µm

### Negative (Cross-Linking)

**AZ® nXT**
- **Resist Film Thickness**: 2 - 3 µm

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<td>Improved adhesion for wet etching, no focus on steep resist sidewalls</td>
<td>AZ® 1500</td>
<td>AZ® 1505, AZ® 1512 HS, AZ® 1514 H, AZ® 1518</td>
<td>≈ 0.5 µm</td>
<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<td>AZ® 4500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AZ® P4000</td>
<td>AZ® P4110, AZ® P4330, AZ® P4620, AZ® P4903</td>
<td>≈ 1 - 2 µm</td>
<td>AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AZ® PL 177</td>
<td>AZ® PL 177</td>
<td>≈ 3 - 8 µm</td>
<td>AZ® 315B, AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AZ® 4999</td>
<td></td>
<td>≈ 1 - 15 µm</td>
<td>AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<td>Spray coating</td>
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<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<td>Steep resist sidewalls, high resolution and aspect ratio for e. g. dry etching or plating</td>
<td>AZ® ECI 3000, AZ® ECI 3012, AZ® ECI 3027</td>
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<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<td>AZ® 9200</td>
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<td>AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AZ® 701 MR (14 cPs)</td>
<td>AZ® 701 MR (29 cPs)</td>
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<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF, AZ® 826 MIF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevated thermal softening point and high resolution for e. g. dry etching</td>
<td>AZ® XT</td>
<td>AZ® 12 XT-20PL-05, AZ® 12 XT-20PL-10, AZ® 12 XT-20PL-20, AZ® 40 XT</td>
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<td>AZ® 400K, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF</td>
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<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevated thermal softening point and undercut for lift-off applications</td>
<td>AZ® 5200</td>
<td>AZ® 5209, AZ® 5214</td>
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<td>AZ® 351B, AZ® 326 MIF, AZ® 726 MIF</td>
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<td>Ti</td>
<td>Ti 35ESX, Ti xLift-X</td>
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<td>Metal ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative resist sidewalls in combination with no thermal softening for lift-off application</td>
<td>AZ® nLOF 2000</td>
<td>AZ® nLOF 2020, AZ® nLOF 2035, AZ® nLOF 2070</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metal ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AZ® nLOF 5500</td>
<td>AZ® nLOF 5510</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metal ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved adhesion, steep resist sidewalls and high aspect ratios for e. g. dry etching or plating</td>
<td>AZ® nXT</td>
<td>AZ® 15 nXT (115 cPs), AZ® 15 nXT (450 cPs)</td>
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<td>Metal ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AZ® 125 nXT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Metal ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers</td>
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</table>

**Inorganic Developers**

AZ® Developer is based on sodium phosphate and –metasilicate, is optimized for minimal aluminum attack and is typically used diluted 1 : 1 in DI water for high contrast or undiluted for high development rates. The dark erosion of this developer is slightly higher compared to other developers.

AZ® 351B is based on buffered NaOH and typically used diluted 1 : 4 with water, for thick resists up to 1 : 3 if a lower contrast can be tolerated.

AZ® 400K is based on buffered KOH and typically used diluted 1 : 4 with water, for thick resists up to 1 : 3 if a lower contrast can be tolerated.

AZ® 303 specifically for the AZ® 111 XFS photoresist based on KOH / NaOH is typically diluted 1 : 3 - 1 : 7 with water, depending on whether a high development rate, or a high contrast is required.

**Metal Ion Free (TMAB-based) Developers**

AZ® 326 MIF is 2.38 % TMAH- (TetramethylammoniumHydroxide) in water.
Our Removers: Application Areas and Compatibilities

AZ® 100 Remover is an amine solvent mixture and standard remover for AZ® and Ti photoresists. To improve its performance, AZ® 100 remover can be heated to 60 - 80°C. Because the AZ® 100 Remover reacts highly alkaline with water, it is suitable for this with respect to sensitive substrate materials such as Cu, Al or ITO only if contamination with water can be ruled out.

TechniStrip® P1316 is a remover with very strong stripping power for Novolak-based resists (including all AZ® positive resists), epoxy-based coatings, polyimides and dry films. At typical application temperatures around 75°C, TechniStrip® P1316 may dissolve cross-linked resists without residue also, e.g. through dry etching or ion implantation. TechniStrip® P1316 can also be used in spraying processes. For alkaline sensitive materials, TechniStrip® P1313 would be an alternative to the P1316. Nicht kompatibel mit Au oder GaAs.

TechniStrip® P1331 can be an alternative for TechniStrip® P1316 in case of alkaline sensitive materials. TechniStrip® P1331 is not compatible with Au or GaAs.

TechniStrip® N1555 is a stripper with very strong dissolving power for Novolak-based negative resists such as the AZ® 15 nXT and AZ® nLOF 2000 series and very thick positive resists such as the AZ® 40 XT. TechniStrip® N1555 was developed not only to peel cross-linked resists, but also to dissolve them without residues. This prevents contamination of the basin and filter by resist particles and skins, as can occur with standard strippers. TechniStrip® N1555 is not compatible with Au or GaAs.

TechniClean™ CA25 is a semi-aqueous proprietary blend formulated to address post etch residue (PER) removal for all interconnect and technology nodes. Extremely efficient at quickly and selectively removing organo-metal oxides from Al, Cu, Ti, TiN, W and Ni.

TechniStrip™ NFS2 is a highly effective remover for negative resists (liquid resists as well as dry films). The intrinsic nature of the additives and solvent make the blend totally compatible with metals used throughout the BEOL interconnects to WL bumping applications.

TechniStrip™ Micro D2 is a versatile stripper dedicated to address resin lift-off and dissolution on negative and positive tone resist. The organic mixture blend has the particularity to offer high metal and material compatibility allowing to be used on all stacks and particularly on fragile III/V substrates for instance.

TechniStrip™ MLO 07 is a highly efficient positive and negative tone photoresist remover used for IR, III/V, MEMS, Photonic, TSV mask, solder bumping and hard disk stripping applications. Developed to address high dissolution performance and high material compatibility on Cu, Al, Sn/Ag, Alumina and common organic substrates.

Our Wafers and their Specifications

Silicon-, Quartz-, Fused Silica and Glass Wafers

Silicon wafers are either produced via the Czochralski- (CZ-) or Float zone- (FZ-) method. The more expensive FZ wafers are primarily reasonable if very high-ohmic wafers (> 100 Ohm cm) are required. Quartz wafers are made of monocrystalline SiO₂, main criterion is the crystal orientation (e. g. X-, Y-, Z-, AT- or ST-cut) and the state of the surface (polished, 1- or 2-side polished).

Fused silica wafers consist of amorphous SiO₂. The so-called JGS2 wafers have a high transmission in the range of ¼ 280 - 2000 nm wavelength, the more expensive JGS1 wafers at ¼ 220 - 1100 nm.

Our glass wafers, if not otherwise specified, are made of borosilicate glass.

Specifications

Common parameters for all wafers are diameter, thickness and surface (1- or 2-side polished). Fused silica wafers are made either of JGS1 or JGS2 material, for quartz wafers the crystal orientation (<100> or <111>) is the main criterion as well as the resistivity (Ohm cm) for silicon wafers, besides the crystal orientation (<100> or <111>) the doping (n- or p-type) as well as the resistivity (Ohm cm) are selection criteria.

Prime-, Test-, and Dummy Wafers

Silicon wafers usually come as „Prime-grade“ or „Test-grade“, latter mainly have a slightly broader particle specification. „Dummy-Wafers“ neither fulfill Prime- nor Test-grade for different possible reasons (e. g. very broad or missing specification of one or several parameters, reclaim wafers, no particle specification) but might be a cheap alternative for e. g. resist coating tests or equipment start-up.

Our Silicon-, Quartz-, Fused Silica and Glass Wafers

Our frequently updated wafer stock list can be found here: www.microchemicals.com/products/wafers/waferlist.html

Further Products from our Portfolio

Plating

Plating solutions for e. g. gold, copper, nickel, tin or palladium: www.microchemicals.com/products/electroplating.html

Solvents (MOS, VLSI, ULSI)

Acetone, isopropyl alcohol, MEK, DMSO, cyclopentanone, butylacetate, ... www.microchemicals.com/products/solvents.html

Acids and Bases (MOS, VLSI, ULSI)

Hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, nitric acid, KOH, TMAH, ... www.microchemicals.com/products/etchants.html

Etching Mixtures

for e. g. chromium, gold, silicon, copper, titanium, ... www.microchemicals.com/products/etching_mixtures.html
Further Information


Our Photolithography Book and -Posters

We see it as our main task to make you understand all aspects of microstructuring in an application-oriented way. At present, we have implemented this claim with our book Photolithography on over 200 pages, as well as attractively designed DIN A0 posters for your office or laboratory.

We will gladly send both of these to you free of charge as our customer (if applicable, we charge shipping costs for non-European deliveries):
www.microchemicals.com/downloads/brochures.html
www.microchemicals.com/downloads/posters.html

Thank you for your interest!

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All information, process descriptions, recipes, etc. contained in this book are compiled to the best of our knowledge. Nevertheless, we cannot guarantee the correctness of the information. Particularly with regard to the formulations for chemical (etching) processes we assume no guarantee for the correct specification of the components, the mixing conditions, the preparation of the batches and their application.

The safe sequence of mixing components of a recipe usually does not correspond to the order of their listing. We do not warrant the full disclosure of any indications (among other things, health, work safety) of the risks associated with the preparation and use of the recipes and processes. The information in this book is based on our current knowledge and experience. Due to the abundance of possible influences in the processing and application of our products, they do not exempt the user from their own tests and trials. A guarantee of certain properties or suitability for a specific application can not be derived from our data. As a matter of principle, each employee is required to provide sufficient information in advance in the appropriate cases in order to prevent damage to persons and equipment. All descriptions, illustrations, data, conditions, weights, etc. can be changed without prior notice and do not constitute a contractually agreed product characteristics. The user of our products is responsible for any proprietary rights and existing laws.

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