

An Experimental Analysis of RowHammer in HBM2 DRAM Chips

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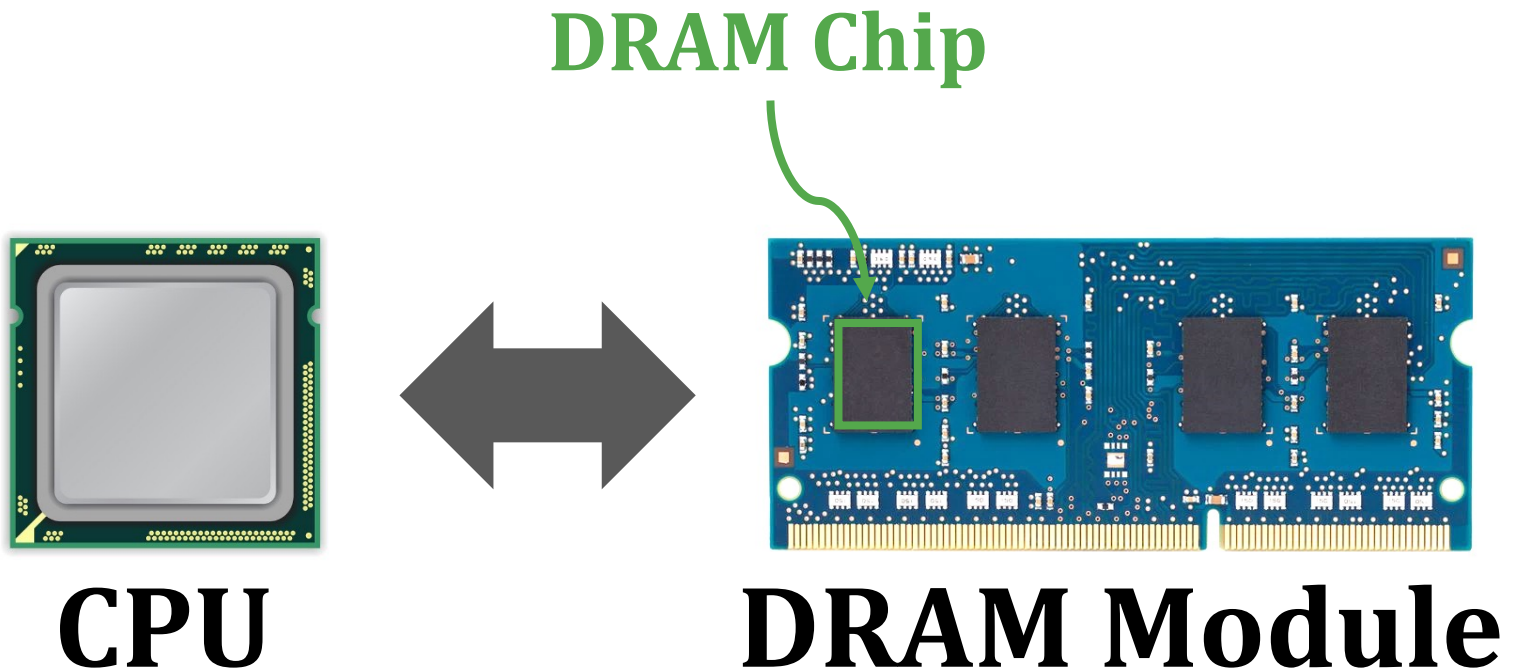
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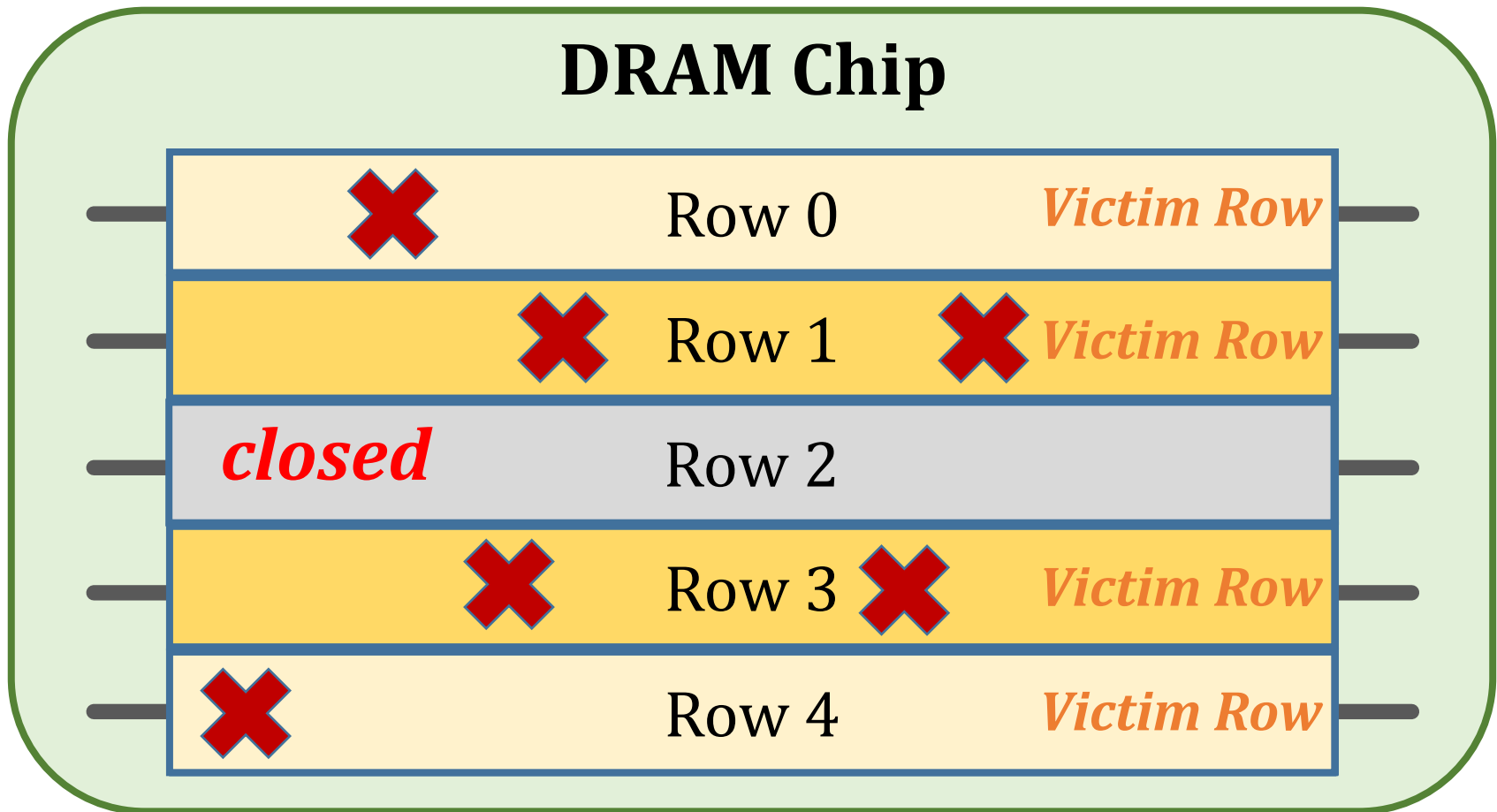


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The RowHammer Vulnerability (I)

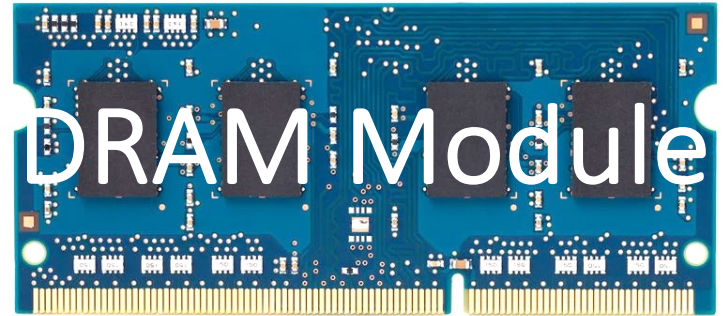
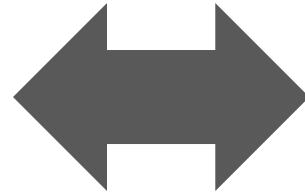
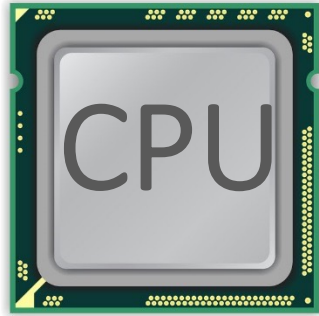


The RowHammer Vulnerability (II)

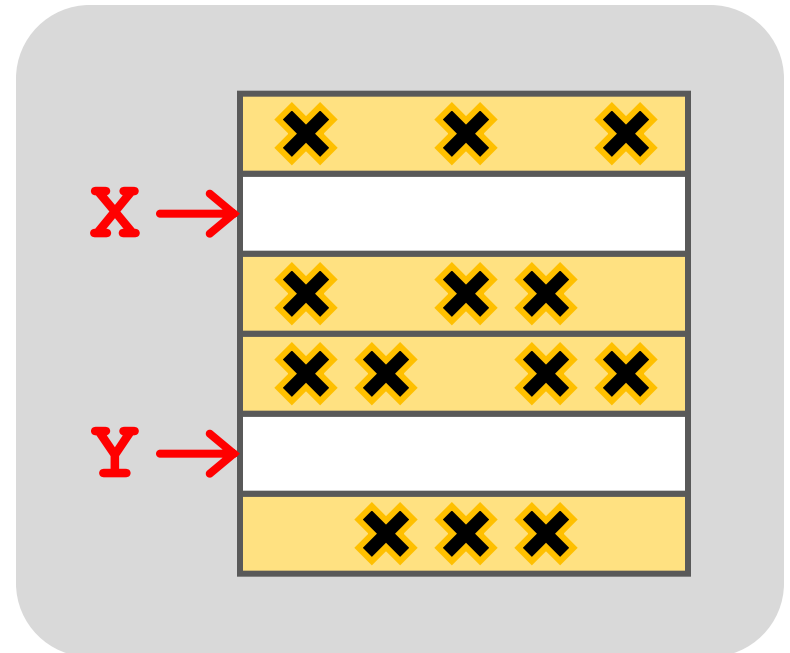


Repeatedly **opening** (activating) and **closing** (precharging) a DRAM row causes **RowHammer bit flips** in nearby rows

A Simple Program Can Induce Bitflips



```
loop:  
  mov (X), %eax  
  mov (Y), %ebx  
  clflush (X)  
  clflush (Y)  
  mfence  
  jmp loop
```



One Can Take Over a System

Flipping Bits in Memory Without Accessing Them: An Experimental Study of DRAM Disturbance Errors

Abstract. **Memory isolation** is a key property of a reliable and secure computing system — an access to one memory address should not have unintended side effects on data stored in other addresses. However, as DRAM process technology

Project Zero

[Flipping Bits in Memory Without Accessing Them:
An Experimental Study of DRAM Disturbance Errors](#)
(Kim et al., ISCA 2014)

News and updates from the Project Zero team at Google

Monday, March 9, 2015

[Exploiting the DRAM rowhammer bug to
gain kernel privileges](#) (Seaborn, 2015)

Exploiting the DRAM rowhammer bug to gain kernel privileges

Most DRAM Modules Are Vulnerable (2020)

DRAM type-node	Number of Chips (Modules) Tested			
	Mfr. A	Mfr. B	Mfr. C	Total
DDR3-old	56 (10)	88 (11)	28 (7)	172 (28)
DDR3-new	80 (10)	52 (9)	104 (13)	236 (32)
DDR4-old	112 (16)	24 (3)	128 (18)	264 (37)
DDR4-new	264 (43)	16 (2)	108 (28)	388 (73)
LPDDR4-1x	12 (3)	180 (45)	N/A	192 (48)
LPDDR4-1y	184 (46)	N/A	144 (36)	328 (82)

All tested DRAM types are susceptible to RowHammer bitflips

What about High Bandwidth Memory (HBM)?

Executive Summary

Motivation: HBM chips have **new architectural characteristics** (e.g., 3D-stacked dies) that **might affect** the RowHammer vulnerability in various ways

Understanding RowHammer enables designing **effective and efficient solutions**

Problem: No prior study demonstrates the RowHammer vulnerability in HBM

Goal: **Experimentally analyze** how vulnerable **HBM** DRAM chips are to **RowHammer**

Experimental Study: Detailed **experimental characterization** of RowHammer in a **modern** HBM2 DRAM chip. Our study provides two main findings:

1. Spatial variation of RowHammer vulnerability

- Different **channels** in a 3D-stacked HBM chip exhibit **different RowHammer vulnerability**
- DRAM **rows near the end of a DRAM bank** are more RowHammer **resilient**

2. On-DRAM-die RowHammer mitigations

- A modern HBM chip **implements** undisclosed on-DRAM-die RowHammer mitigation
- The mitigation refreshes a victim row after **every 17 periodic refresh operations** (e.g., similar to DDR4 chips)

Outline

1. HBM DRAM Organization & Operation
2. DRAM Cell Leakage & RowHammer
3. HBM DRAM Testing Methodology
4. RowHammer Spatial Variation Analysis
5. On-die RowHammer Mitigation Analysis
6. Conclusion

Outline

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2. DRAM Cell Leakage & RowHammer

3. HBM DRAM Testing Methodology

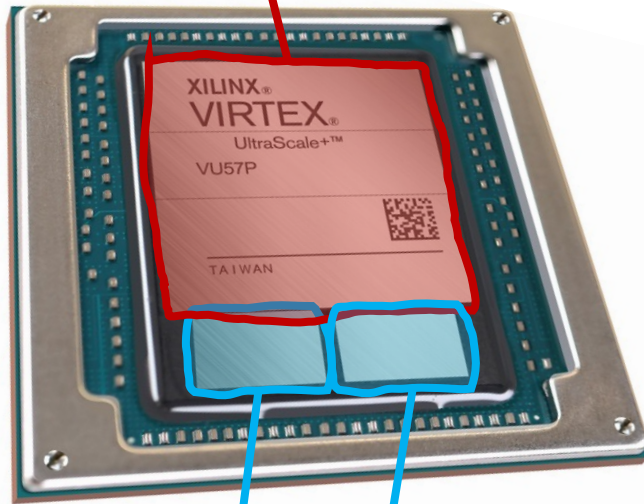
4. RowHammer Spatial Variation Analysis

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System with High Bandwidth Memory

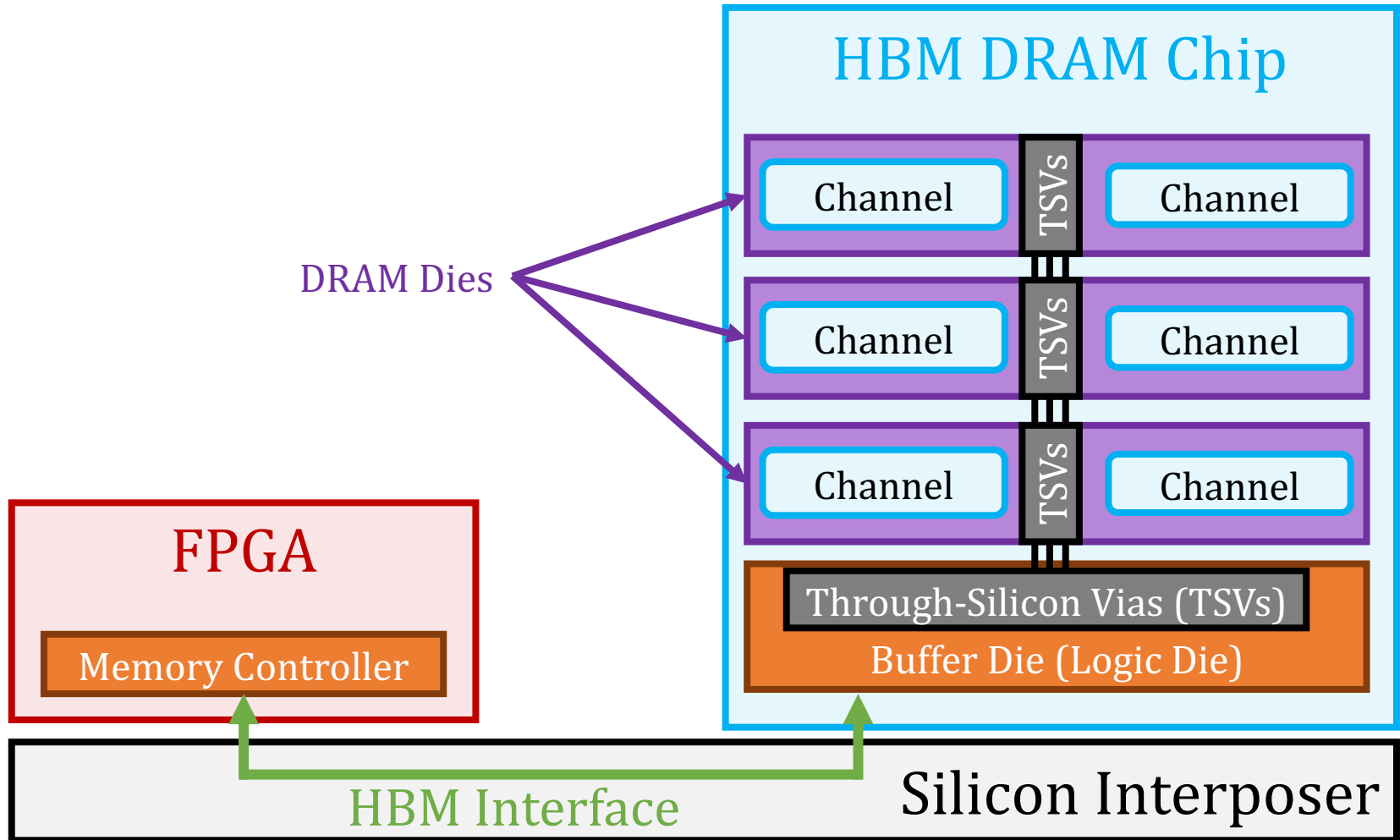
Compute Chip (e.g., FPGA)



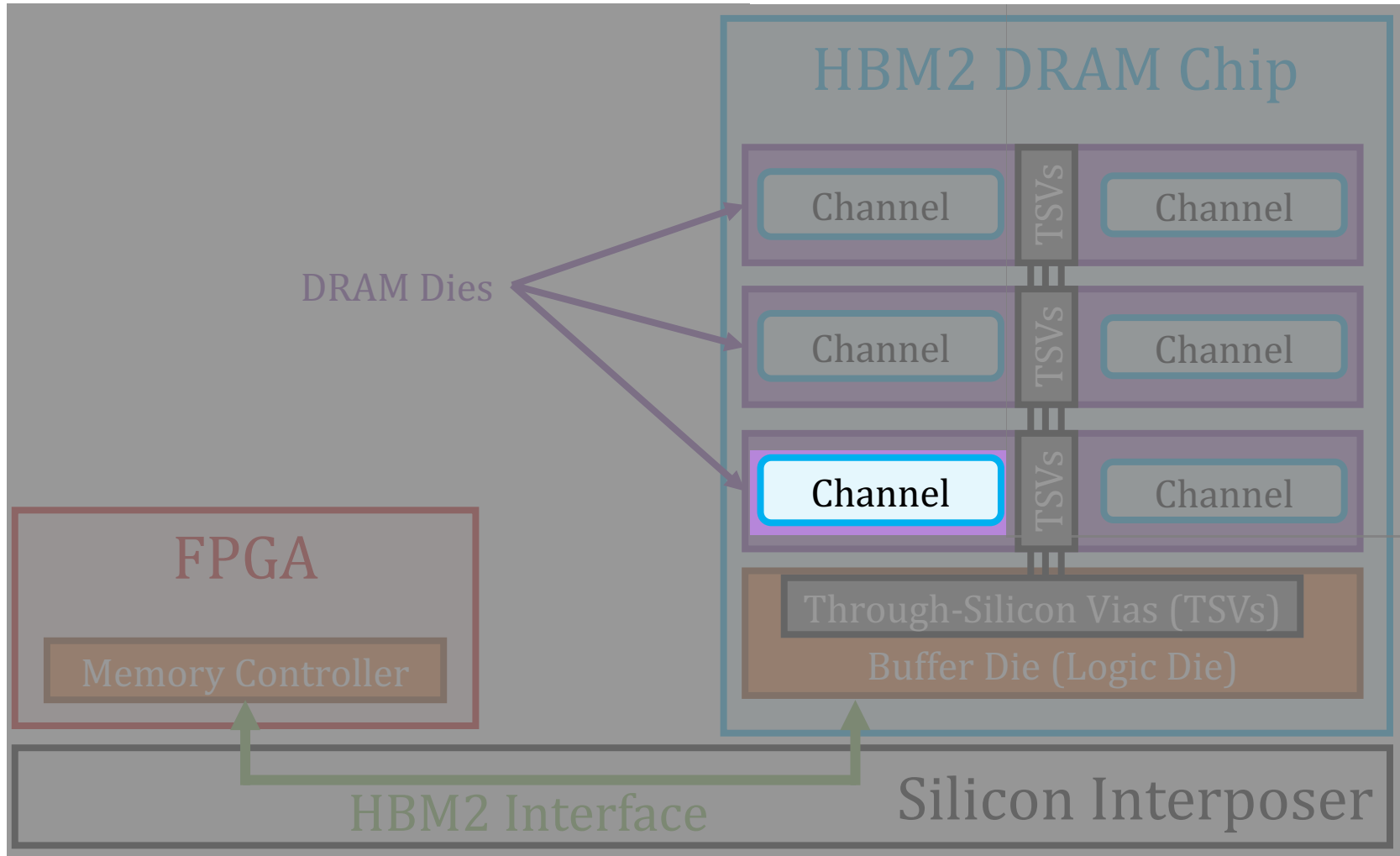
Memory Chip
(e.g., HBM DRAM)

Inside one **package**

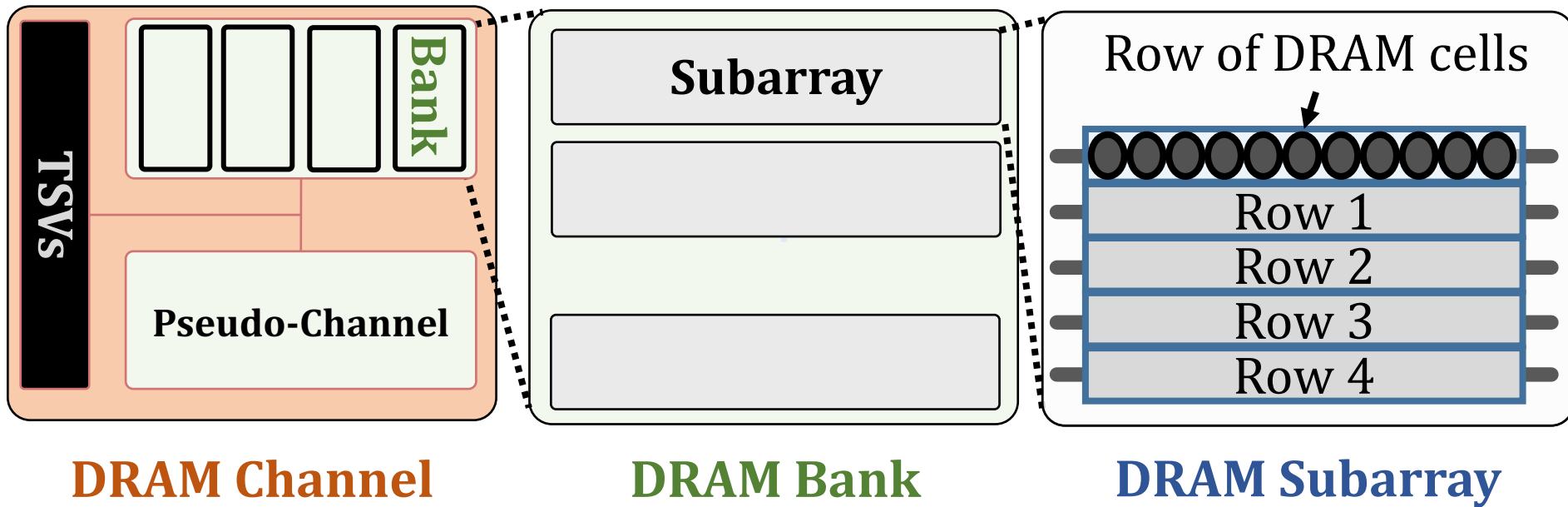
HBM DRAM Organization (I)



HBM DRAM Organization (I)



HBM DRAM Organization (II)



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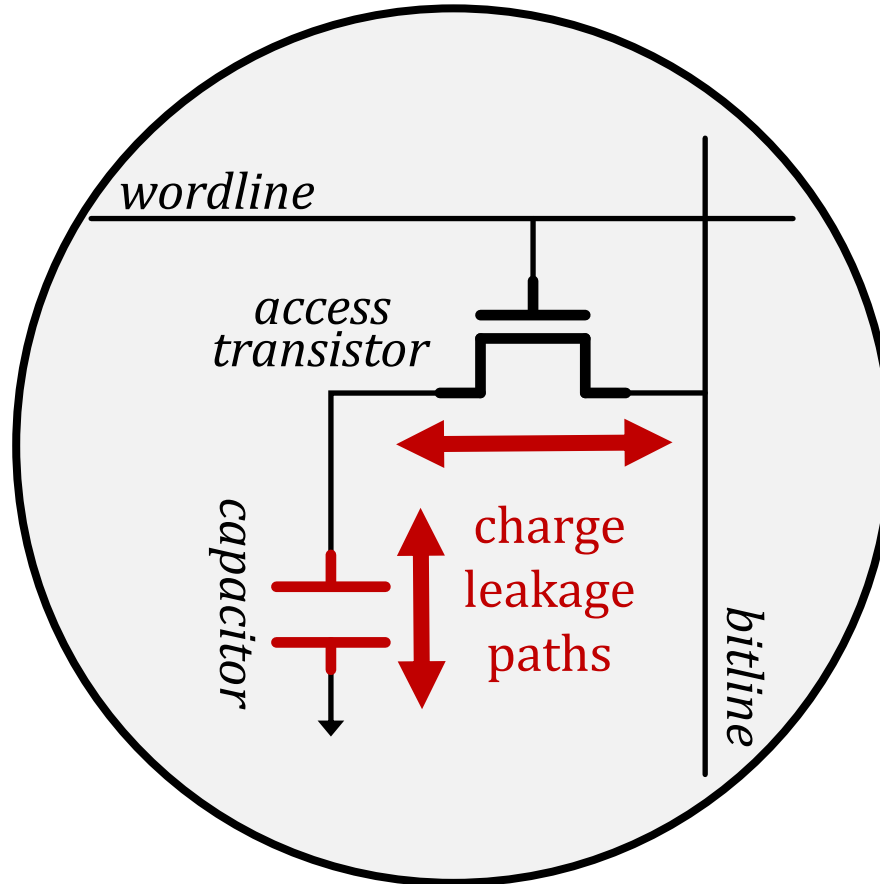
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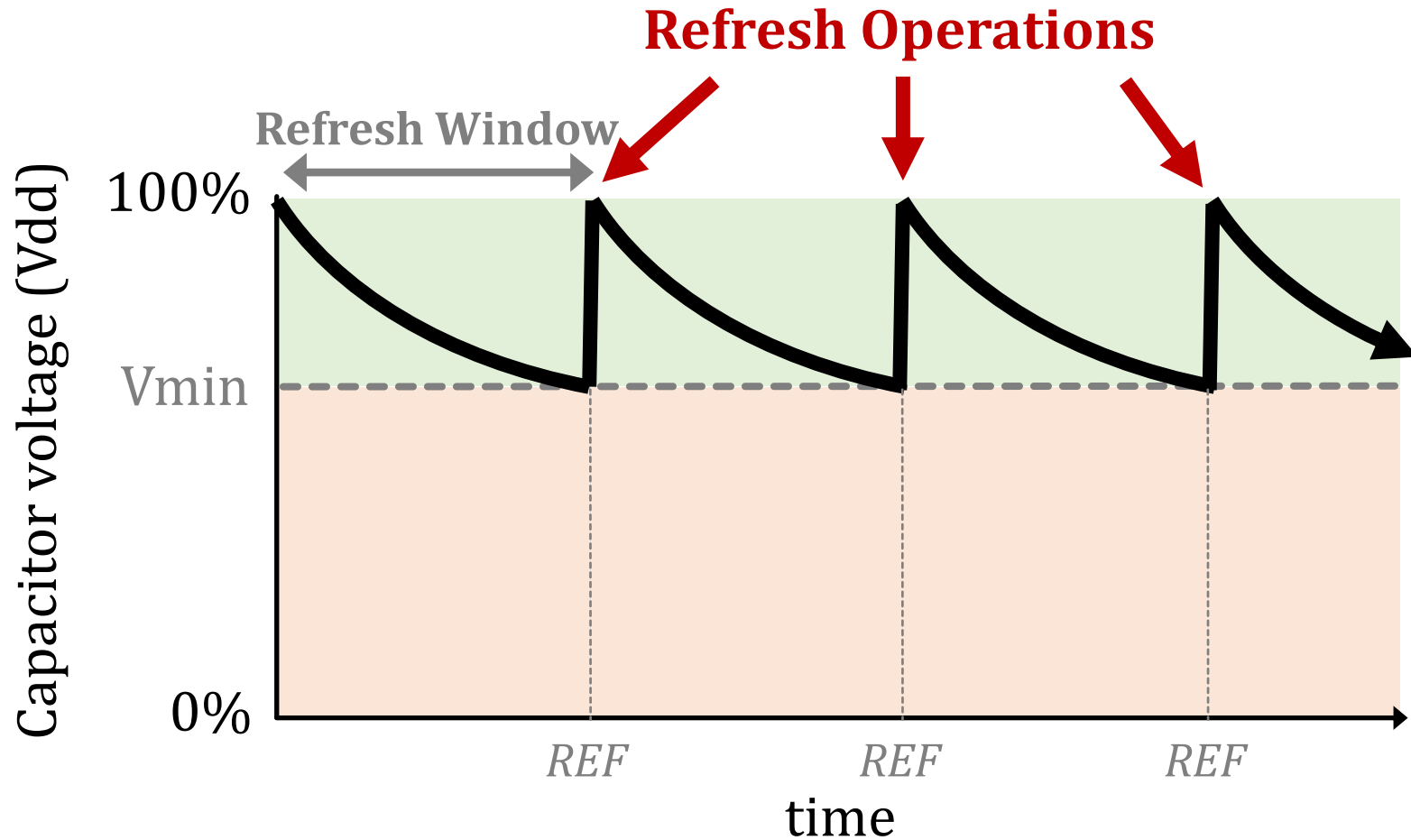
DRAM Cell Leakage

Each cell encodes information in **leaky** capacitors



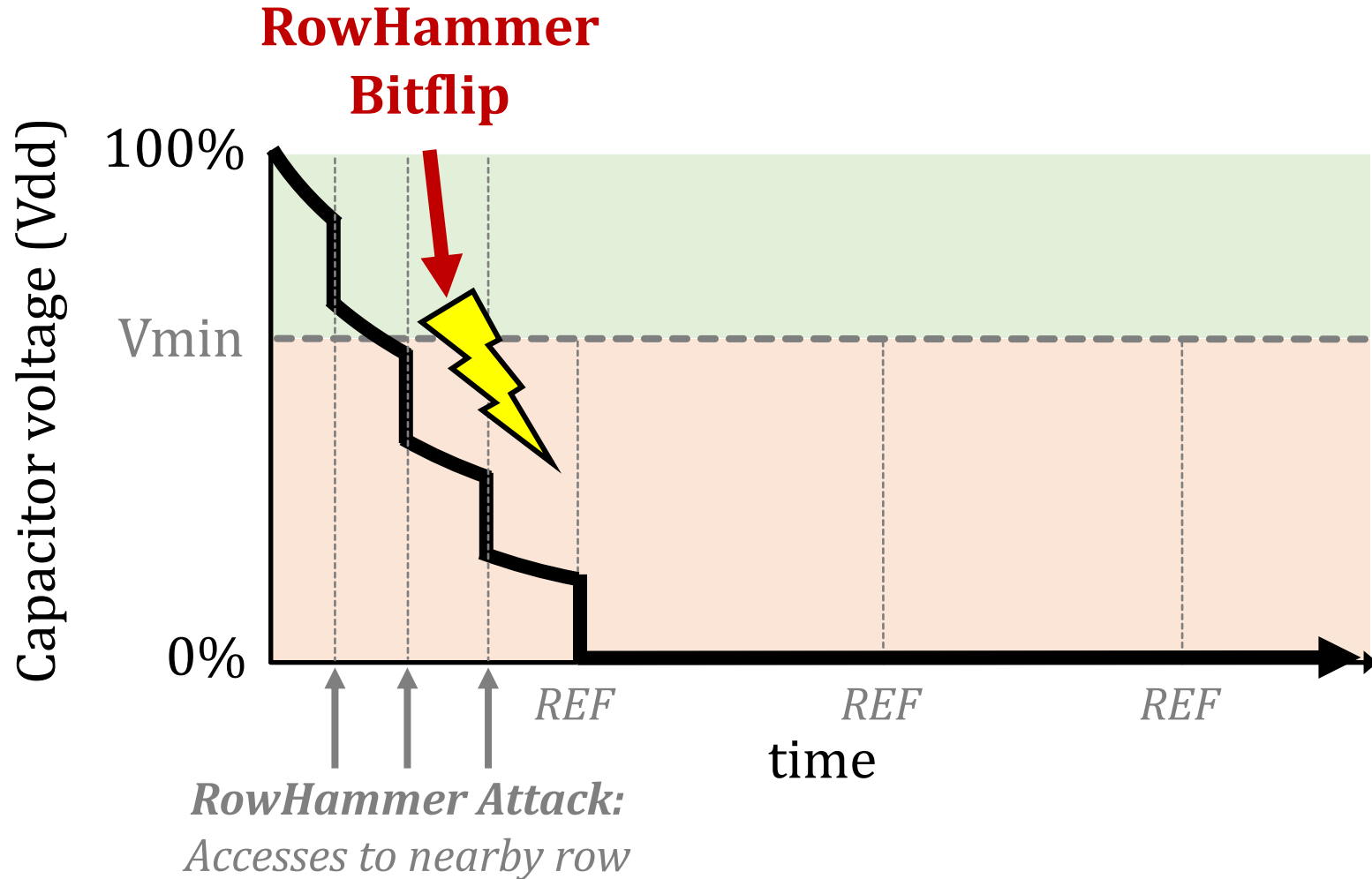
Stored data is **corrupted** if too much charge leaks (i.e., the capacitor voltage degrades too much)

DRAM Refresh



Periodic **refresh operations** preserve stored data

RowHammer Bitflips



Problem & Goal

Problem

No **prior study** demonstrates the **RowHammer** vulnerability in **high bandwidth memory**

Our Goal

Experimentally analyze how vulnerable **real** high bandwidth memory chips are to RowHammer

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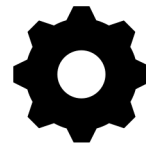
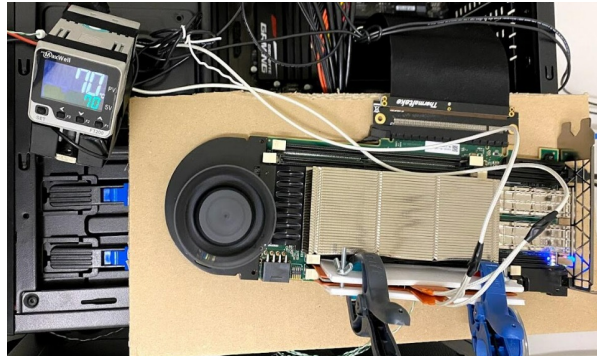
4. RowHammer Spatial Variation Analysis

5. On-die RowHammer Mitigation Analysis

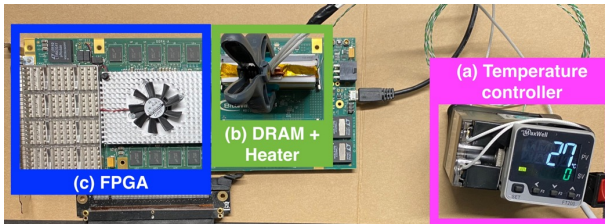
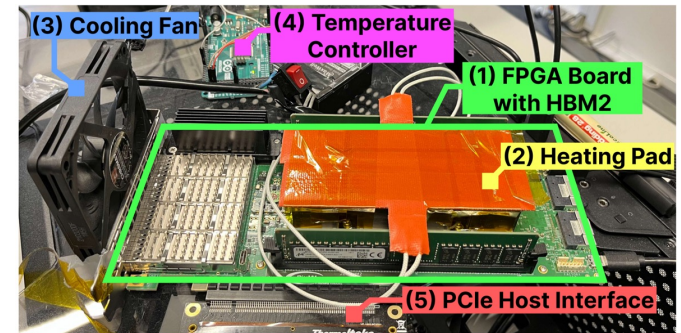
6. Conclusion

DRAM Testing Infrastructure




DRAM Bender DDR3/4 Testing Infrastructure







Adapt to work
with HBM2 chips



<https://github.com/CMU-SAFARI/DRAM-Bender>

  CMU-SAFARI / DRAM-Bender 

 Code  Issues 1  Pull requests 1

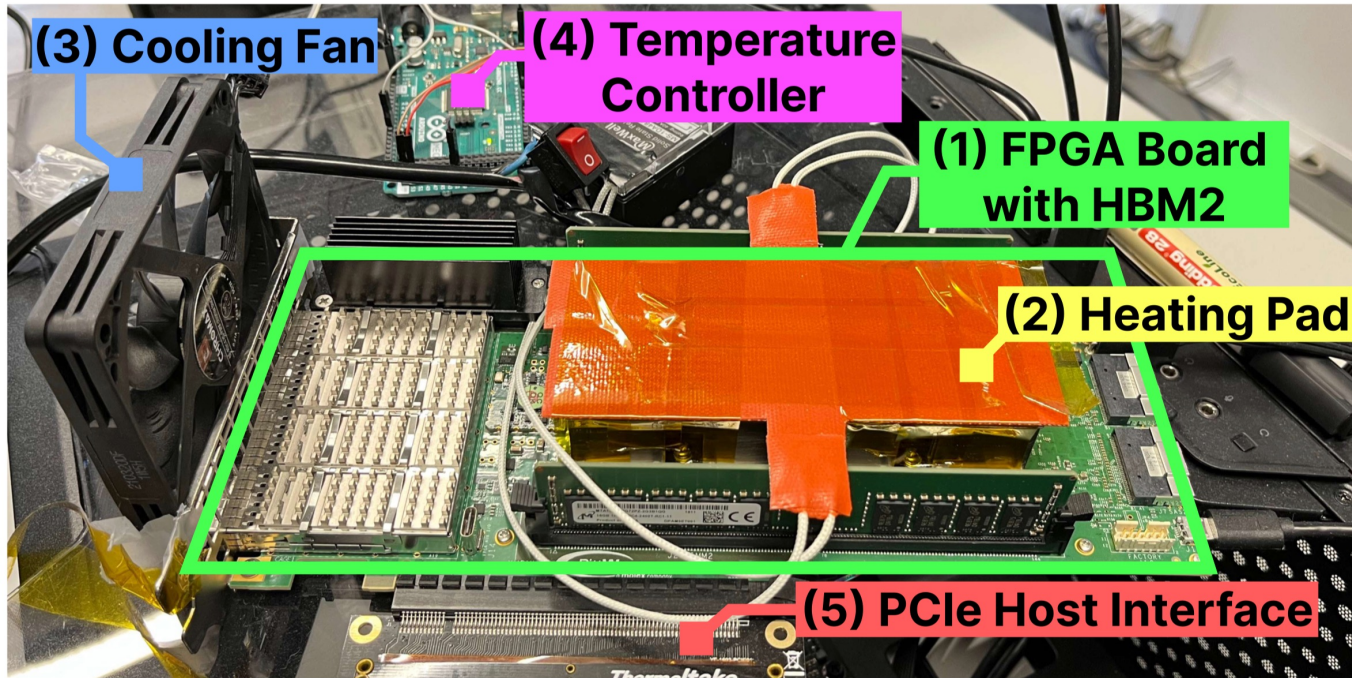
 DRAM-Bender Public

About

DRAM Bender is the first open source DRAM testing infrastructure that can be used to easily and comprehensively test state-of-the-art DDR4 modules of different form factors. Five prototypes are available on different FPGA boards.

DRAM Testing Infrastructure

FPGA-based HBM2 Testing Setup (Bittware XUPV VH)



Fine-grained control over **DRAM commands,**
timing parameters ($\pm 1.66\text{ns}$)

RowHammer Testing Methodology (I)

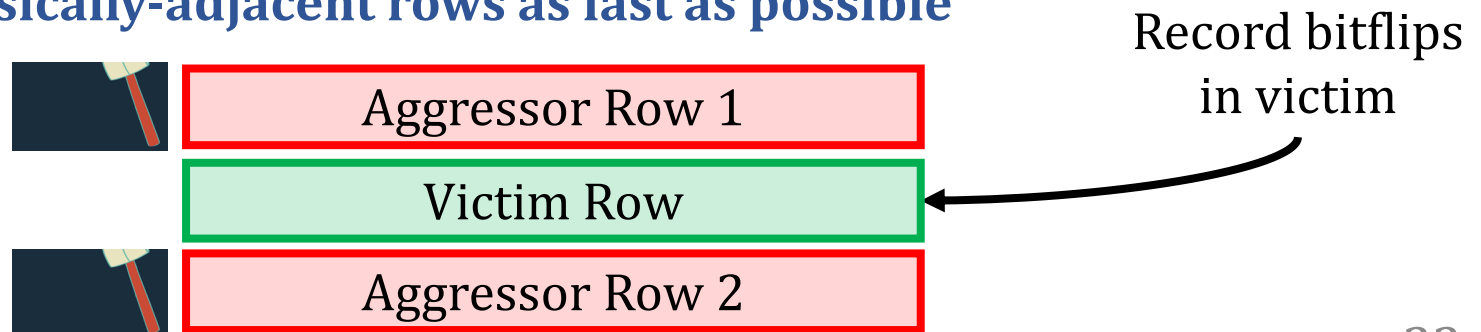
To characterize our DRAM chips at **worst-case** conditions:

1. Prevent sources of interference during core test loop

- **No DRAM refresh**: to avoid refreshing victim row
- **No RowHammer mitigation mechanisms**: to observe circuit-level effects
- Test for **less than a refresh window (32ms)** to avoid retention failures
- **Repeat tests** for five times

2. Worst-case RowHammer access sequence

- We use **worst-case** RowHammer access sequence based on prior works' observations
- Double-sided RowHammer: **repeatedly access the two physically-adjacent rows as fast as possible**



RowHammer Testing Methodology (II)

- Tested HBM2 chip's organization:
 - 8 channels
 - 2 pseudo-channels
 - 16 banks
 - 16384 rows (1 KiB each)
- Test **all** channels, pseudo-channels, banks
- Test **first, middle, and last 3K** rows in a bank
 - 9K out of 16K (more than half)
- Keep HBM2 chip temperature at **85°C**



Xilinx FPGA
with HBM2 DRAM chips

Metrics

1. Bit error rate (BER):

The fraction of DRAM cells in a row that experience a bitflip after 512K activations

Higher is worse

2. Hammer Count for the First Bitflip (HC_{first}):

Aggressor row activation count to cause the first bitflip in the victim row

Lower is worse

Tested Data Patterns



Row Addresses	Rowstripe0	Rowstripe1	Checkered0	Checkered1
Victim (V)	0x00	0xFF	0x55	0xAA
Aggressors (V ± 1)	0xFF	0x00	0xAA	0x55
V ± [2:8]	0x00	0xFF	0x55	0xAA

Tested Data Patterns



Row Addresses	<i>Rowstripe0</i>	<i>Rowstripe1</i>	<i>Checkered0</i>	<i>Checkered1</i>
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Tested Data Patterns



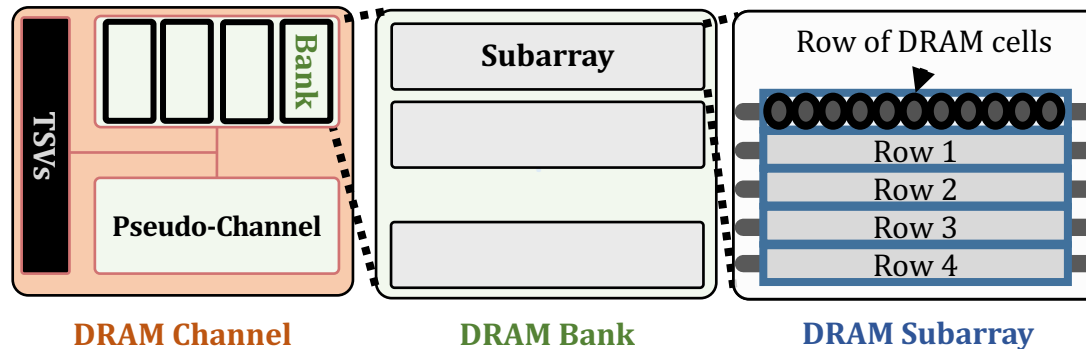
Row Addresses	<i>Rowstripe0</i>	<i>Rowstripe1</i>	<i>Checkered0</i>	<i>Checkered1</i>
Victim (V)	0x00	0xFF	0x55	0xAA
Aggressors ($V \pm 1$)	0xFF	0x00	0xAA	0x55
$V \pm [2:8]$	0x00	0xFF	0x55	0xAA

Worst-case data pattern (**WCDP**) of a row: Causes smallest HC_{first} for a row

Two Main Analyses

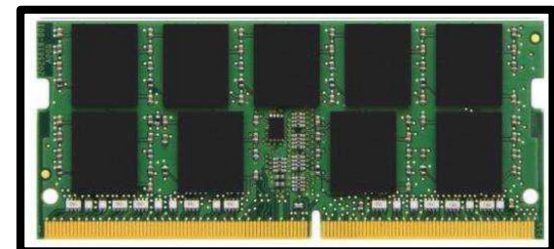
1. Spatial variation of RowHammer vulnerability

How does the RowHammer vulnerability change across channels, pseudo-channels, banks, rows in HBM?



2. On-DRAM-die RowHammer mitigations

Do real HBM chips implement undisclosed RowHammer mitigations resembling those that exist in DDR4?



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Key Takeaways from Spatial Variation Analysis

Takeaway 1

Different 3D-stacked HBM2 channels exhibit different RowHammer vulnerability

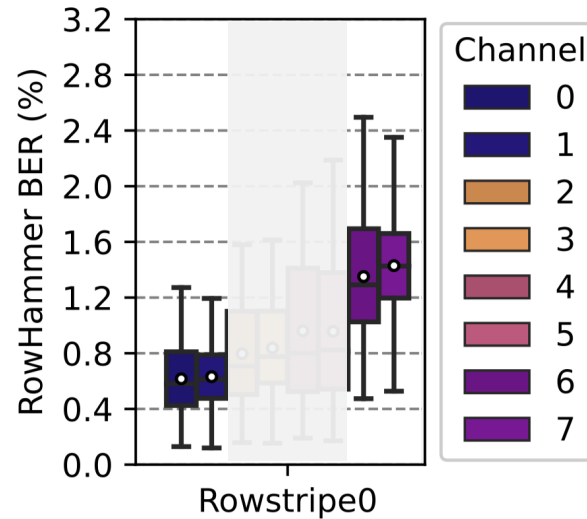
Takeaway 2

DRAM rows near the end of a DRAM bank experience smaller bit error rate (BER) than others

Takeaway 3

Activation count needed to induce the first RowHammer bitflip (HC_{first}) changes with the data pattern and the physical location of the DRAM row

Spatial Distribution of BER (I)

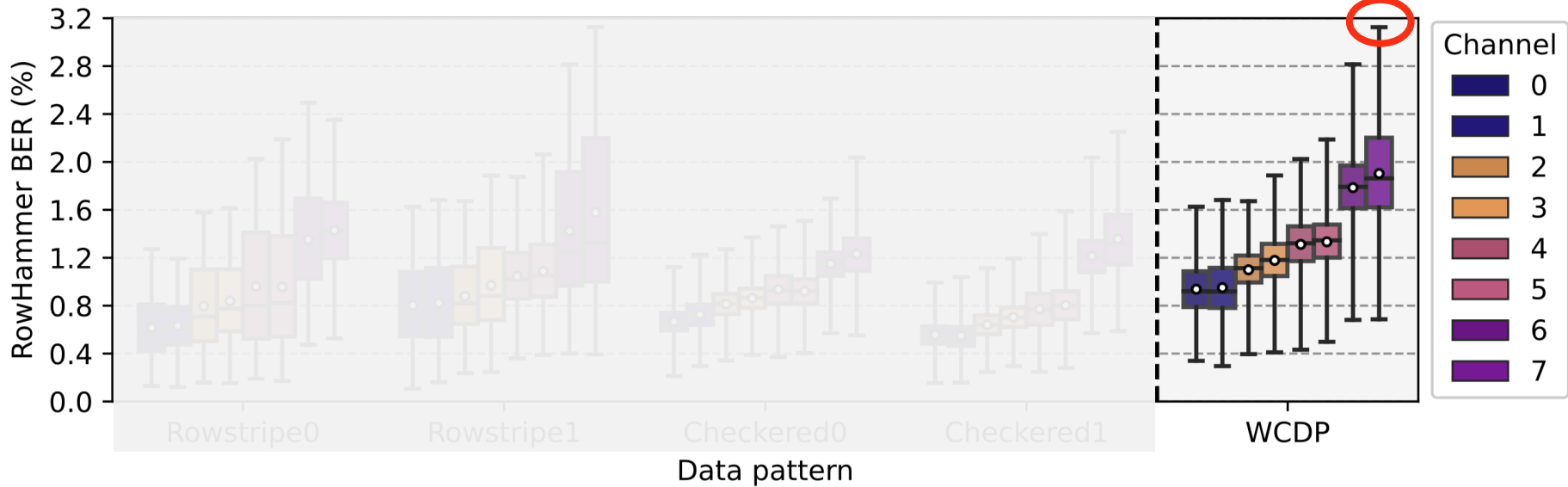


There are **bitflips** in **every** tested DRAM **row**
across **all** tested HBM2 **channels**

BER **varies across channels**:
groups of two channels have different BERs

Spatial Distribution of BER (I)

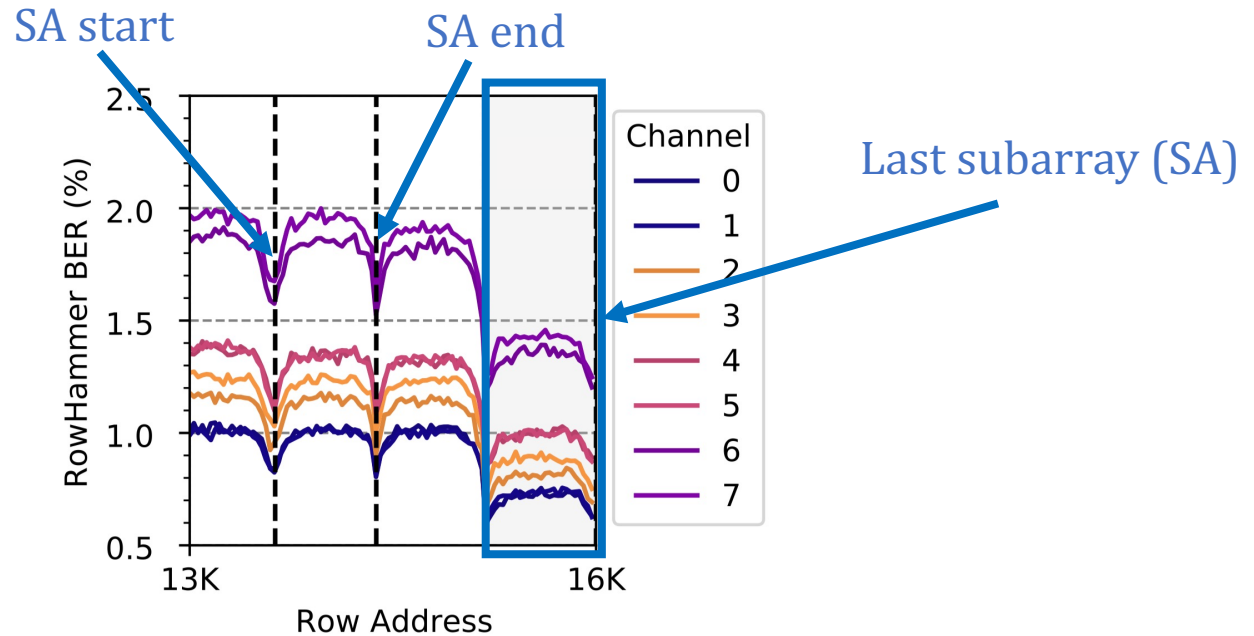
~262 bitflips (out of 8192 in a row)



The **data pattern affects** the BER distribution

Up to ~262 bitflips in a row of 8K bits
with 512K aggressor row activations

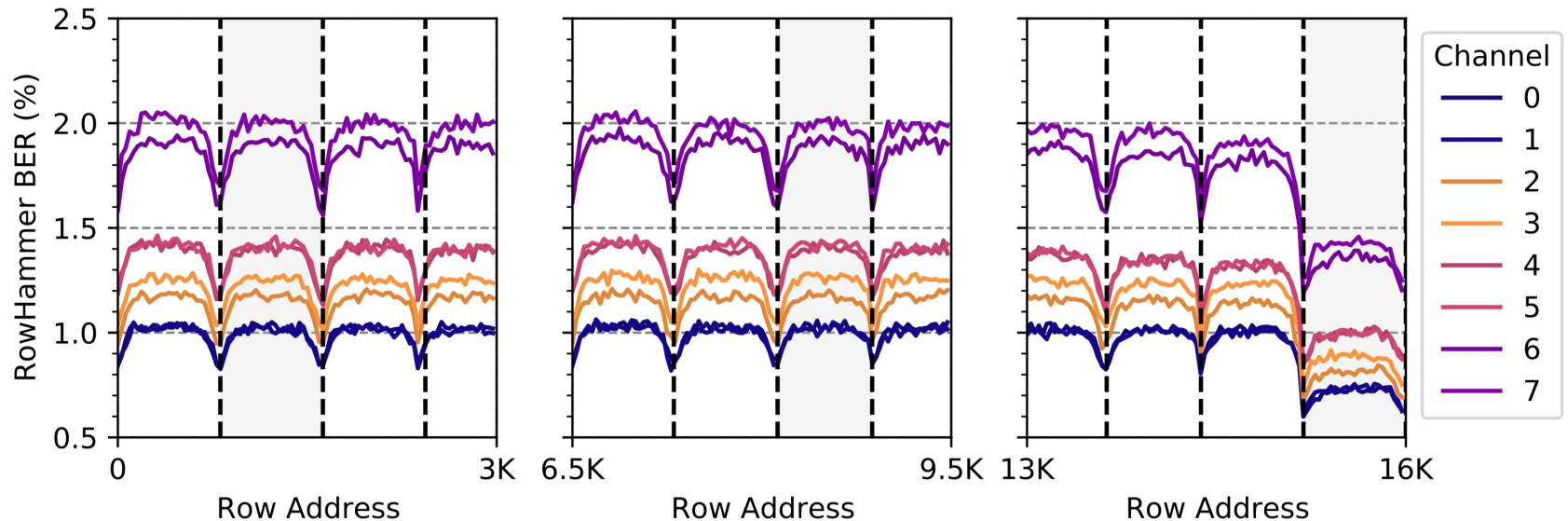
Spatial Distribution of BER (II)



BER is substantially smaller in the **last subarray (i.e., last 832 rows)**

BER periodically increases and decreases across rows:
BER is **higher** in the **middle of a subarray**

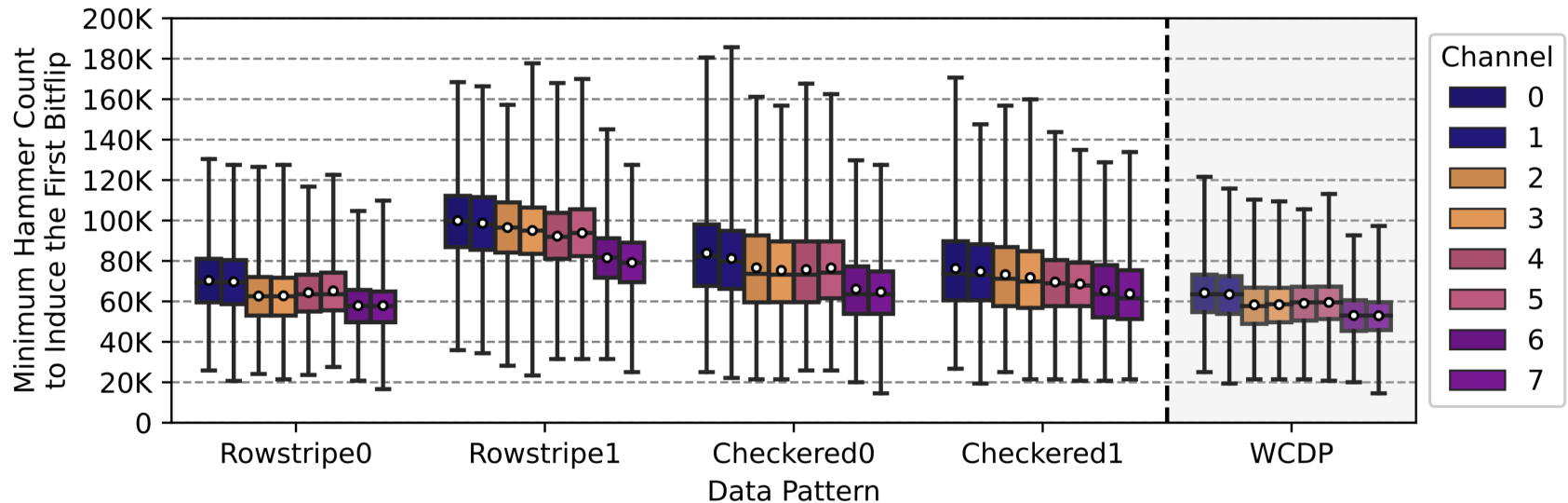
Spatial Distribution of BER (II)



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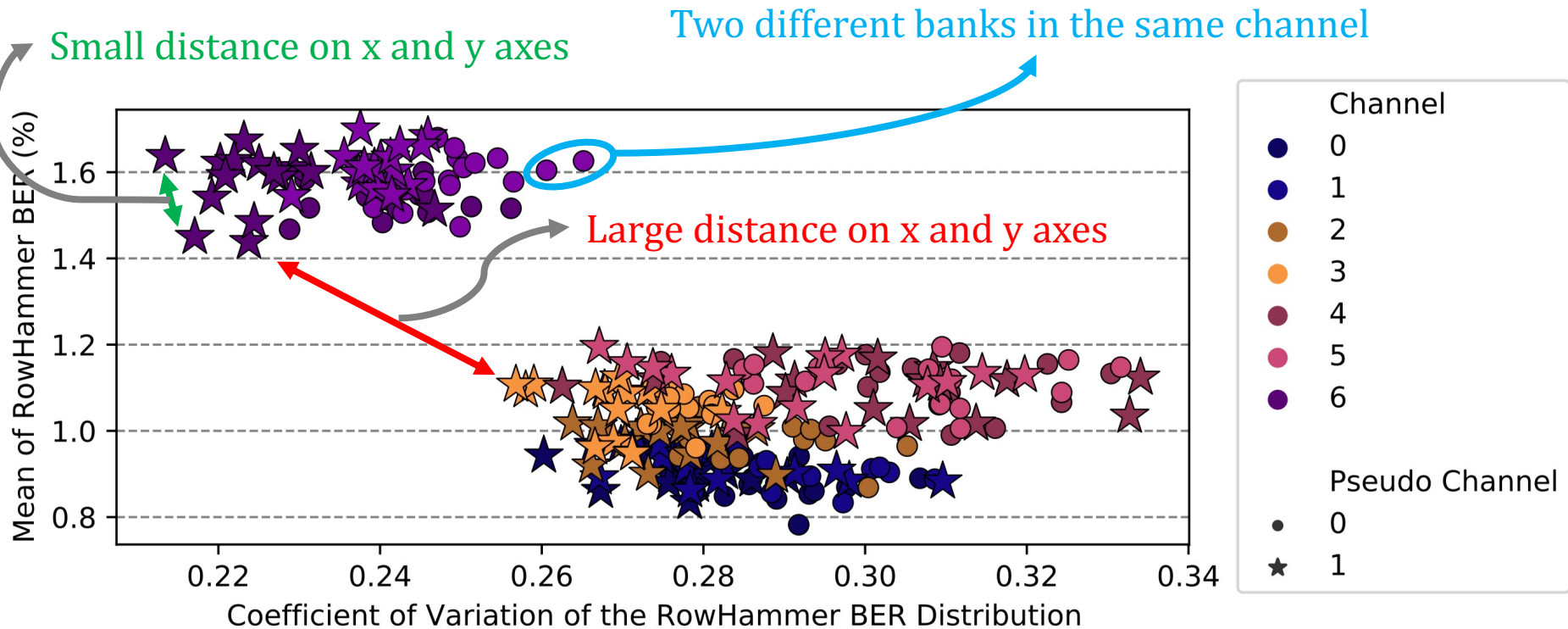
Spatial Distribution of HC_{first}



HC_{first} is as low as **14531** across all tested rows/channels:
Only ~1.3 ms to induce a RowHammer bitflip

HC_{first} distribution heavily **depends on the data pattern**

Variation in Bit Error Rate

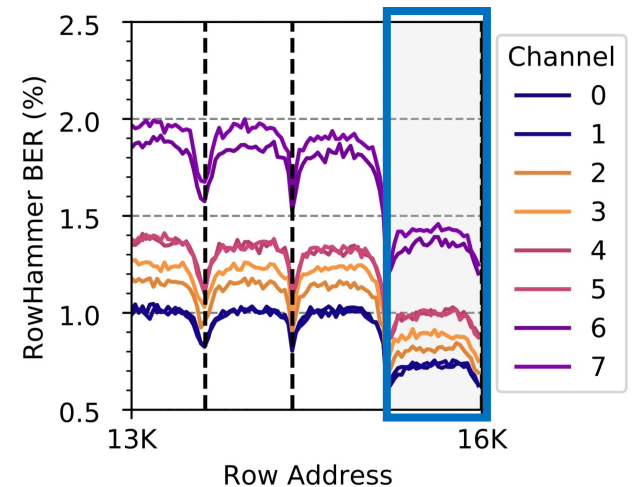
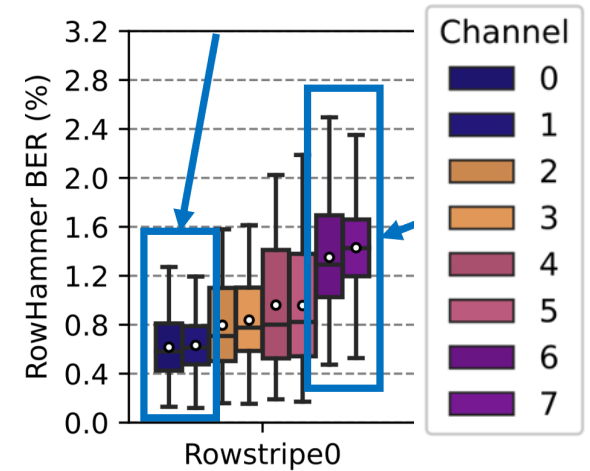


Banks in the same channel have similar variation in BER

Hypotheses from Characterization

1. Similar BER & HC_{first} within groups of two channels suggests these channels share DRAM dies

2. RowHammer BER changes with the row's proximity to sense amplifiers and bank I/O



Implications on Attacks and Mitigations

Key Observation: RowHammer BER and HC_{first} vary across channels

Two implications for RowHammer attacks and mitigations

A RowHammer attack can use the most-RH-vulnerable HBM2 channel to prepare for and perform the attack faster

A RowHammer mitigation can allocate fewer resources for RowHammer-resilient channels and more efficiently prevent RowHammer bitflips

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Key Takeaways from on-die Mitigation Analysis

Takeaway 1

A modern HBM2 chip **implements** an **undisclosed** on-DRAM-die RowHammer mitigation

Takeaway 2

This mitigation **resembles the one in DDR4 chips** from one major manufacturer as shown in prior work

On-Die RowHammer Mitigation Analysis (I)

HBM2 standard defines a “Target Row Refresh (TRR)-mode”

- Memory controller and DRAM **cooperate** to prevent RH bitflips

Real DDR4 chips implement **on-die mitigation** mechanisms

- Memory-controller-**transparent**, **hidden** behind periodic REF

*Does a similar **hidden** mitigation mechanism exist in HBM2?*

On-Die RowHammer Mitigation Analysis (II)

Hassan et al., "[Uncovering In-DRAM RowHammer Protection Mechanisms: A New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns, and Implications](#)," in MICRO, 2021.

Uncovering In-DRAM RowHammer Protection Mechanisms: A New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns, and Implications

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Kaveh Razavi[†]
[‡]TOBB University of Economics & Technology

Jeremie S. Kim[†]

Onur Mutlu[†]

^σQualcomm Technologies Inc.

Victor van der Veen^σ

Key idea: Use **data retention failures** as a side channel to **detect when a row is refreshed** by on-die mitigation

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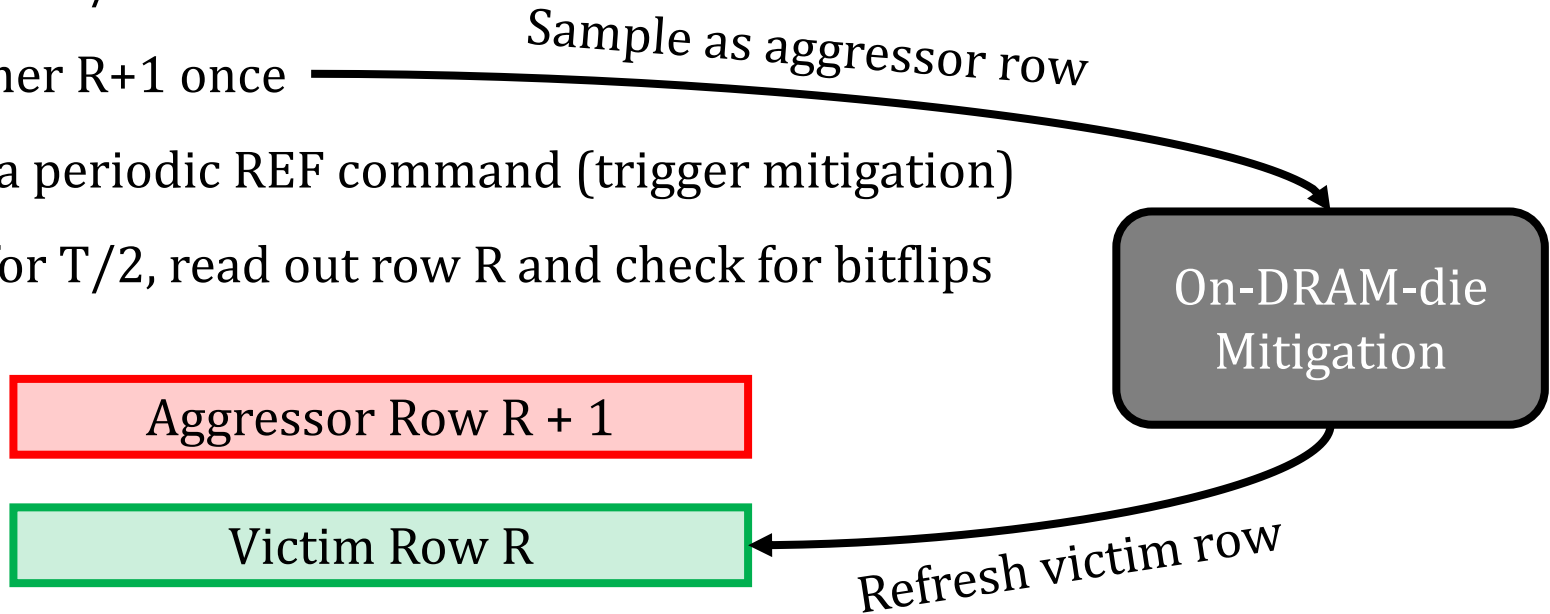
arthasSin adding more info on the DRAM modules tested in the paper 23e2efb on Nov 15, 2022 2 commits

RowHammerAttacker initial commit 9 months ago

Source code of the U-TRR methodology presented in "Uncovering In-DRAM RowHammer Protection Mechanisms: A New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns, and Implications"

Experimental Methodology

1. Identify a row (R) with T retention time
2. Wait for $T/2$
3. Hammer R+1 once
4. Issue a periodic REF command (trigger mitigation)
5. Wait for $T/2$, read out row R and check for bitflips



Experimental Methodology

1. Identify a row (R) with T retention time

Row R experiences no bitflips
only if on-DRAM-die mitigation exists

4. Issue a periodic REF command (trigger mitigation)

5. Wait for $T/2$, read out row R and check for bitflips

Aggressor Row $R + 1$

Victim Row R

On-DRAM-die Mitigation

Refresh victim row



Experimental Methodology

1. Identify a row (R) with T retention time

Row R experiences no bitflips
only if on-DRAM-die mitigation exists

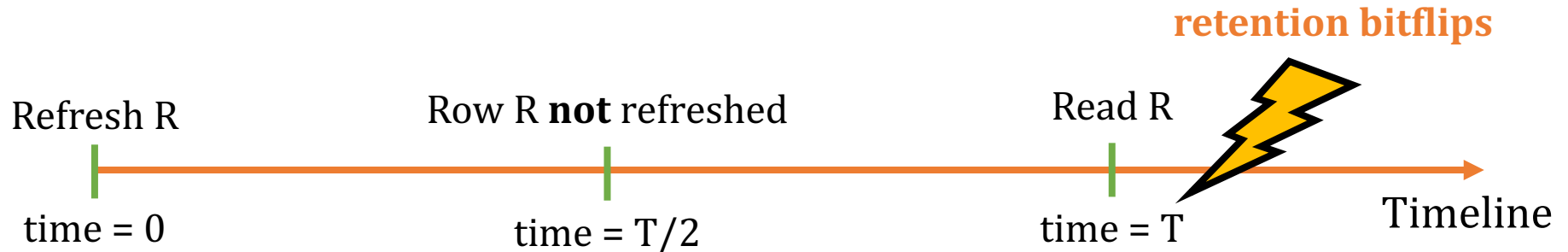
4. Issue a periodic REF command (trigger mitigation)

5. Wait for $T/2$, read out row R and check for bitflips

Row R experiences retention bitflips
if not refreshed at $T/2$

Victim Row R

Refresh victim row



HBM2 DRAM Chips Implement Undisclosed TRR

The HBM2 chip **implements** an **undisclosed** on-die RowHammer mitigation mechanism

This mechanism **performs** a victim row refresh operation every **17** periodic refresh (REF) operations

This mitigation **resembles the one in DDR4 chips** from one major manufacturer

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Conclusion

We provide the **first detailed experimental characterization** of **RowHammer** in a modern **HBM2** DRAM chip

Different **channels** in 3D-stacked HBM chips exhibit **different RowHammer vulnerability**

DRAM **rows near the end of a DRAM bank** are more RowHammer **resilient**

Two implications for RowHammer **attacks and mitigations**:

1. Faster and more effective attacks
2. More efficient mitigations

A modern HBM chip **implements** undisclosed on-DRAM-die RowHammer mitigation (e.g., similar to DDR4 chips)

Future Directions: To present more insights into how RowHammer behaves in HBM

1. Test **more** HBM DRAM chips, data patterns, at different temperature and voltage levels
2. Investigate read-disturb-based interference **across different 3D-stacked HBM DRAM channels**
3. Study the effects of the **new** read-disturb phenomenon, **RowPress [Luo+, ISCA'23]**

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2305.17918>

arXiv > cs > arXiv:2305.17918

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[Submitted on 29 May 2023]

An Experimental Analysis of RowHammer in HBM2 DRAM Chips

Ataberk Olgun, Majd Osseiran, Abdullah Giray Yağlıkcı, Yahya Can Tuğrul, Haocong Luo, Steve Rhyner, Behzad Salami, Juan Gomez Luna, Onur Mutlu

RowHammer (RH) is a significant and worsening security, safety, and reliability issue of modern DRAM chips that can be exploited to break memory isolation. Therefore, it is important to understand real DRAM chips' RH characteristics. Unfortunately, no prior work extensively studies the RH vulnerability of modern 3D-stacked high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips, which are commonly used in modern GPUs.

In this work, we experimentally characterize the RH vulnerability of a real HBM2 DRAM chip. We show that 1) different 3D-stacked channels of HBM2 memory exhibit significantly different levels of RH vulnerability (up to 79% difference in bit error rate), 2) the DRAM rows at the end of a DRAM bank (rows with the highest addresses) exhibit significantly fewer RH bitflips than other rows, and 3) a modern HBM2 DRAM chip implements undisclosed RH defenses that are triggered by periodic refresh operations. We describe the implications of our observations on future RH attacks and defenses and discuss future work for understanding RH in 3D-stacked memories.

Comments: To appear at DSN Disrupt 2023

Subjects: **Cryptography and Security (cs.CR)**; Hardware Architecture (cs.AR)

Cite as: arXiv:2305.17918 [cs.CR]

(or arXiv:2305.17918v1 [cs.CR] for this version)

<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2305.17918> 

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An Experimental Analysis of RowHammer in HBM2 DRAM Chips

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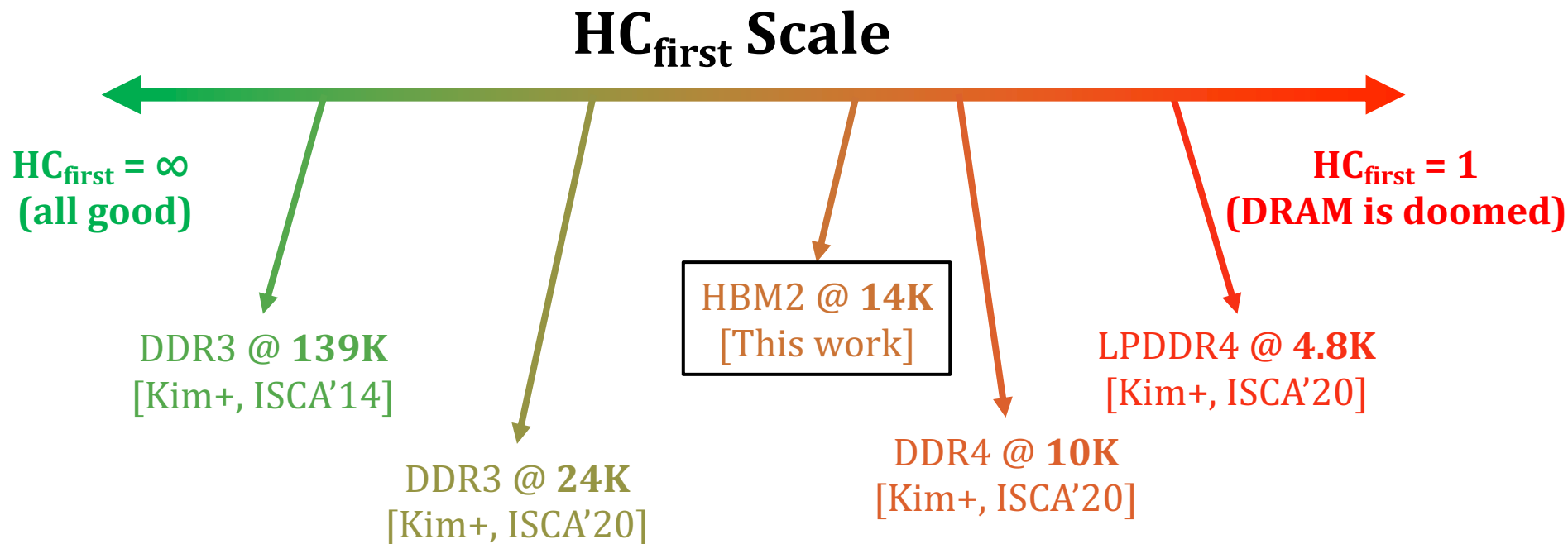
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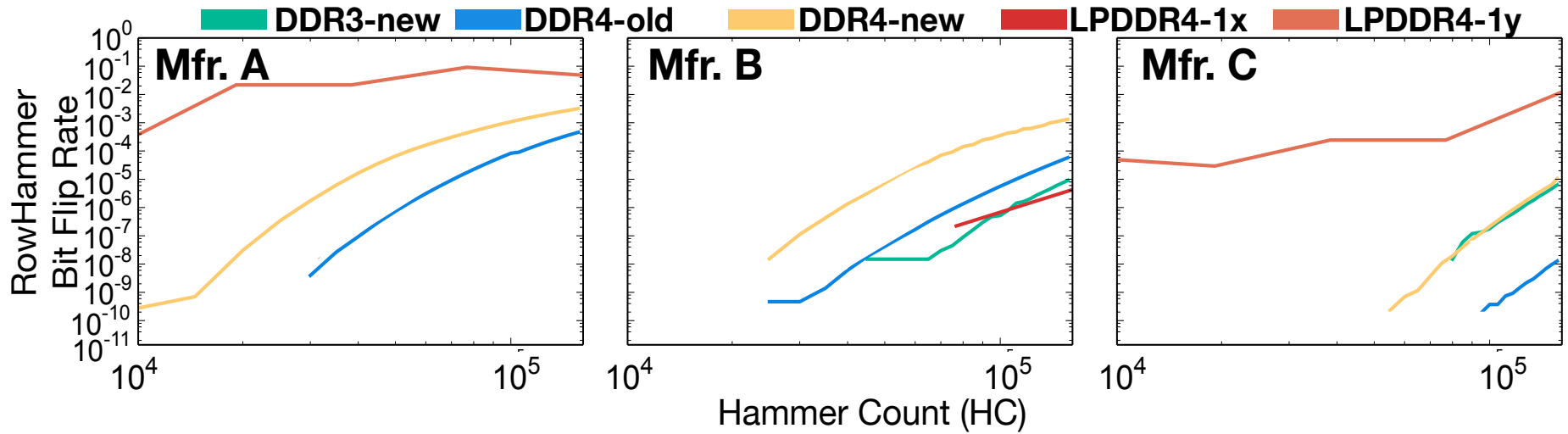
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Publicly-available HC_{first} Values



*Not shown: Significant variance in HC_{first} across vendors and die variations

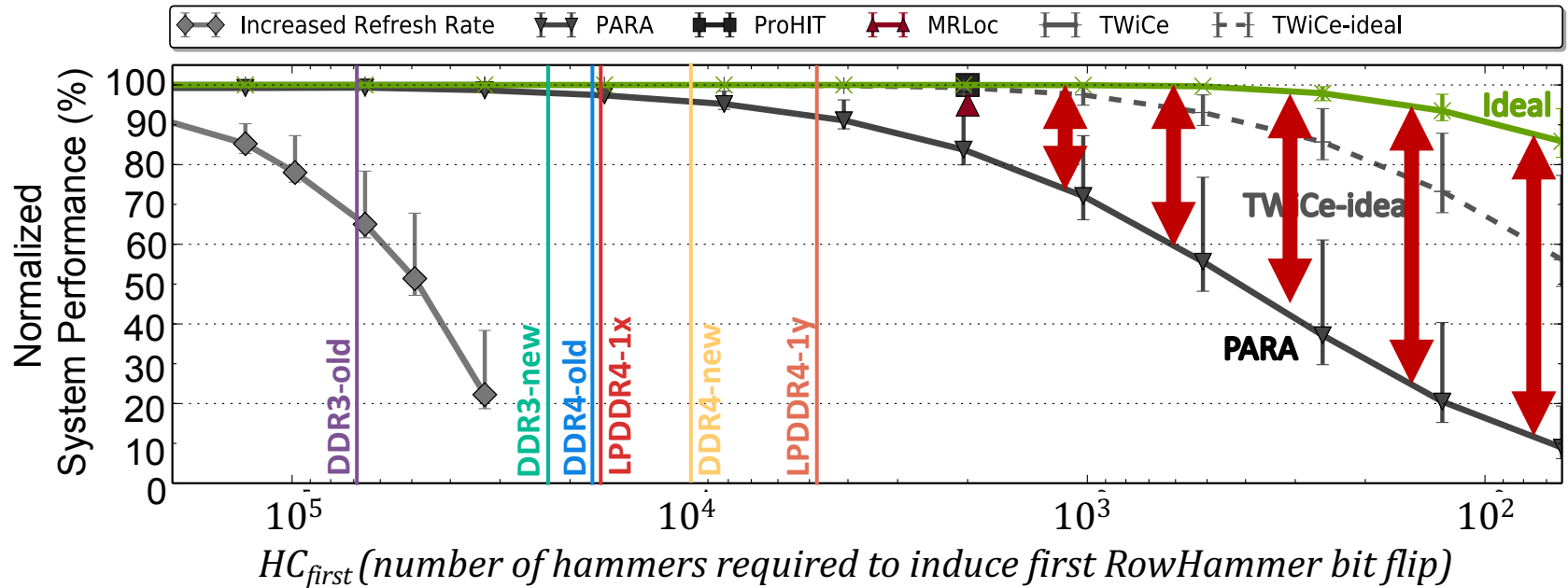
3. Hammer Count (HC) Effects



RowHammer bit flip rates **increase**
when going **from old to new** DDR4 technology node generations

**RowHammer bit flip rates (i.e., RowHammer vulnerability)
increase with technology node generation**

Mitigation Mechanism Evaluation



Ideal mechanism is significantly better than any existing mechanism for $HC_{first} < 1024$

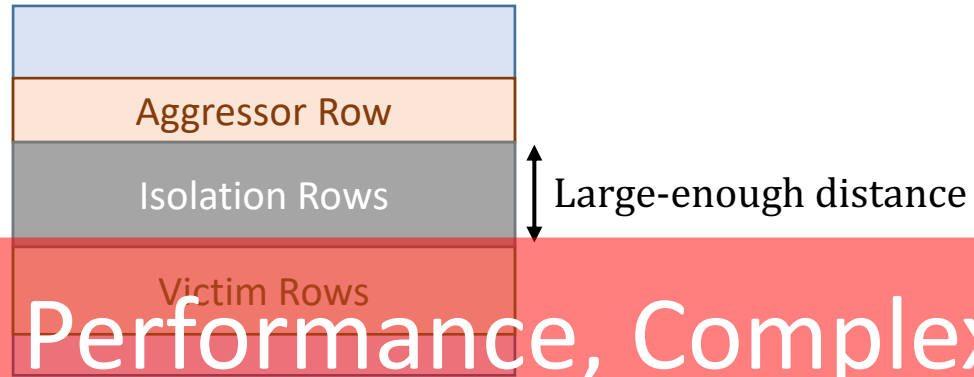
Significant opportunity for developing a RowHammer solution with low performance overhead that supports low HC_{first}

RowHammer Solution Approaches

- More robust DRAM chips **and/or** error-correcting codes
- Increased refresh rate

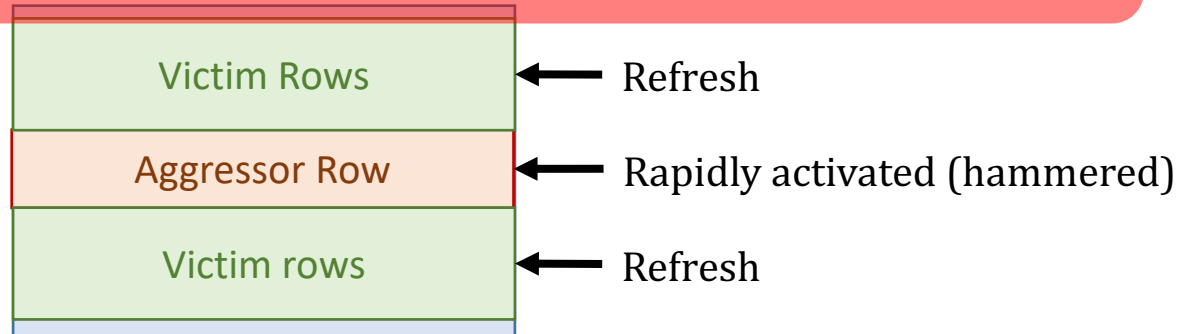


- Physical isolation



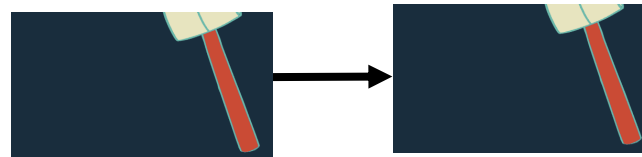
Cost, Power, Performance, Complexity

- Reactive refresh



- Proactive throttling

SAFARI




More Security Implications (I)

"We can gain unrestricted access to systems of website visitors."

www.iaik.tugraz.at ■

Not there yet, but ...



ROOT privileges for web apps!

29 Daniel Gruss (@lavados), Clémentine Maurice (@BloodyTangerine),
December 28, 2015 — 32c3, Hamburg, Germany



GATED
COMMUNITIES

Rowhammer.js: A Remote Software-Induced Fault Attack in JavaScript (DIMVA'16)

More Security Implications (II)

"Can gain control of a smart phone deterministically"



Drammer: Deterministic Rowhammer
Attacks on Mobile Platforms, CCS'16 56

More Security Implications (III)

- Using an integrated GPU in a mobile system to remotely escalate privilege via the WebGL interface.



BIZ & IT TECH SCIENCE POLICY CARS GAMING & CULTURE

"GRAND PWNING UNIT" —

Drive-by Rowhammer attack uses GPU to compromise an Android phone

JavaScript based GLitch pwns browsers by flipping bits inside memory chips.

DAN GOODIN - 5/3/2018, 12:00 PM

Grand Pwning Unit: Accelerating Microarchitectural Attacks with the GPU

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More Security Implications (IV)

- Rowhammer over RDMA (I) [USENIX ATC 2018](#)

ars TECHNICA

[BIZ & IT](#) [TECH](#) [SCIENCE](#) [POLICY](#) [CARS](#) [GAMING & CULTURE](#)

THROWHAMMER —

Packets over a LAN are all it takes to trigger serious Rowhammer bit flips

The bar for exploiting potentially serious DDR weakness keeps getting lower.

DAN GOODIN - 5/10/2018, 5:26 PM

Throwhammer: Rowhammer Attacks over the Network and Defenses

Andrei Tatar
VU Amsterdam

Radhesh Krishnan
VU Amsterdam

Elias Athanasopoulos
University of Cyprus

Cristiano Giuffrida
VU Amsterdam

Herbert Bos
VU Amsterdam

Kaveh Razavi
VU Amsterdam

More Security Implications (V)

- Rowhammer over RDMA (II)



Nethammer—Exploiting DRAM Rowhammer Bug Through Network Requests



Nethammer: Inducing Rowhammer Faults through Network Requests

Moritz Lipp
Graz University of Technology

Misiker Tadesse Aga
University of Michigan

Michael Schwarz
Graz University of Technology

Daniel Gruss
Graz University of Technology

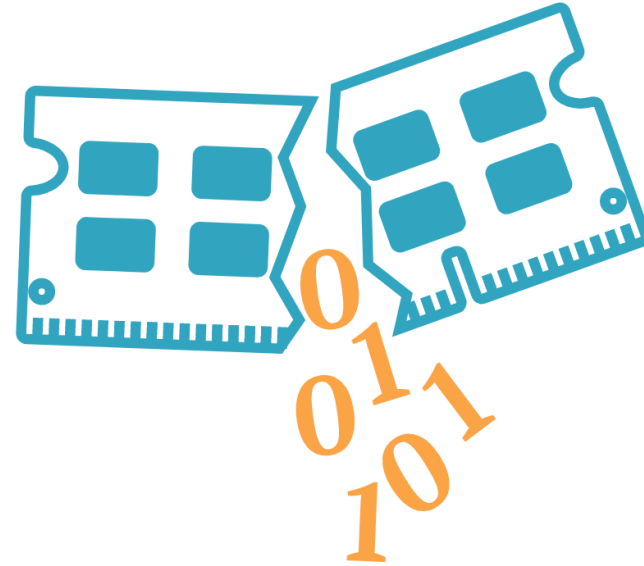
Clémentine Maurice
Univ Rennes, CNRS, IRISA

Lukas Raab
Graz University of Technology

Lukas Lamster
Graz University of Technology

More Security Implications (VI)

- IEEE S&P 2020



RAMBleed

RAMBleed: Reading Bits in Memory Without Accessing Them

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More Security Implications (VII)

- **USENIX Security 2019**

Terminal Brain Damage: Exposing the Graceless Degradation in Deep Neural Networks Under Hardware Fault Attacks

Sanghyun Hong, Pietro Frigo[†], Yiğitcan Kaya, Cristiano Giuffrida[†], Tudor Dumitraş

University of Maryland, College Park
[†]Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



A Single Bit-flip Can Cause Terminal Brain Damage to DNNs

One specific bit-flip in a DNN's representation leads to accuracy drop over 90%

Our research found that a specific bit-flip in a DNN's bitwise representation can cause the accuracy loss up to 90%, and the DNN has 40-50% parameters, on average, that can lead to the accuracy drop over 10% when individually subjected to such single bitwise corruptions...

[Read More](#)

More Security Implications (VIII)

• USENIX Security 2020

DeepHammer: Depleting the Intelligence of Deep Neural Networks through Targeted Chain of Bit Flips

Fan Yao
University of Central Florida
fan.yao@ucf.edu

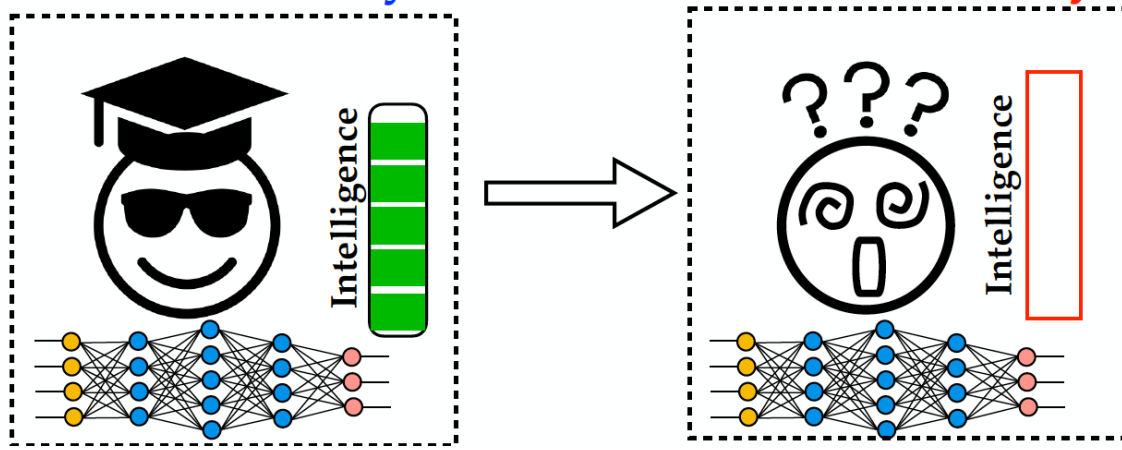
Adnan Siraj Rakin
Arizona State University
asrakin@asu.edu

Deliang Fan
Arizona State University
dfan@asu.edu

Degrade the inference accuracy to the level of Random Guess

Example: ResNet-20 for CIFAR-10, 10 output classes

Before attack, **Accuracy: 90.2%** After attack, **Accuracy: ~10% (1/10)**



More Security Implications (IX)

- Rowhammer on MLC NAND Flash (based on [Cai+, HPCA 2017])



Security

Rowhammer RAM attack adapted to hit flash storage

Project Zero's two-year-old dog learns a new trick

By [Richard Chirgwin](#) 17 Aug 2017 at 04:27

17 SHARE ▼

**From random block corruption to privilege escalation:
A filesystem attack vector for rowhammer-like attacks**

Anil Kurmus

Nikolas Ioannou

Matthias Neugschwandtner

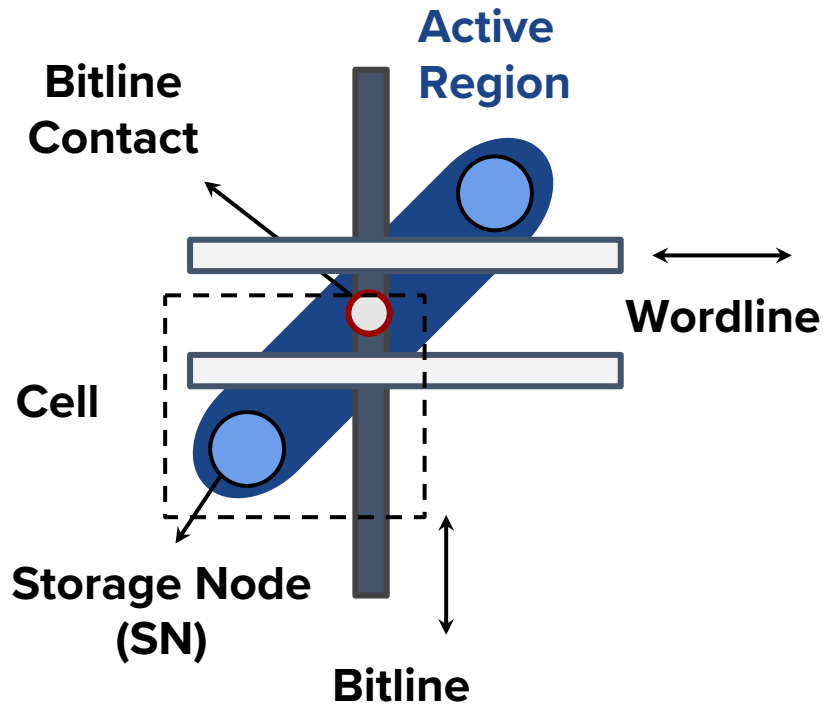
Nikolaos Papandreou

Thomas Parnell

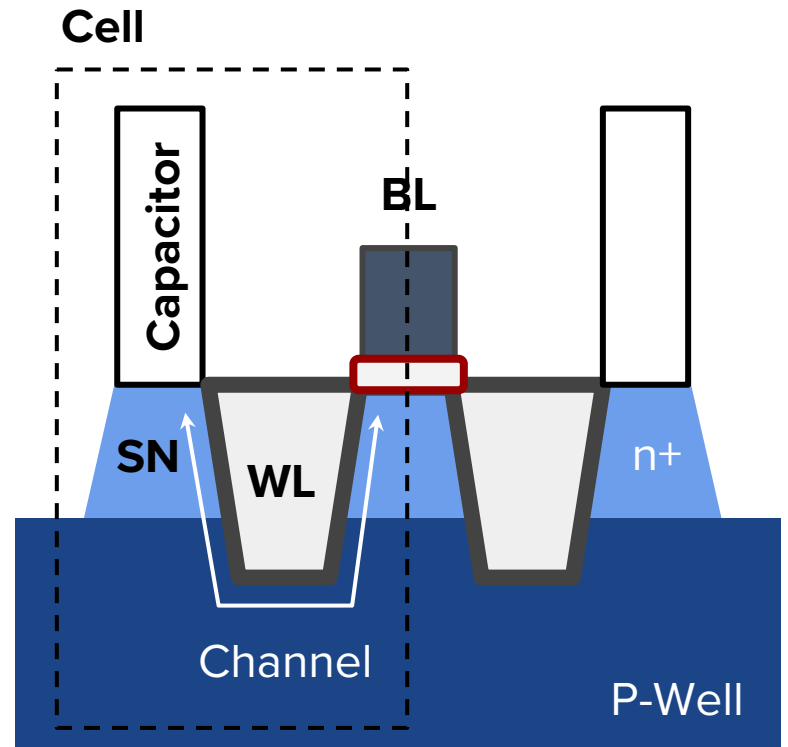
IBM Research – Zurich

DRAM Array Layout

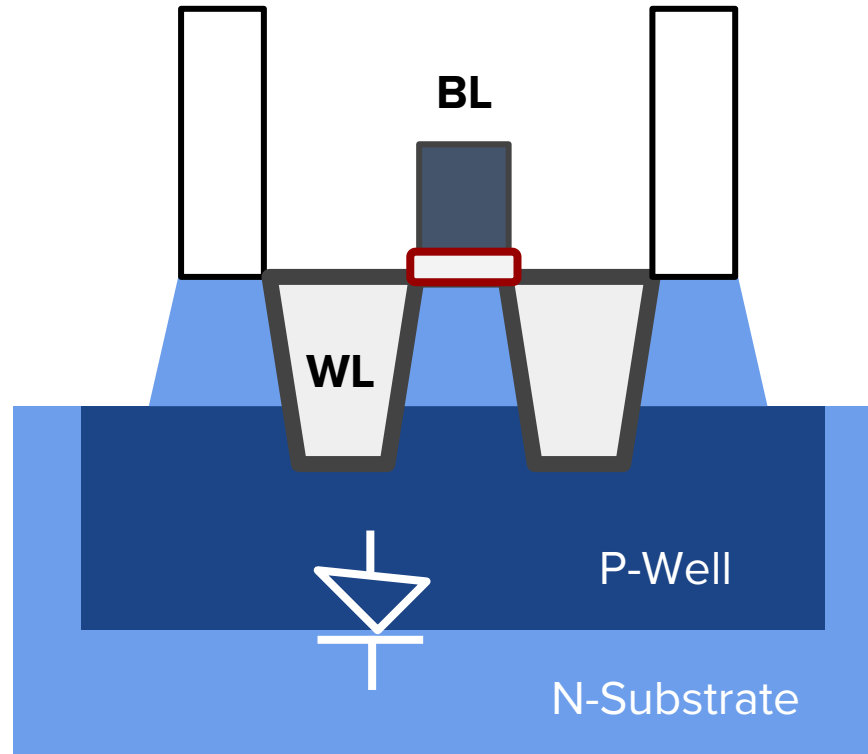
Top View



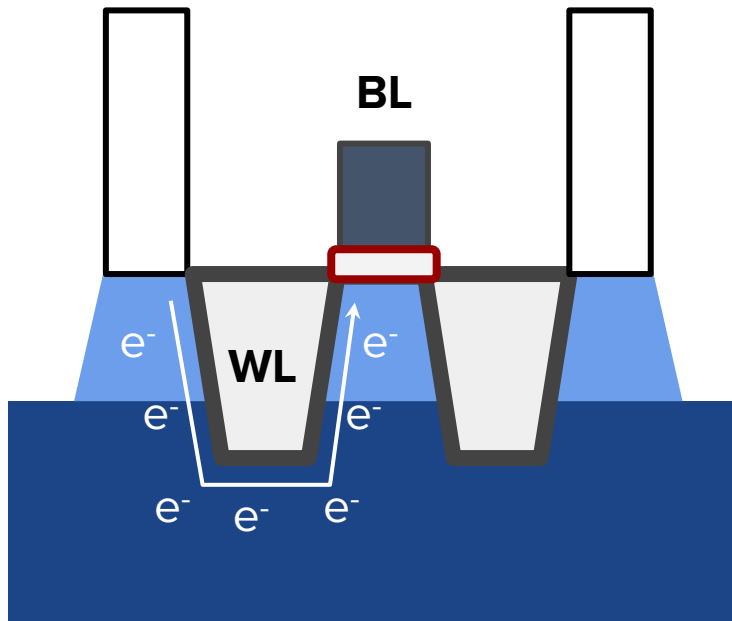
Cross Section



Mechanism 0: Reflecting Electric Field

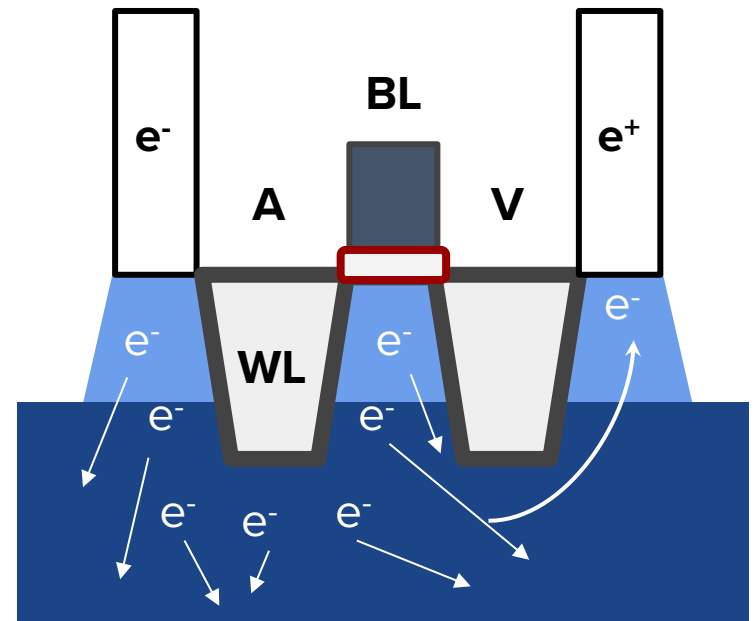


Mechanism 1: Electron Injection



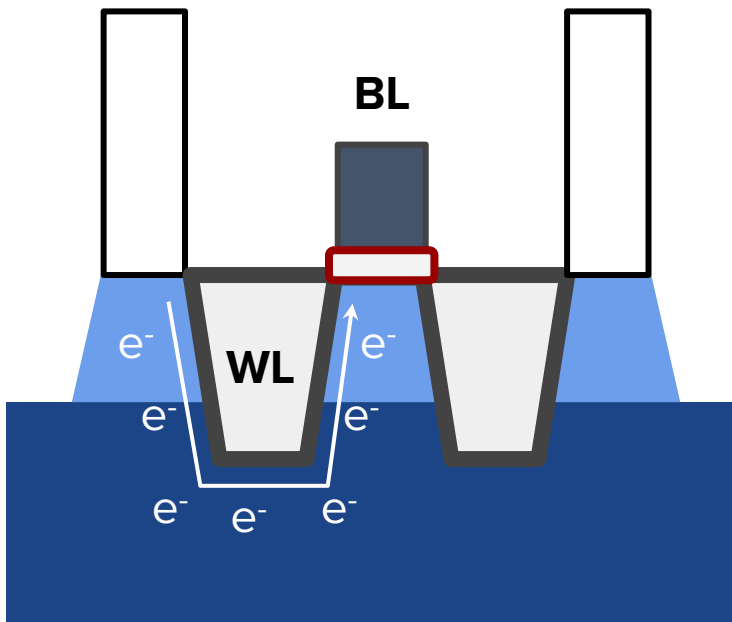
Aggressor ACT

Precharge

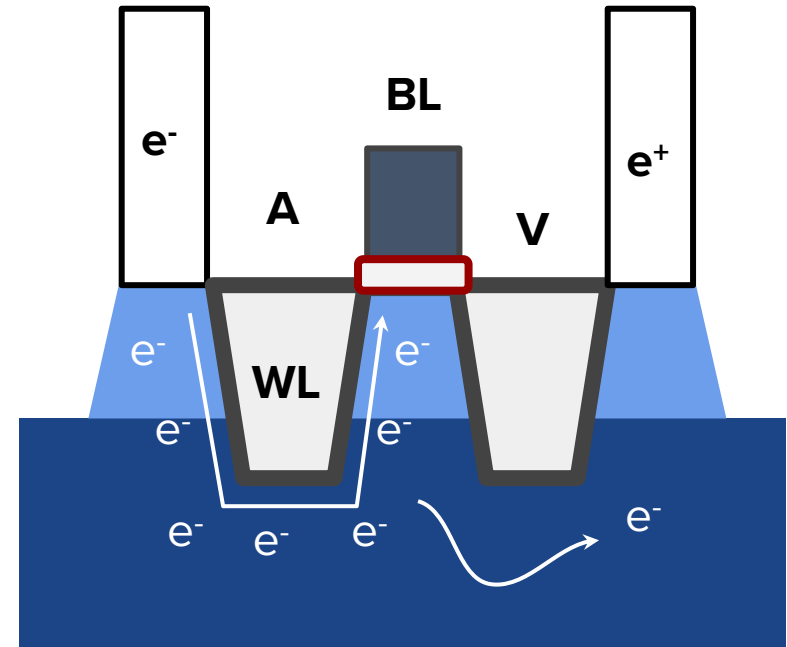


Recombination

Mechanism 2: Electron Drift



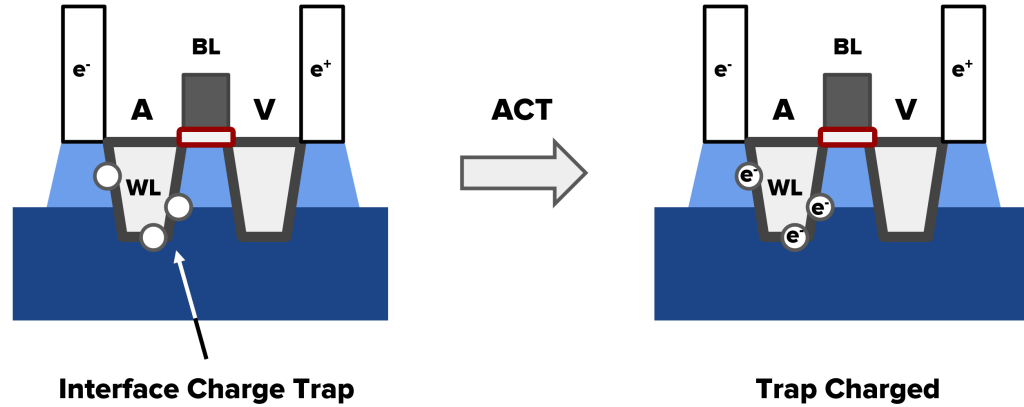
Aggressor ACT



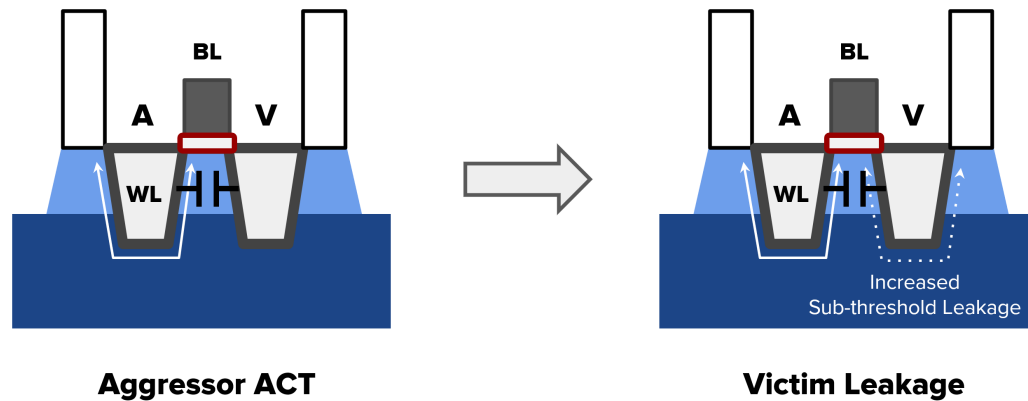
Electron Drift

More

- Charge traps

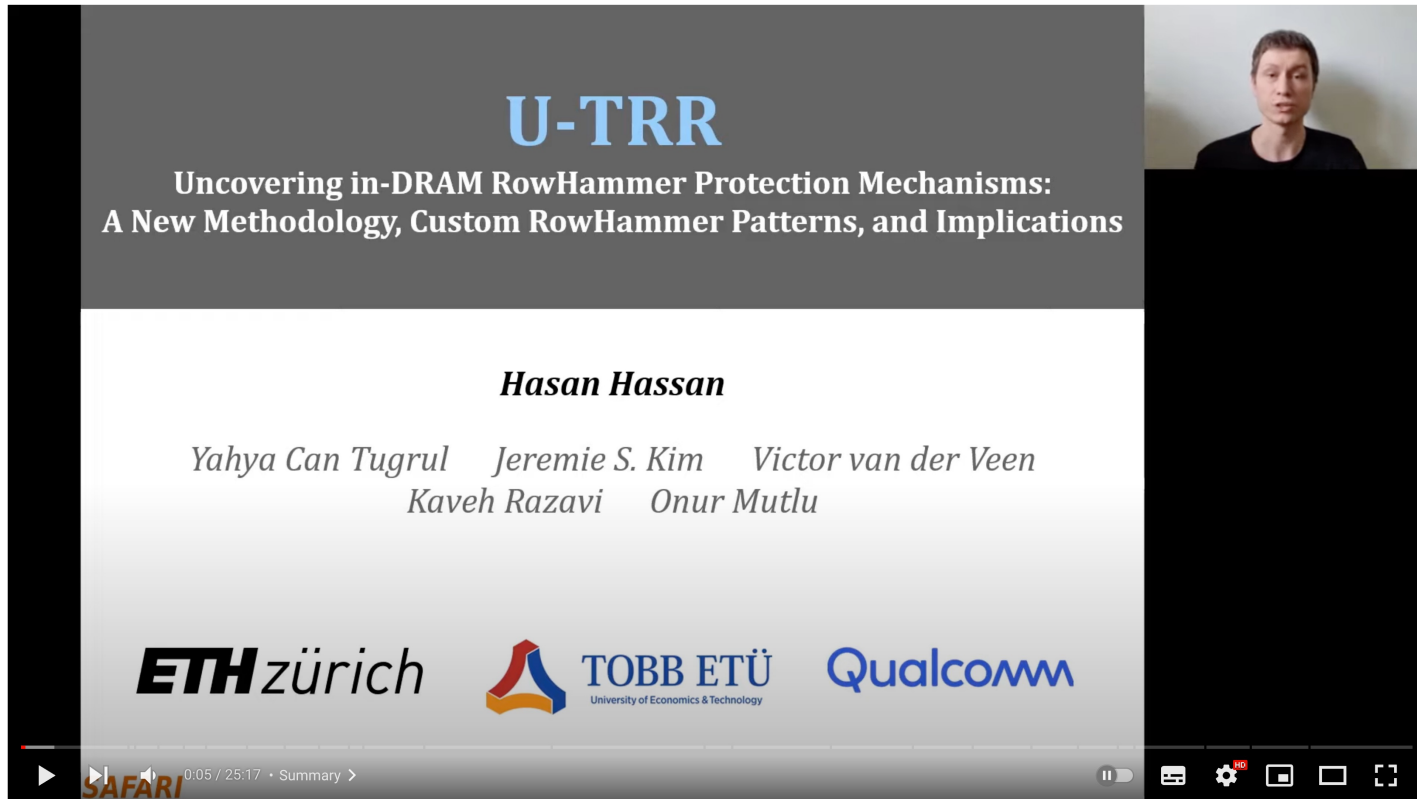


- Wordline Crosstalk



More on U-TRR

<https://youtu.be/YkBR9yeLHRs>



The video player shows a presentation slide with the following content:

U-TRR

Uncovering in-DRAM RowHammer Protection Mechanisms:
A New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns, and Implications

Hasan Hassan

Yahya Can Tugrul Jeremie S. Kim Victor van der Veen
Kaveh Razavi Onur Mutlu

Logos for **ETH zürich**, **TOBB ETÜ** (University of Economics & Technology), and **Qualcomm** are displayed at the bottom of the slide.

The video player interface includes a progress bar at 0:05 / 25:17, a 'Summary' link, and standard YouTube controls (play, volume, settings, full screen, etc.).

Uncovering TRR: New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns & Implications - MICRO'21 Long Talk; 25m



Onur Mutlu Lectures
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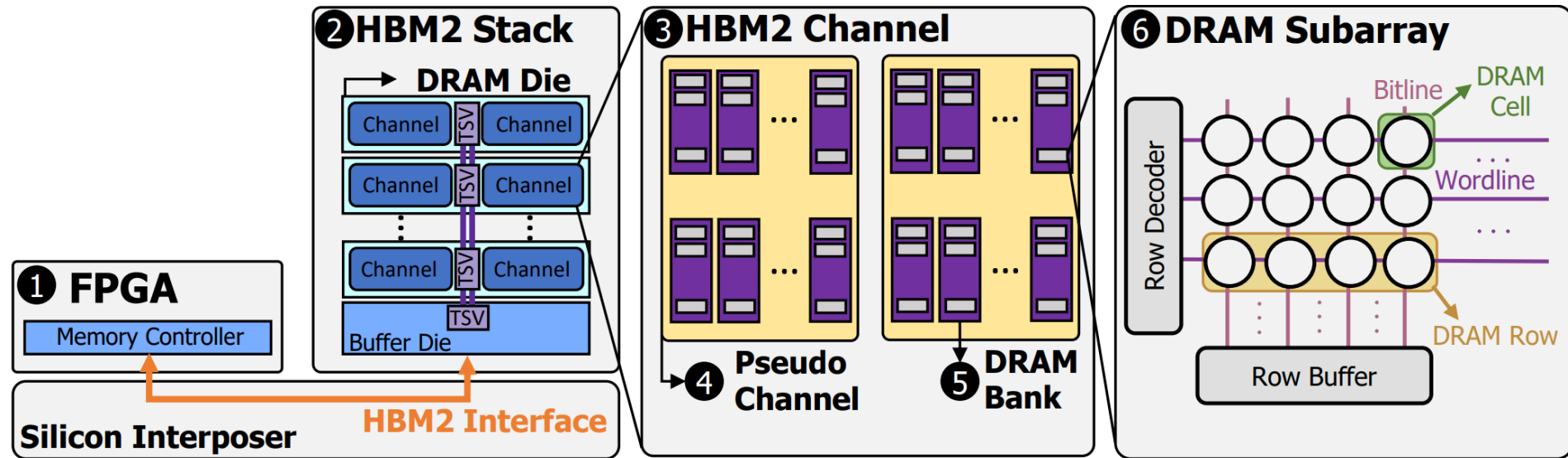
360 views 1 year ago MICRO 2021 Conference Presentations

Talk: "Uncovering In-DRAM RowHammer Protection Mechanisms: A New Methodology, Custom RowHammer Patterns, and Implications"

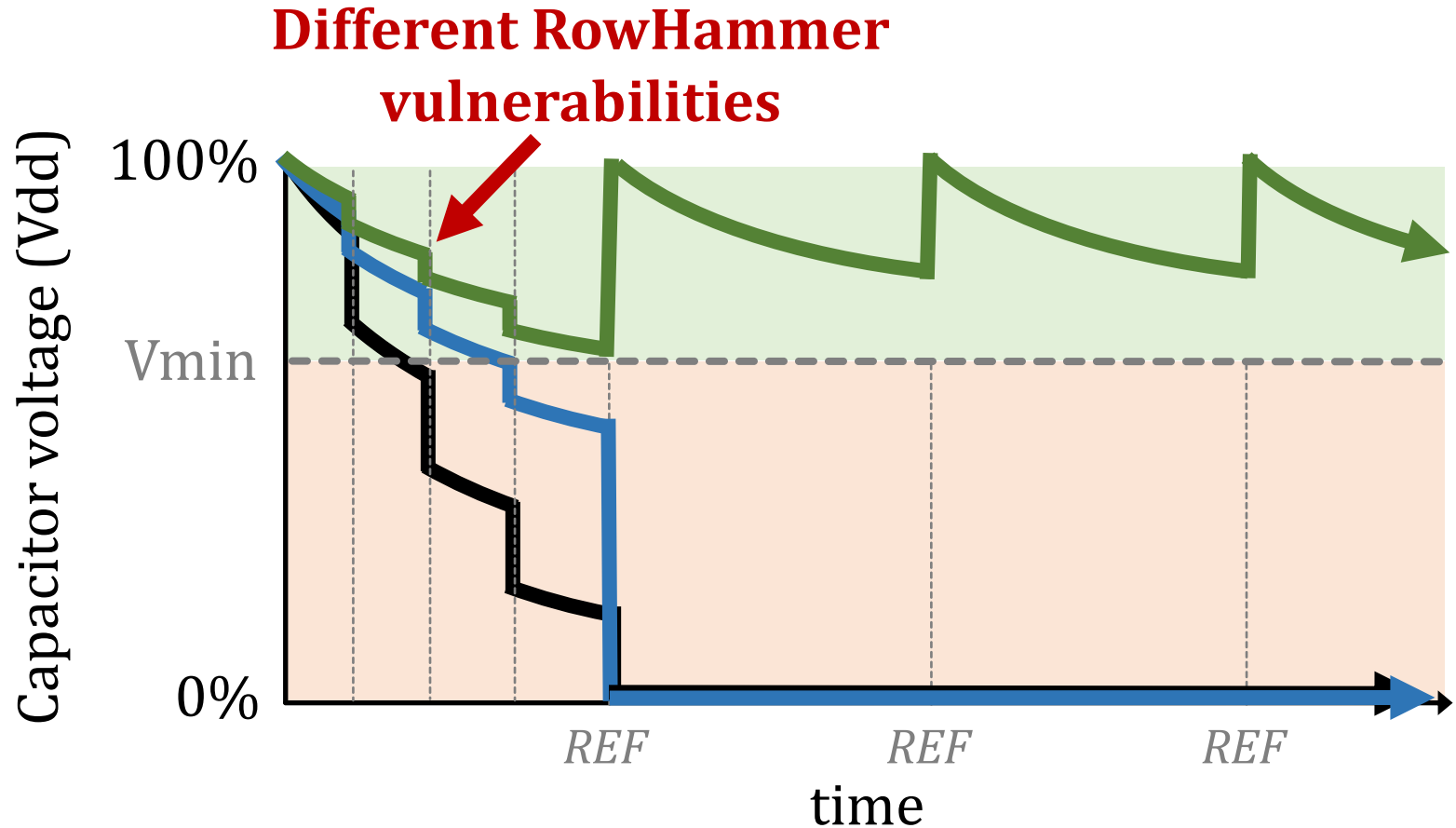
Full Conference Talk at MICRO 2021 by Hasan Hassan

25 minutes Show more

HBM2 Organization



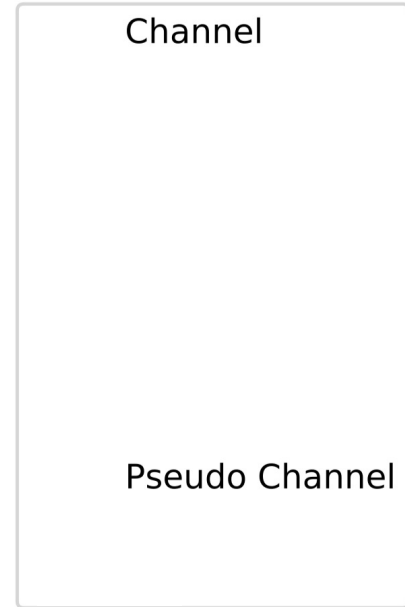
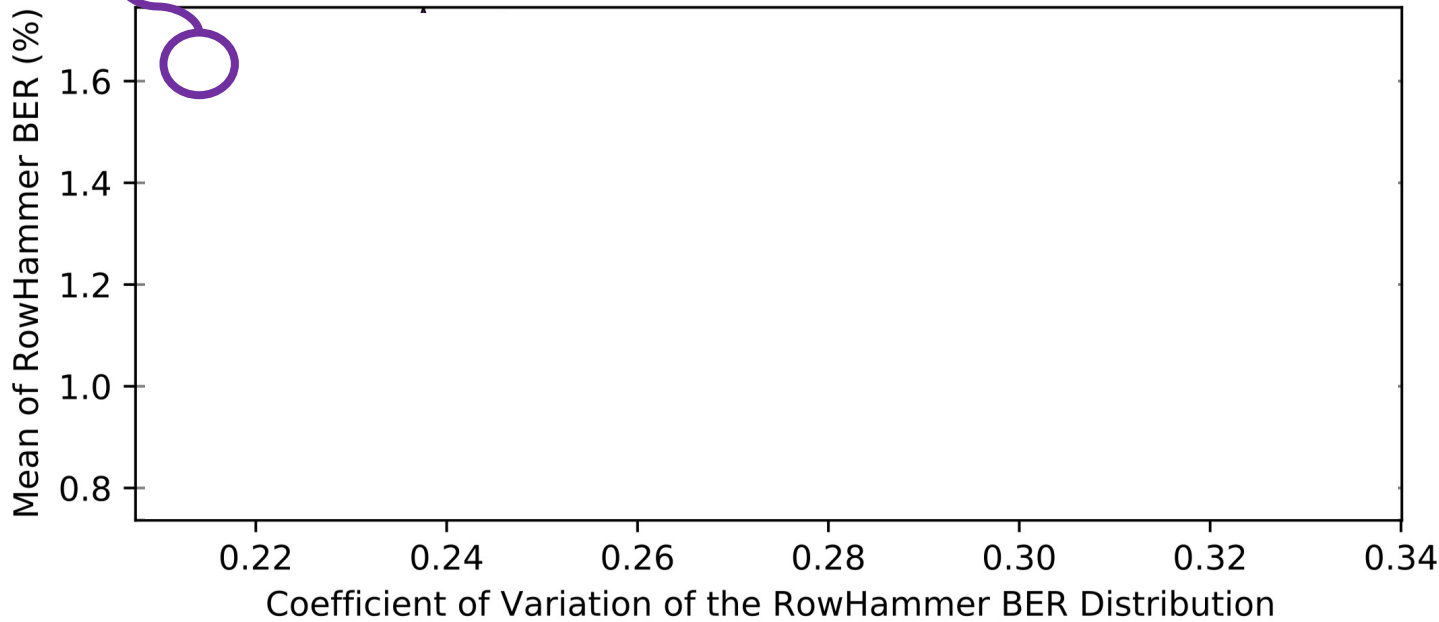
Cell-to-Cell Variation



Some cells are more vulnerable due to **process variation** and **design-induced variation**

Variation in Bit Error Rate

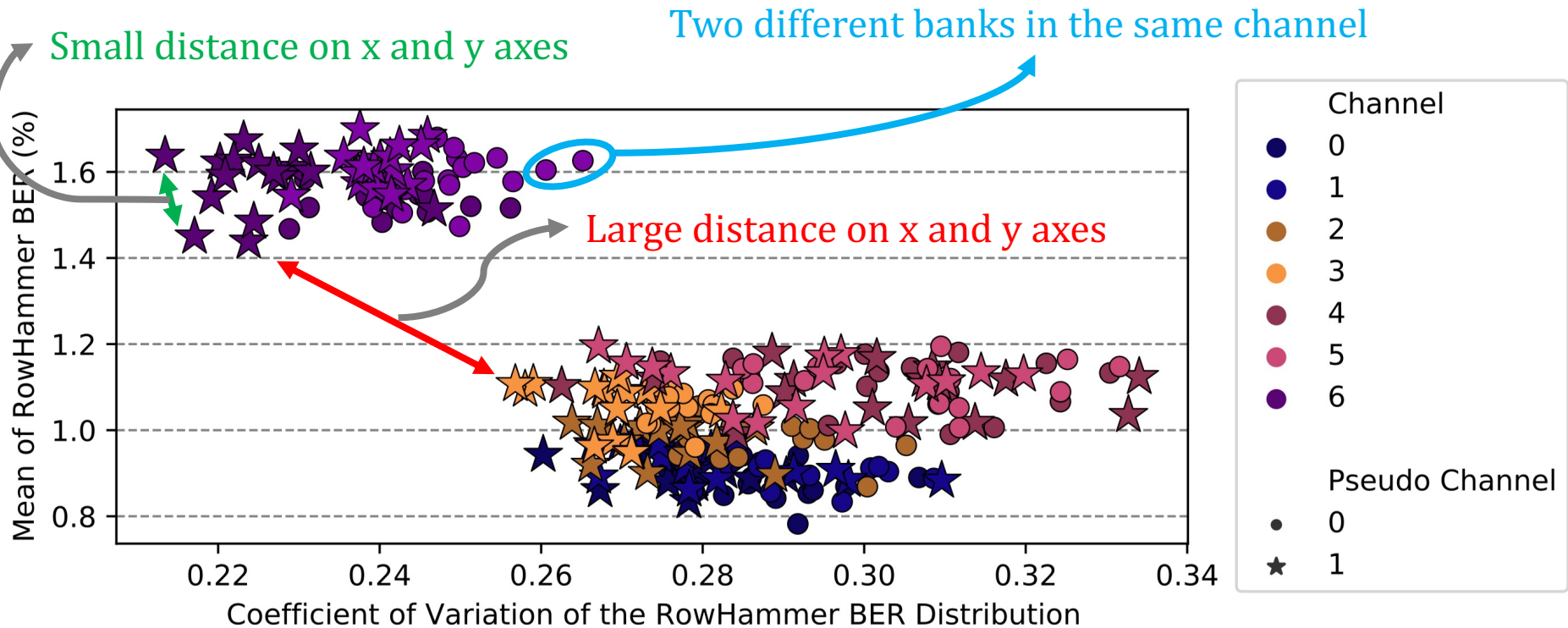
Mean BER (y) and BER variation (x) across rows **in one bank**



Variation in BER
across rows decrease

Variation in BER
across rows increase

Variation in Bit Error Rate



Banks in the same channel have similar variation in BER