

A GREATER MEASURE OF CONFIDENCE

**KEITHLEY**  
A Tektronix Company

# Learn How to Overcome the Electrical Measurement Challenges *of High Brightness LEDs*



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# Overcome the Electrical Measurement Challenges of High Brightness LEDs

High Brightness Light Emitting Diodes (HBLEDs) are growing rapidly in popularity in today's devices because of their high-use efficiency, long life, and wide range of available colors. These characteristics are driving their use in applications such as architectural lighting, automotive lighting, medical equipment, military systems, and even general illumination. The demand for HBLEDs will continue to grow even faster as their price decreases and their efficiency increases; however, this achievement is contingent upon refined testing methodology and instrumentation.

Reliable and accurate electrical measurements are vital for the mass production of high brightness LEDs, and, therefore, a solid understanding of them is critical. Our e-guide provides access to application-based seminars, application notes and other materials. After viewing these materials, we expect that you will come away with an overview of the common electrical measurements performed on high brightness LEDs and how to overcome the challenges associated with those measurements. You will learn and understand:

- The effects of self-heating in LEDs and how to avoid it
- How to relate forward voltage to junction temperature
- The effects of noise in your forward voltage measurements
- The testing differences between DC and AC LEDs

## ■ Article – Accurate, Cost-Effective High Brightness LED Testing Starts with Device Fundamentals

## ■ Application Overview – Simplified I/V Characterization of LEDs

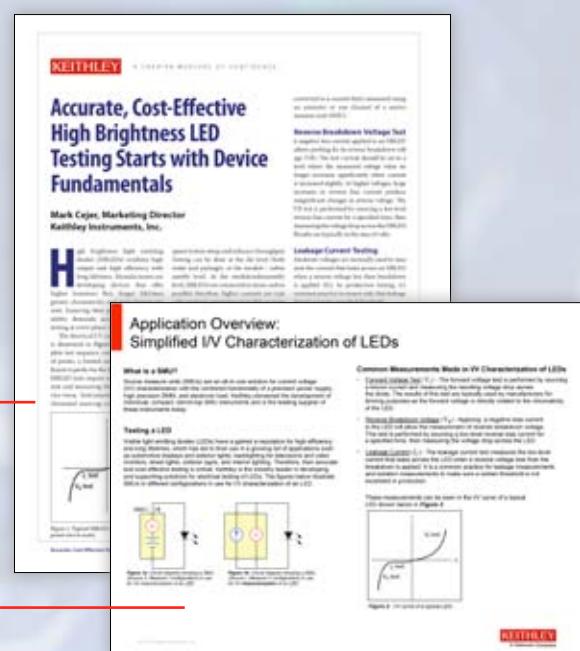
### High Value HBLED Testing

To take advantage of the new opportunities that HBLEDs bring, manufacturers are looking for ways to increase production volumes and reduce unit costs of existing HBLED designs. In R&D labs, new III-V materials and phosphors (for white light) are being investigated to find those that allow HBLEDs to be produced cheaply and with better performance. Major objectives include higher efficiency, more colors, higher current density and optical output, and better packaging with increased cooling capabilities. These aims are especially important for HBLEDs used in illumination, where incandescent and fluorescent lamps currently have a significant unit price advantage. View our two-part seminar series now:

- Seminar: Overcoming the Electrical Measurement Challenges of High Brightness LEDs (Part 1)
- Seminar: Meeting the Electrical Measurement Demands of High Power High Brightness LEDs (Part 2)



**View the video:  
How to Overcome Electrical Measurement Challenges of High Brightness LEDs**



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# Let's take a look at the three steps in the life cycle of LED manufacturing.

## Step One: Wafer Acceptance Testing (WAT) or Die Sort

During the wafer acceptance testing or die sort cycle in production testing, every LED device on a wafer is tested to identify the good die from the bad die. This ensures that the LED device on the wafer meets the design specifications and prevents additional value-added process steps on bad die.

The Keithley **Series 2600B SourceMeter® SMU Instrument Family** is a great fit for automated test applications like WAT that demand the highest levels of automation and throughput. The Series 2600B's **Test Script Processor (TSP®)** technology delivers industry-best performance by fully embedding and then executing complete test programs from within the SMU instrument itself. This virtually eliminates all time-consuming bus communications to and from the PC controller and, thus, dramatically improves overall test times.

## Step Two: LED Device Testing

In the LED device testing cycle, parameters such as reverse breakdown voltage, leakage current, forward voltage, optical test, etc. are examined on each individual LED device. Keithley's **Series 2400 SourceMeter SMU Instruments** and, for high power requirements, **Model 2651A High Current SMU Instrument** streamline this process and provide reliable operation and superior throughput in non-stop production environments. Additionally, the **Model 2602B Dual-Channel SMU Instrument** enables parallel testing of LED devices when even greater production efficiency is required.

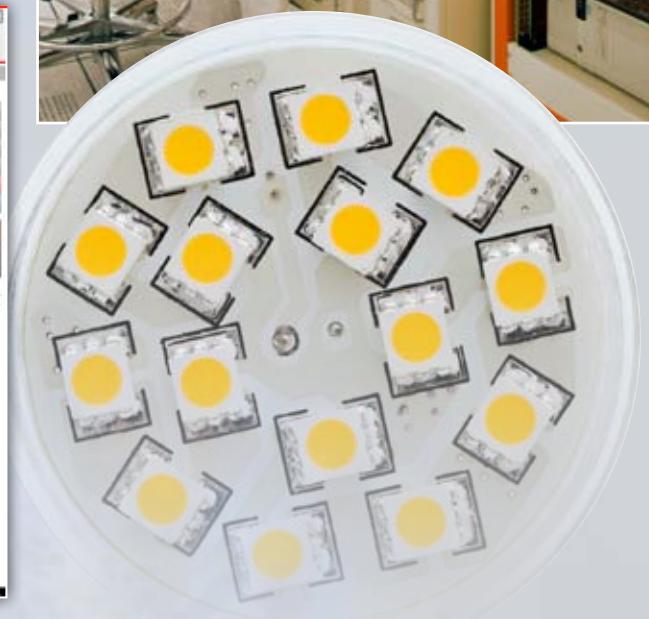
### ■ Learn more about the Series 2400 Family of SMU Instruments

### ■ Learn more about the Model 2651A High Current System SMU Instrument

### ■ Learn more about the Model 2602B Dual-Channel SMU Instrument



### ■ Learn more about the Series 2600B SMU Instruments



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## Let's take a look at the three steps in the life cycle of LED manufacturing. continued.

### Step Three: Testing LED Modules

Once the LED devices are embedded in a complete module (for example, LED car headlights,) the entire LED module is tested for reverse breakdown voltage, leakage current, forward voltage, optical tests etc. Though it seems as though the same parameters are tested in this step as in the LED device testing done in step two, testing complete LED modules in this step is done at much higher power, voltage, and current levels than testing LED devices.

For many applications, space is limited and/or the light must be directional. This demand for a lot of light in a small package has led to the development of high power LED modules, which consist of one or more large-die LEDs. When multiple LEDs are present, they're either wired in parallel or in series, depending on the application and the available power source. The die of these LEDs are much larger than the die of typical HBLEDs and can handle much larger currents as well. In fact, it's common for a single die to be required to withstand current levels as high as 10A. High current pulse width modulation is a common method of controlling the brightness of such LEDs. When using this technique, the current through the LED is pulsed at a constant frequency with a constant pulse level, but the width of the pulse is varied. Keithley's [Series 2600B SMU Instruments](#) and [Model 2651A High Current SMU](#) are powerful solutions that offer unmatched throughput in production applications.

#### ■ Application Note: [High Brightness LEDs under Pulse Width Modulation Using the Model 2651A High Power System SourceMeter® Instrument](#)

#### ■ Learn more about the [Series 2600B SMU Instruments](#)

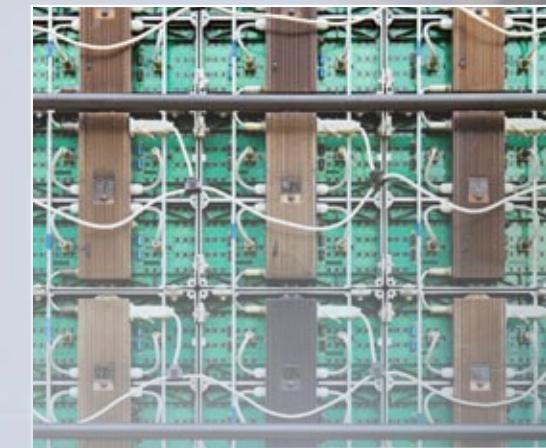
#### ■ Learn more about the [Model 2651A High Current System SMU Instrument](#)

### Other LED Testing Requirements

In device testing, there is also a need for temperature profiling and environment stress screening.

These applications involve batch testing of devices by sampling requiring the need for multiplexing to reduce costs. Keithley's [Model 3706A System Switch](#) with High Performance Digital Multimeter is a tightly integrated switch and measurement system that meets demanding precision and multiplexing requirements in an automated test system for device testing.

#### ■ Learn more about the [Model 3706A](#)



**KEITHLEY Application Note Series**

**Number 5249**  
Testing High Brightness LEDs under Pulse Width Modulation Using the Model 2651A High Power System SourceMeter® Instrument

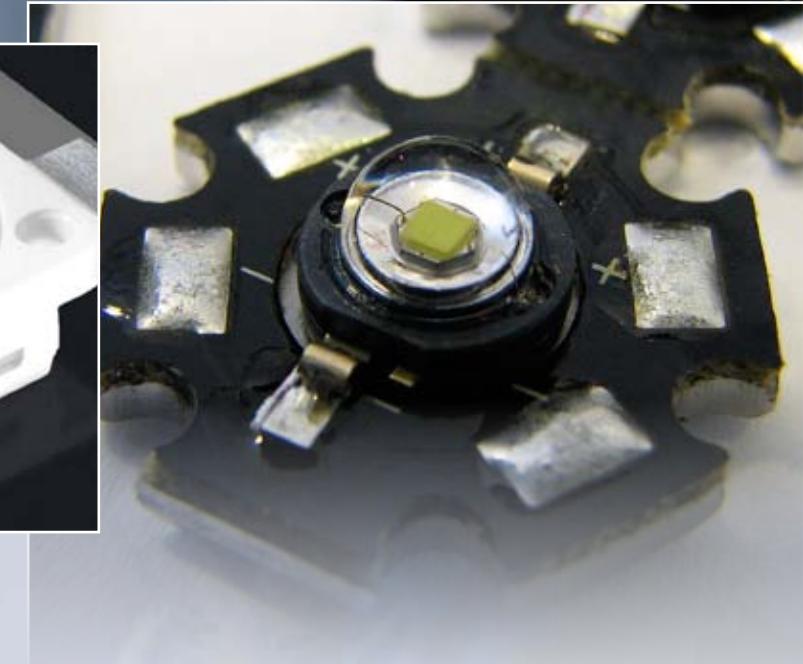
**Introduction**

With a worldwide focus on energy conservation, the high power consumption of traditional light sources has come under scrutiny. As a result, there is a growing demand for the improvement of lighting sources. This demand has lead to better increases in the development of alternatives to the incandescent bulb. Compared to incandescent bulbs, high power LEDs have a longer lifetime and efficiency is much more efficient and longer than incandescent bulbs. They still fall short of being ideal replacements. High Brightness Light Emitting Diodes (HBLEDs) are the next generation of LEDs. They are a much better option. Like incandescent bulbs, they reach full brightness immediately and do not require any difficult techniques of dimming. There are many advantages over incandescent bulbs. Their long lifetime and efficiency levels are continuously being increased.

The demand for more power

HBLEDs are commonly defined as LEDs that operate at 10W of power or higher with typical operating ranges of from 10W to 75W. Instead of focusing on 10W of current and being packaged in a large, heavy, and expensive metal can, HBLEDs are often stored and are measured as a small, obviously conductive board designed to draw heat away from the LED junction. These boards are often referred to as PCBs. PCBs are not bright enough to be used in most lighting applications. Instead, multiple HBLEDs are commonly combined in a single housing, referred to as LED light bars for a sensible application. As more light is required, the number of LEDs is confined to several tens. Production testing is typically performed at the individual package level, requiring massive power delivery capability, which is well within the capabilities of these devices.

Figure 1: Pulse response for the Model 2651A high-power system SourceMeter instrument.



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# Learn How to Choose the Right SMU for Your Application

The popularity of SMU instruments has increased rapidly as more people discover that their tightly-integrated DMM and precision power supply capabilities can serve a wide variety of applications throughout the electronics and semiconductor industries. Learn how to evaluate instrument specifications carefully in order to choose the most appropriate SMU for a specific application. [View our online webinar.](#)

## ■ Read the White Paper:

- [Choosing the Optimal Source Measurement Unit Instrument for Your Test and Measurement Application](#)



[Click here for an online discussion on “What Is an SMU Instrument, and How Do You Decide Which One Is Right for Your Application?”](#)

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# Get Unmatched Performance for Characterizing and Testing High Power, High Current Electronics

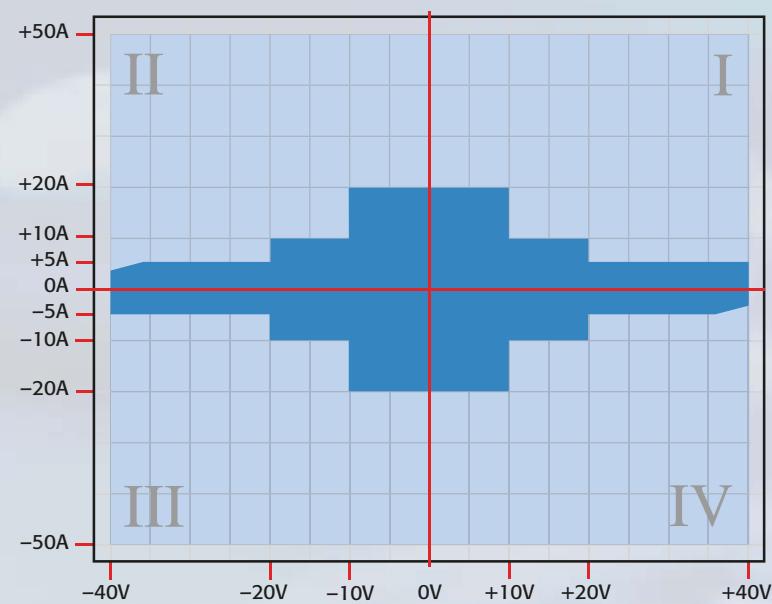
Our new **Model 2651A High Power/High Current System SourceMeter® Instrument** simplifies characterizing today's challenging high power electronics with unprecedented power, precision, speed, flexibility, and ease of use. It combines a highly flexible, four-quadrant voltage and current source/load with precision voltage and current meters.

- Source or sink 2,000W of pulsed power ( $\pm 40V$ ,  $\pm 50A$ ), 200W of DC power ( $\pm 10V @ \pm 20A$ ,  $\pm 20V @ \pm 10A$ ,  $\pm 40V @ \pm 5A$ )
- Easily connect two units (in series or parallel) to create solutions up to  $\pm 100A$  or  $\pm 80V$
- 1pA resolution enables precise measurement of very low leakage currents
- 1 $\mu$ s per point (1MHz), continuous 18-bit sampling, accurately characterizes transient behavior



## Choice of digitizing or integrating measurement modes

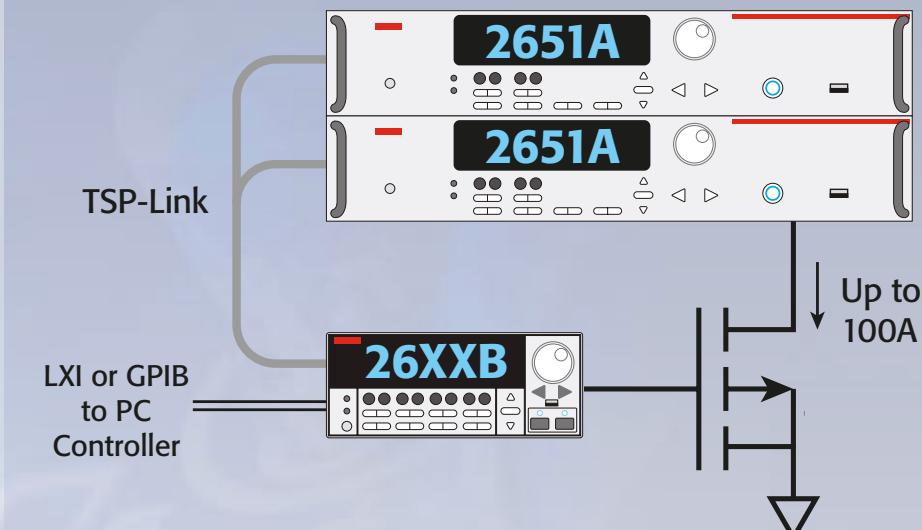
With the Model 2651A, you can choose from either digitizing or integrating measurement modes for precise characterization of both transient and steady-state behavior. Two independent ADCs define each mode—one for current and the other for voltage—which run simultaneously for accurate source readback without sacrificing test throughput. The digitizing measurement mode's 18-bit ADCs can support continuous one-microsecond-per-point sampling, making it ideal for waveform capture and measuring transient characteristics with high precision. The integrating measurement mode, based on 22-bit ADCs, supports applications that demand the highest possible measurement accuracy and resolution. This ensures precise measurements of the very low currents and voltages common in next-generation devices.



A single Model 2651A unit can source and sink up to  $\pm 40V$  and  $\pm 50A$ . Connect two units in parallel via the built-in TSP-Link expansion bus to extend the system's current range to 100A or connect them in series to expand the voltage range to 80V. The embedded Test Script Processor (TSP®) included simplifies testing by allowing you to address multiple units as a single instrument so that they act in concert. The built-in trigger controller can synchronize the operation of all linked channels to within 500 nanoseconds.

## Model 2651A Applications

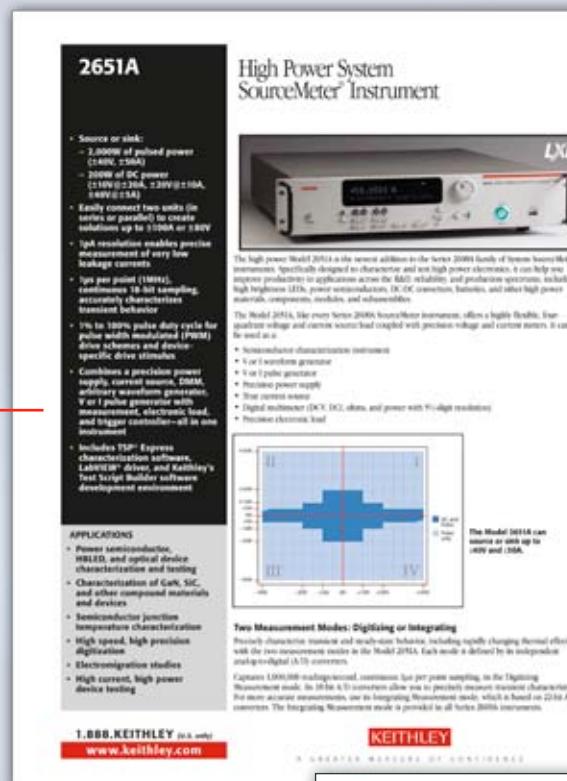
- Power semiconductor, high brightness LED (HBLED), and optical device characterization and testing
- Characterization of GaN, SiC, and other compound materials and devices
- Semiconductor junction temperature characterization
- Reliability testing
  - High speed, high precision digitization
  - Electromigration studies



Built for building systems. The embedded TSP controller and TSP-Link interface in each Series 2600B instrument make it easy to link multiple Model 2651As with Series 2600B instruments to create an integrated test system with up to 64 channels. Precision timing and tight channel synchronization are guaranteed with built-in 500ns trigger controllers. The fully isolated, independent channels of Series 2600B instruments allow true SMU-per-pin testing without the power and/or channel limitations of mainframe-based systems.

# Ready to learn more?

- Download the Model 2651A datasheet.



- Read these Application Briefs:

- Testing High Brightness LEDs under Pulse Width Modulation Using the Model 2651A High Power System SourceMeter®

**Instrument.** Learn how to test high brightness LEDs properly with accurate, reliable and repeatable measurements by using complex drive schemes such as pulse width modulated waveforms, AC waveforms, and even arbitrary waveforms.



Click on the video above to view our demo of how you can combine two Model 2651As to source currents as high as 100A!

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# Get Superior Ease-of-Use with Best-in-Class Value & Performance

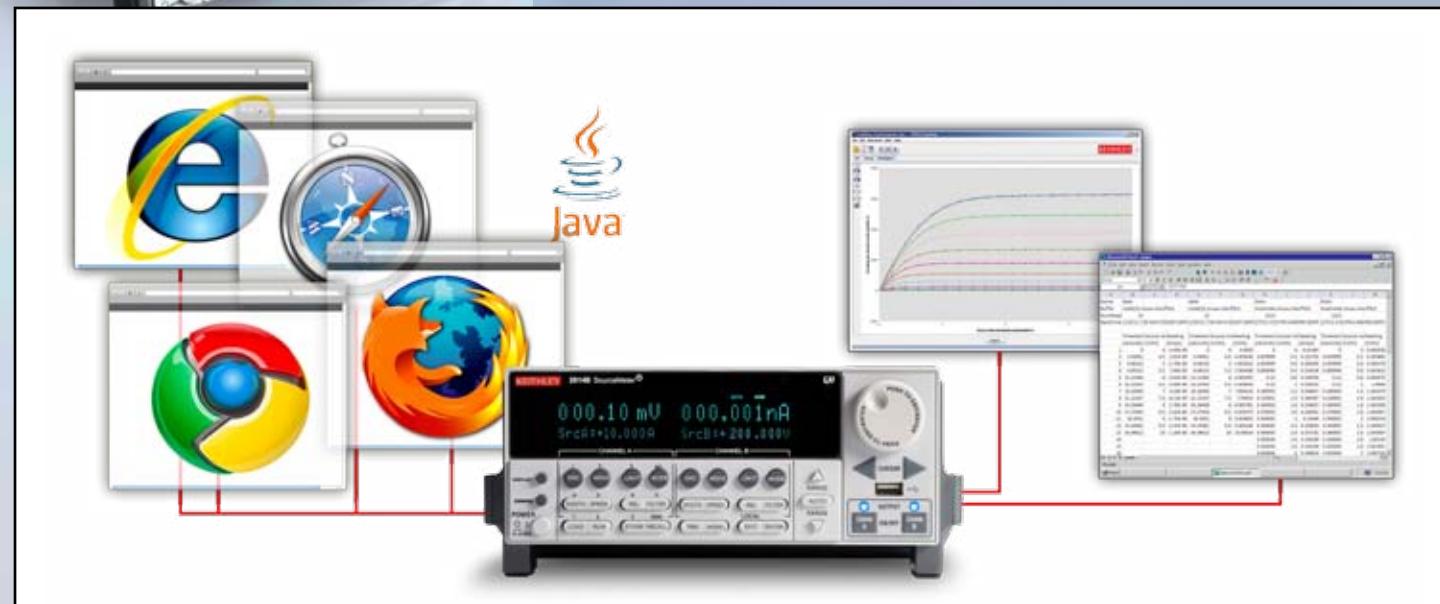
Like other SourceMeter® SMU Instruments, Series 2600B offers both single- and dual-channel models. Each combines the capabilities of a Precision Power Supply, true Current Source, 6½ digit DMM, Arbitrary Waveform Generator, Pulse Generator, and Electronic Load – all into one tightly-integrated, 4-quadrant voltage/current source and measure instrument.

With our new Series 2600B SMU line, the most powerful, fastest, and highest resolution SMU instruments are now easier than ever to use, with:

- 6½ digit display with industry-best resolution up to 0.1fA
- Software emulation for Keithley's Model 2400 SourceMeter SMU Instruments
- Built-in, Java-based test software that enables true plug & play I/V characterization and test through any browser.
- USB 2.0, LXI-C, GPIB, RS-232, and digital I/O interfaces

With our [Series 2600B SourceMeter SMU Instruments](#), we've added three new bench-top models and expanded the capabilities of six more instruments.

[See our selector table on page 11 of this guide.](#)



[View our video demo](#) and learn how to boost productivity using the built-in, Java-based test software runs directly from any web browser

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# Ready to learn more?

## ■ Download the Series 2600B datasheet.

## ■ Read an Application Note:

### - High Speed Testing of High Brightness LEDs –

Learn how to achieve throughput advantages and reduce the cost of test by using new test technologies, including instruments enabled with an embedded Test Script Processor.

**Series 2600B**  
System SourceMeter® SMU (Source-Measure Unit) Instruments

- Tightly-integrated, 4-quadrant voltage/current source and measure instruments offer best in class performance with 6½ digit resolution
- Family of models offer industry's widest dynamic range from 0.1mA and 20V to 100A and 200V
- Built-in, Java-based test software enables true plug & play I/V characterization and test, through any browser
- Test Script Processor technology provides complete test programs inside the instrument's flexible system-level throughput
- TSP-Link expansion technology for multi-channel parallel test without a mainframe
- Software emulation for test applications of a SourceMeter SMU instrument
- USB 2.0, LXI-C, GPIB, RS-232, and digital I/O interfaces
- Free software drivers and development/debugging tools
- Optional ACS-Basic semiconductor characterization software

**KEITHLEY**  
Application Note Series  
Number 2639  
**High Speed Testing of High Brightness LEDs**

**Introduction**  
Visible light emitting diodes (LEDs) have gained a reputation for high efficiency and long lifetimes, which has led to their use in a growing list of applications, including automotive displays and entrance lights, back lighting for televisions and video monitors, traffic control signals, signs, and mobile lighting. Extensive research and development in LED manufacturing techniques has led to the creation of LEDs with higher lumens per watt, longer lifetimes, greater color purity, and more lumens per watt, which has driven demand and encouraged an even wider array of applications. To ensure the reliability and quality of these devices, accurate and cost effective tests are critical.

**LED Testing**  
There are two different types of test required at each stage of production, test during design research and development, or wafer measurements during production, and final test of packaged parts. While concrete testing "recipes" often include a multitude of steps intended to verify product lifetime or extract data for specific performance characteristics, they are typically not designed to provide detailed information to be used to provide solid information on the needed "parameters" for these recipes—these tests that illustrate how to probe the diode's characteristics and example test set-ups. This note also outlines how to achieve throughput advantages and reduce the cost of test by using new test technologies, including instruments enabled with Keithley's Test Script Processor (TSP).

**Test Description**  
Testing LEDs typically involves both electrical and optical measurements. This note focuses on electrical characterization, including light measurement techniques when appropriate. Figure 1 illustrates the basic I-V curve of a typical diode. A complete test could include a number of other test values versus current operating points, but a limited sample of points is generally sufficient to probe for the figures of merit.

**Figure 1: Typical LED DC I-V curve and test points (not to scale).**

**Methods to Achieve Higher Currents from I-V Measurement Equipment**

The most flexible test equipment for sourcing and measuring current (I) and voltage (V) are source-measure units (SMUs) such as Keithley's Series 2600B System SourceMeter® instruments. These specialized instruments are high performance I/V source-measure instruments that are designed for use either as forward I/V characterization tools or as building block components for automated test systems. In addition to the built-in power source, a 20MHz arbitrary waveform generator with measurement, an electronic load, and a trigger controller—all in one instrument! In short, they source I or V, and then measure the current/voltage simultaneously. They also support both pulsed and I & V switching power, referred to as "true quasistatic operation".

**Figure 2: DC current limits.**

Figure 2 shows the DC current limits, or performance envelope. Note however if the SMU can produce a time-varying waveform such as a pulse. If the pulse waveform had 40% amplitude, 1ns pulse width, and a 50% duty cycle, then the effective CW power averaged over several seconds is 20W, not 40W. Depending on its design, it may be possible for this SMU to source higher currents in pulse mode than in DC mode, since the average measured peak power pulse mode is higher than DC peak power, but the CW power dissipation during pulse mode is less on average than in DC mode.

**Figure 3: Pulse sweeps.**

There is a limit to the DC maximum current or voltage that a single SMU can source and measure. This limit is a function of the inherent requirements and is typically dependent on the design parameters such as the maximum output of the power supply internal to the SMU itself, the safe operating area (SOA) of the discrete components used in the SMU, the spacing of the metal lines on the SMU's internal printed circuit board. Some of these design parameters are constrained by maximum current limits, while others are constrained by maximum voltage limits. A typical representation of the DC I-V characteristics of a four quadrant SMU is shown in Figure 4. It shows a maximum DC current of 5A (point A in the figure) and a maximum voltage of 40V (point B). The maximum power the SMU can output is 200W, which is achieved at point B (1A@40V). At point A the



[Click here to download our 2 page overview of simplified I/V characterization of LEDs.](#)

### - Methods to Achieve Higher Currents from I-V Measurement Equipment – Discover how to achieve current levels during test sequencing that are higher than the published DC (direct current) specifications of a single SMU.

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Join the discussion on our [application forum](#).

# Explore the Series 2400 SourceMeter instrument family

**Series 2400 SourceMeter instruments** are designed specifically for testing devices that demand tightly coupled precision voltage and current sourcing as well as measurement capabilities. Each is a single-channel instrument that is both a highly stable DC power source and a true instrument-grade 6½-digit multimeter. The power source characteristics include low noise, precision, and readback. The multimeter capabilities include high repeatability and low noise. The result is a compact, single-channel, DC parametric tester.

- Six models: 20–100W DC, 1000W pulsed, 1100V to 1 $\mu$ V, 10A to 10pA
- Source and sink (4-quadrant) operation, plus 2-, 4-, and 6-wire ohms functions
- 0.012% basic DCV measure accuracy with 6½-digit resolution
- Available high speed sense lead contact check function
- Programmable DIO port for automation/handler/prober control
- Up to 1700 readings/second at 4½ digits via the GPIB bus
- 5000 6½-digit readings can be stored in the non-volatile buffer memory

## Built-In Test Sequencer

The Series 2400 Source Memory list provides faster and easier testing by allowing you to set up and execute up to 100 different test setups that can run without PC intervention.

- Stores up to 100 individual test configurations, each containing unique source settings, measurement settings, pass/fail criteria, etc., linked together to form a complete test suite
- Pass/fail limit test as fast as 500 $\mu$ s per point with onboard comparator that eliminates the delay caused when sending data to the computer for analysis
- Built-in, user definable math functions to calculate derived parameters



*Series 2400 SourceMeter instruments are easy to set up and use, providing convenient DMM-like operation, while eliminating many of the connection, compatibility, and synchronization problems that occur when multiple instruments are used. You can source voltage or current while making measurements without changing connections. This not only makes it easier to use, it saves test time.*

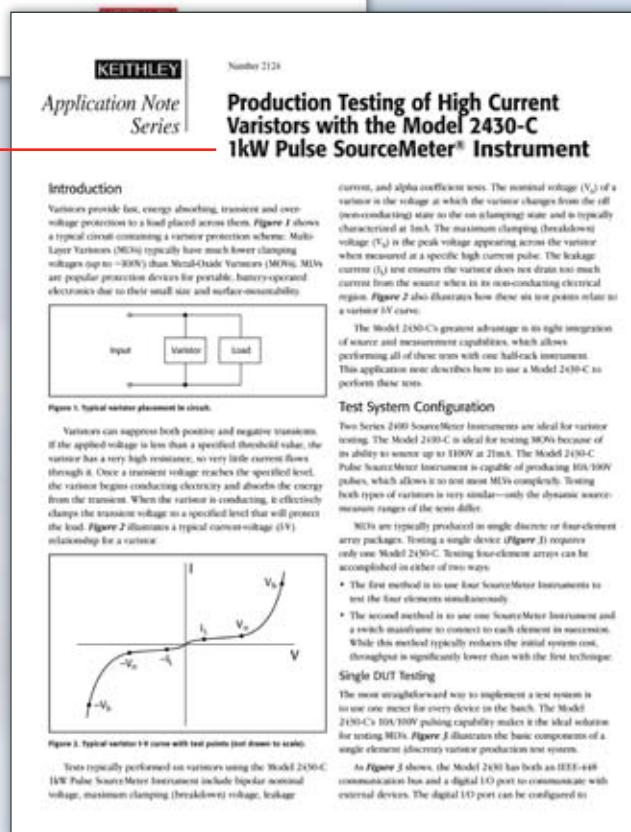
# Ready to learn more?

- Download the Series 2400 datasheet.



- Read an Application Note:

- Production Testing of High Current Varistors with the 2430C 1kW Pulse SourceMeter Instrument – Learn about the methods and issues related to creating production test system solutions that verify the performance of single and multiple (array) LED devices.



**Click on the video above - Learn how to use saved setups with the Series 2400 SourceMeter Instrument Family.**

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Contact us online.**

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# Discover how you benefit from our legacy of innovation in Source-Measure Unit engineering

Our latest generation of System SourceMeter® instruments offers the T&M industry's best combination of precision, throughput, and functionality. When used individually, they bring together everything we've learned about engineering instruments that deliver unparalleled performance. They're also flexible, efficient, I-V source-and-measure building blocks for creating fast, powerful, and cost-effective test and measurement systems for electronic devices. Keithley has been a leading provider of integrated sourcing and measurement solutions since the late 1980s, when we introduced our first generation of source-measure units (SMUs).

First one-microsecond per point digitizing SMU instrument (Model 2651A)  
First 200W DC, 2000W pulsed SMU instrument (Model 2651A)

First 3,000V, 180W SMU with 1fA current measurement resolution (Model 2657A)



*today*

First half-rack, DMM-like SMU instrument (Model 2400)



First instrument-based SMU (Series 23X)



First 1000V SMU instrument (Model 237)

First two-channel, half-rack SMU instrument (Model 2602)  
First script-based SMU instrument (Models 2601/2602)



Series 2600B SourceMeter® SMU Instruments



*2005*

*1995*

First one-kilowatt pulsed SMU instrument (Model 2430)



First sub-femtoamp SMU instrument (Model 6430)



*2000*

First SMU instrument with parallel test expansion capability (Series 2600A)



# System SourceMeter® SMU Instruments



Feature	2651A / 2657A High Current / High Voltage	2634B / 2635B / 2636B Low Current	2602B / 2612B Dual Channel	2601B / 2611B Single Channel	2604B / 2614B Dual Channel Benchtop
<b># of Channels</b>	1 (optional expansion to 32)	1 – 2 (optional expansion to 64 via TSP Link for 2635B/2636B)	2 (optional expansion to 64 via TSP-Link)	1 (optional expansion to 32 via TSP-Link)	2
<b>Current Max / Min</b>	1 (optional expansion to 32 via TSP-Link®)	2634B: 10A pulse/1fA 2636B, 2635B: 10A pulse/0.1fA	10A pulse/100fA	10A pulse/100fA	10A pulse/100 fA
<b>Voltage Max / Min</b>	2651A: 50A pulse/100fA 2657A: 120mA/1fA	200V/100nV	40V/100nV for 2602B 200V/100nV for 2612B	40V/100nV for 2601B 200V/100nV for 2611B	40V/100nV for 2604B 200V/100nV for 2614B
<b>System-Level Automation</b>	Digital I/O, TSP-Link, Contact Check	Digital I/O, TSP-Link, Contact Check (not available on 2634B)	Digital I/O, TSP-Link, Contact Check	Digital I/O, TSP-Link, Contact Check	N/A
<b>Max readings / sec</b>	38,500 1μSec/pt., 18-bit digitizer	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Computer Interface</b>	GPIB, LAN (LXI), RS-232	GPIB, LAN (LXI), RS-232, USB	GPIB, LAN (LXI), RS-232, USB	GPIB, LAN (LXI), RS-232, USB	GPIB, LAN (LXI), RS-232, USB
<b>Connectors/Cabling</b>	2651A: Screw terminal, adaptors for banana 2657A: HV triax, SHV	Triax	Screw terminal, adaptors for banana or triax	Screw terminal, adaptors for banana or triax	Screw terminal, adaptors for banana or triax



Feature	6430 Low I SourceMeter	2430 High Power SourceMeter Instrument	2410 High V SourceMeter Instrument	2420 / 2425 / 2440 High I SourceMeter Instruments	2400 / 2401 Low Power SourceMeter Instruments
<b>Current Max / Min</b>	105mA / 10aA	10.5A pulse / 100pA	1.05A / 10pA	5.25A / 100pA	1.05A / 10pA
<b>Voltage Max / Min</b>	200V / 1uV	200V / 1uV	1100V / 1uV	100V / 1uV	200V / 1uV
<b>Power</b>	2W	1100W	22W	110W	22W
<b>Max readings / sec</b>	256	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Interface</b>	GPIB, RS-232, Digital I/O, Trigger Link Trigger Bus	GPIB, RS-232, Digital I/O, Trigger Link Trigger Bus	GPIB, RS-232, Digital I/O, Trigger Link Trigger Bus	GPIB, RS-232, Digital I/O, Trigger Link Trigger Bus	GPIB, RS-232, Digital I/O, Trigger Link Trigger Bus
<b>Connectors</b>	Triax	Banana (front / rear)			

## Want to learn more?

Contact us by phone, fax, mail, or email:



Keithley Instruments hosts an online applications forum to encourage idea exchange, discussions among users. [Join the discussion today.](#)

To learn more about how Keithley's family of SMUs can enhance the productivity of your test and measurement applications, contact your local Keithley representative or [ask us a question online](#).

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