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Picosecond Avalanche Detector - working principle and gain measurement with a proof-of-concept prototype

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The Picosecond Avalanche Detector is a multi-junction silicon pixel detector based on a (NP)drift(NP)gain structure, devised to enable charged-particle tracking with high spatial resolution and picosecond time-stamp capability. It uses a continuous junction deep inside the sensor volume to amplify the primary charge produced by ionizing radiation in a thin absorption layer. The signal is then induced by the secondary charges moving inside a thicker drift region, using a “parallel plate” readout to deliver picosecond time resolution. A proof-of-concept monolithic prototype, consisting of a matrix of hexagonal pixels with 100 μm pitch, has been produced using the 130 nm SiGe BiCMOS process by IHP microelectronics. Measurements on probe station and with a ^{55}Fe X-ray source show that the prototype is functional and displays avalanche gain up to a maximum electron gain of 23. A study of the avalanche characteristics, corroborated by TCAD simulations, indicates that space-charge effects due to the large primary charge produced by the conversion of X-rays from the ^{55}Fe source limits the effective gain. The results of the first test beam with minimum ionizing particles will be presented.

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