

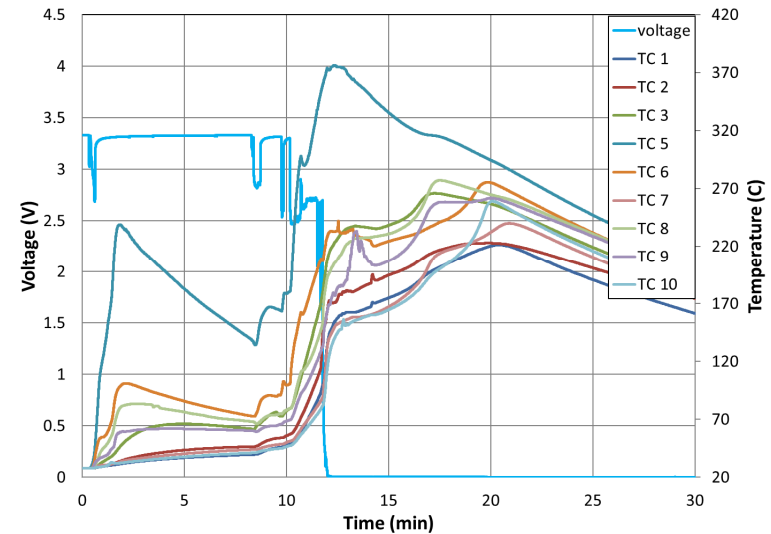
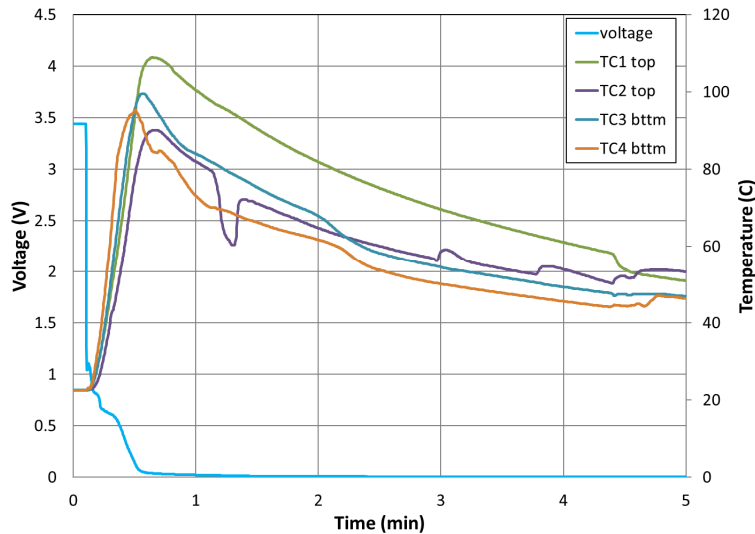
Thermal Runaway Propagation Testing

Joshua Lamb, Leigh Anna M. Steele, Chris Grosso, Jerry Quintana, Loraine Torres-Castro, June Stanley

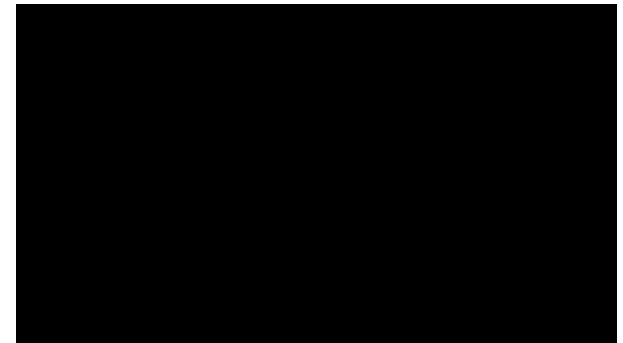
Sandia National Laboratories

Battery Safety Council 4th Forum
Washington, D. C. June 2017

Motivation for propagation testing



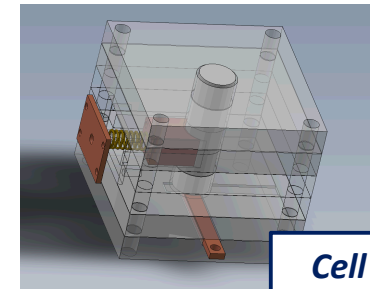
- *Results of single cell nail penetration and 1S10P propagation test*
- *26650 LFP cell*
- *Single cell has relatively minor failure*
- *Significant increase in intensity with a 10 cell pack*



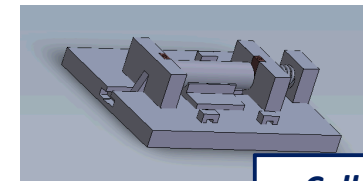
Measuring the impact of electrical connections

- Failures initiated by mechanical insult to cell 1 which is connected to cell 2 through constantan bridge wire
- Development of new testing fixture to increase reproducibility in FY16 (right)
- Additional effort to maintain electrical connection with cell 1 after runaway event
 - Use of spring on nail to apply opposing force keeping cell from ejecting after runaway (images below)

Testing Apparatus

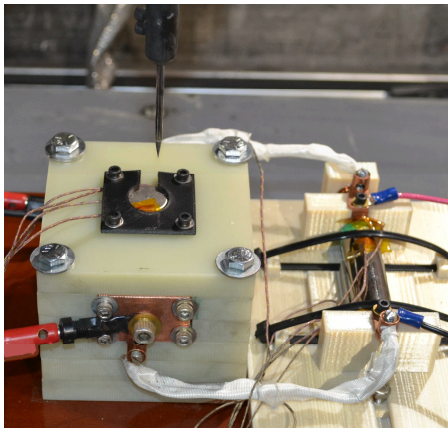


Cell #1 holder

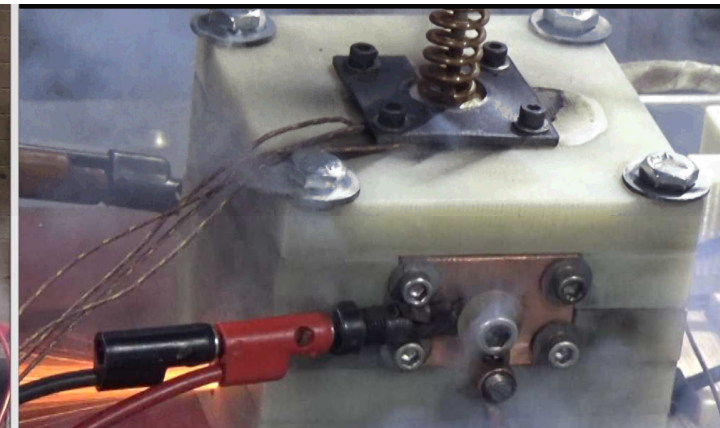
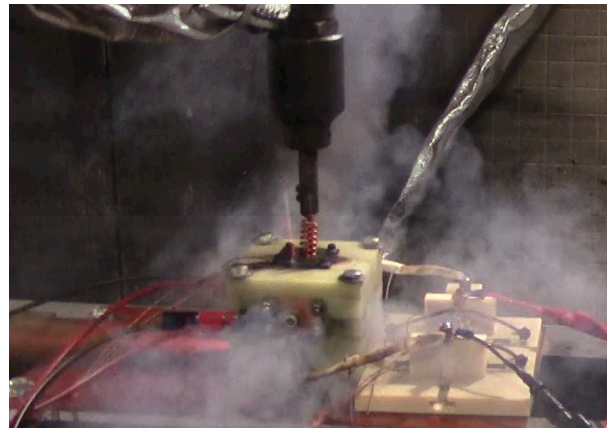


Cell #2 holder

Standard Setup



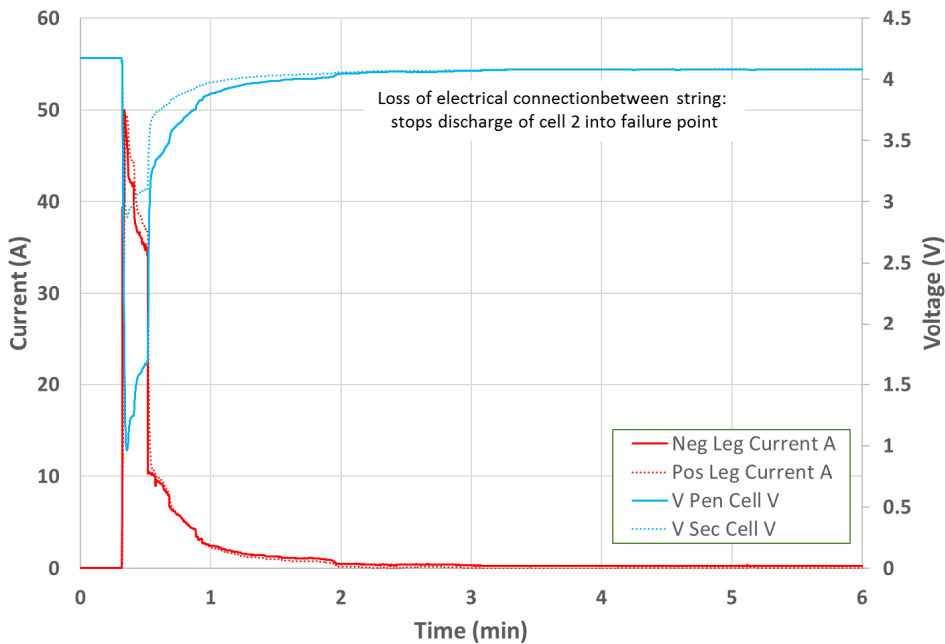
Improved Mechanical Contact



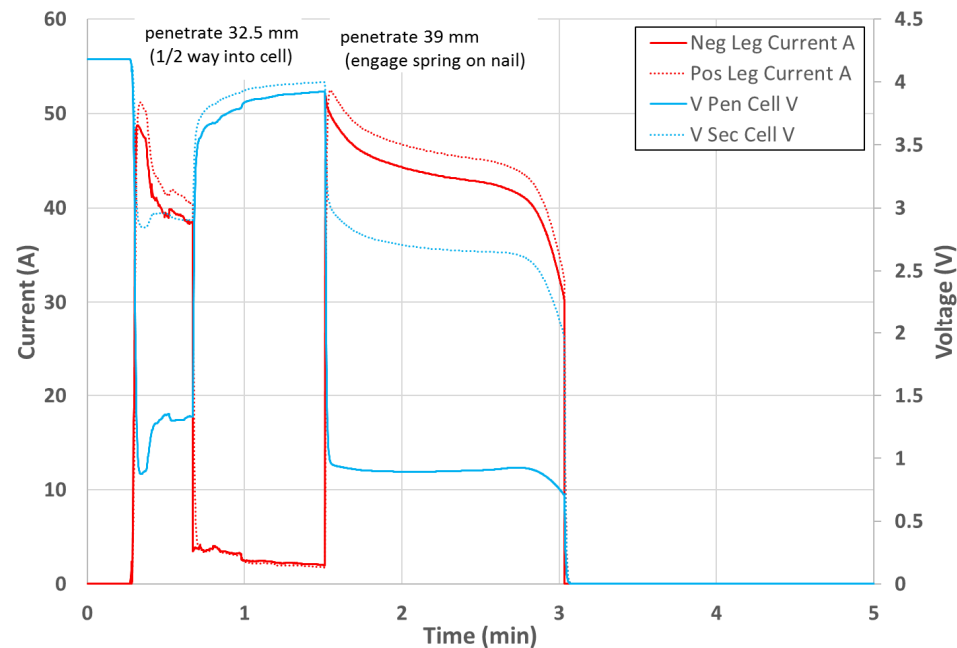
Short Circuit Current During Failure Propagation:NMC

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to cell 1 which is connected to cell 2 through constantan bridge wire

18650 NMC 3Ah cells – 1s2p



18650 NMC 3Ah cells – 1s2p
Improved mechanical contact

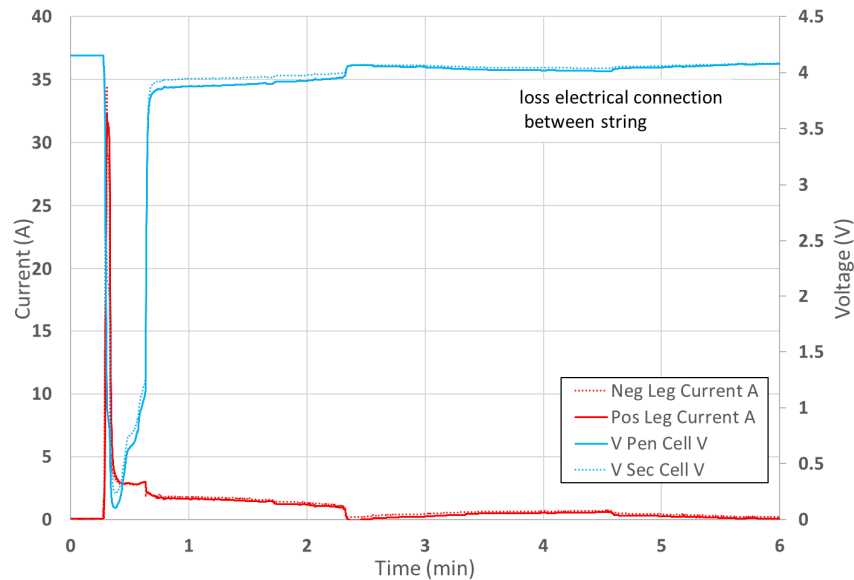


- **Peak currents across constantan bridge during failure propagation consistent between setups: ~50A**
- **Total energy discharged into cell 1 varies based on robustness on electrical connection allowing cell 2 to discharge into failure point longer: without spring 0.027 kJ (lost battery connection) and with spring 5.3 kJ**

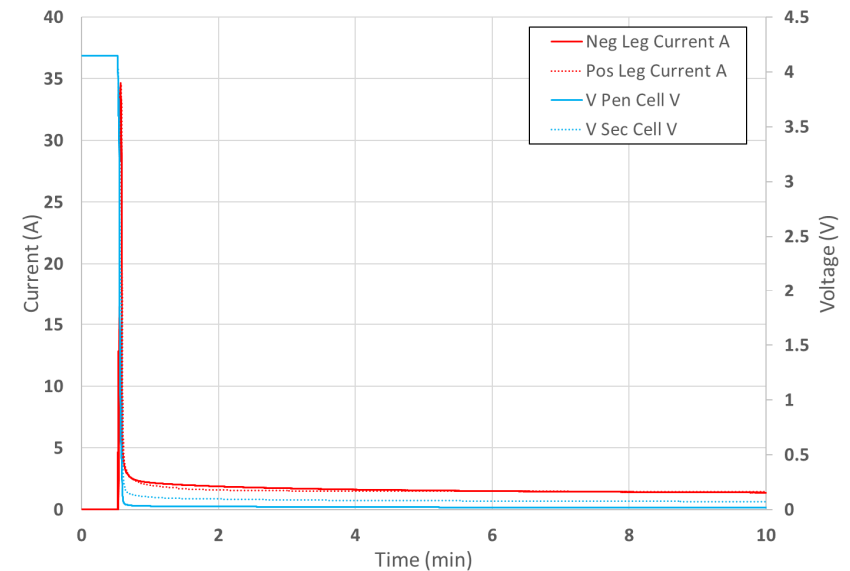
Short Circuit Current During Failure Propagation: NCA

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to cell 1 which is connected to cell 2 through constantan bridge wire

18650 NCA 3.1 Ah cells – 1s2p



**18650 NCA 3.1 Ah cells – 1s2p
improved mechanical contact**



- **Peak currents across constantan bridge during failure propagation consistent between setups: ~35A**
- **Energy output during discharge varies for two setups: without spring ~0.75kJ and with spring ~0.29 kJ (slow discharge of 1.5 A over 2 hours)**
- **Cell might contain a safety device making system become resistive during failure**
- **NCA cell not rated for high discharge currents (max DC is 2C)**

Chemistry comparison

Chemistry	Nominal Capacity (Ah)	Max rated discharge current for cell	Peak current during short circuit (A)	Total Energy discharged into Cell 1 (KJ)
LFP (18650)*	1.5	5.6A (3.7C)	37	14.9
LFP (26650)*	2.6	42A (16C)	30	15.0 (av)
LiCoO ₂ (18650)*	2.2	6.2A (2.8C)	90	2.94 (av)
NMC (18650)	3	20A (6.7C)	80	5.3 (spring), 0.027 (no spring)- lost battery connection
NCA (18650)	3.1	6.2A (2C)	35	0.29 (spring), 0.75 (no spring) <small>*Internal safety device might be preventing an external short current</small>

*testing presented at AMR FY16

- ***Although LFP is a more benign chemistry it is able to sustain a discharge much longer giving a higher total E out during discharge (KJ)***
- ***LFP able to sustain higher currents***
- ***Robustness of connection impacts ability to allow cell 2 to fully discharge into failure point***
- ***NCA has a 2C max discharge current while other cells tested are rated >3C***

Failure Propagation Testing: Alternative Designs Sandia National Laboratories

Methodology:

- Experimentally determine a reproducible thermal runaway initiator for each cell type
- Use this initiator to trigger a single cell thermal runaway failure in a battery
- Evaluate the propagation of that failure event

Experiment

- COTS LiCoO₂ 18650 and LFP 18650/26650 cells
- 1S10P and 10S1P electrical configurations
- Failure initiated by a mechanical nail penetration along longitudinal axis
- The current effort is focused on understanding the effect on propagation from single cell failure at different locations within 1S10P and 10S1P packs as well as the evaluation of pack design (nickel tabbing, copper bus architecture, and air gaps between cells)

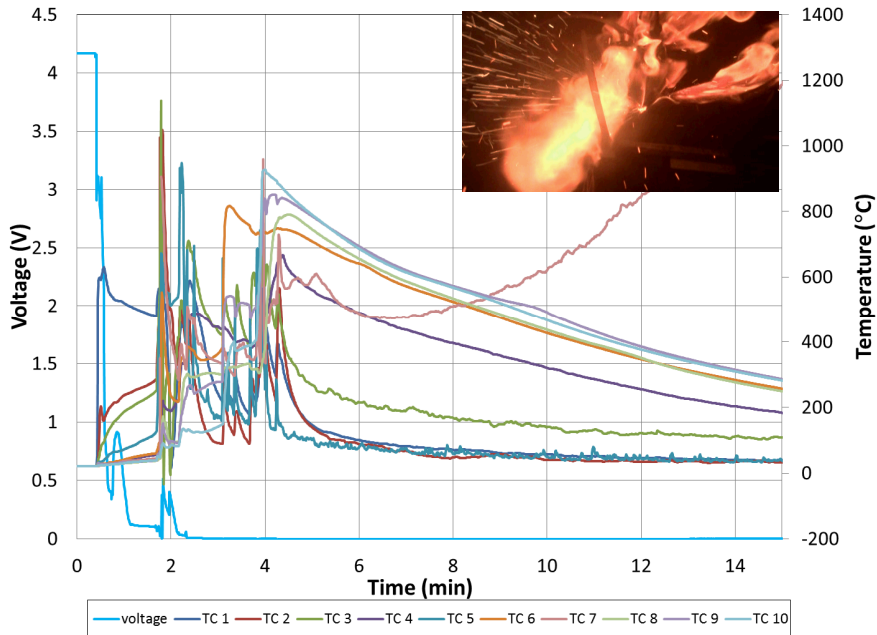


1S10P Battery: Failure point on edge cell

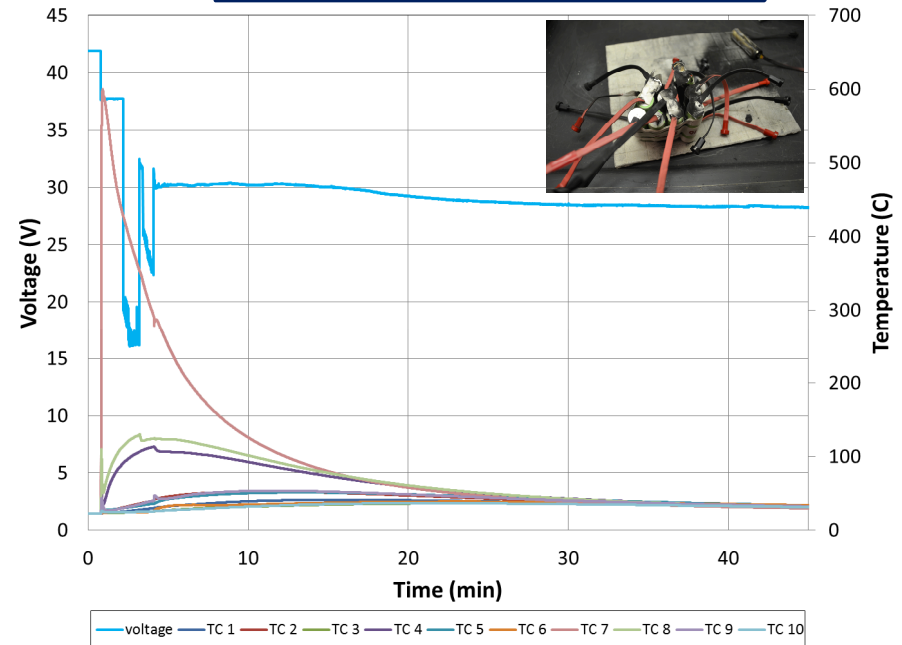
Failure Propagation: Edge Cell Failure

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to edge cell of parallel and series COTS LiCoO₂ packs

LiCoO₂ - 1S10P(parallel)



LiCoO₂ - 10S1P (series)

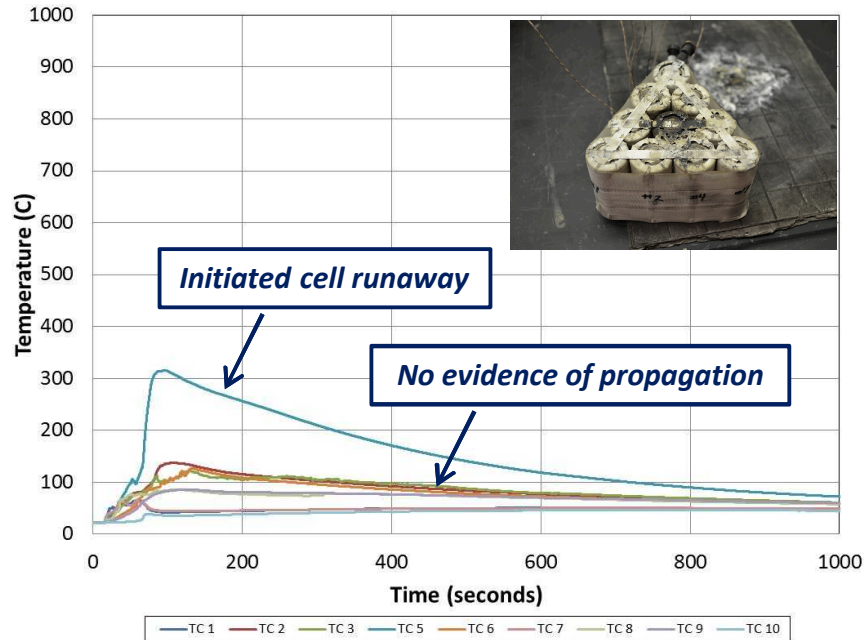


- *Previous testing with center cell failure point in LiCoO₂ packs: limited propagation in 10S1P and complete propagation in 1S10P pack*
- **Edge cell failure: complete propagation for 1S10P and a range of responses for 10S1P: limited (cells next to failure point engaged) to complete propagation**
- **Parallel packs, regardless of initiation point, have full propagation while there is variation within series packs (limited to full propagation)**

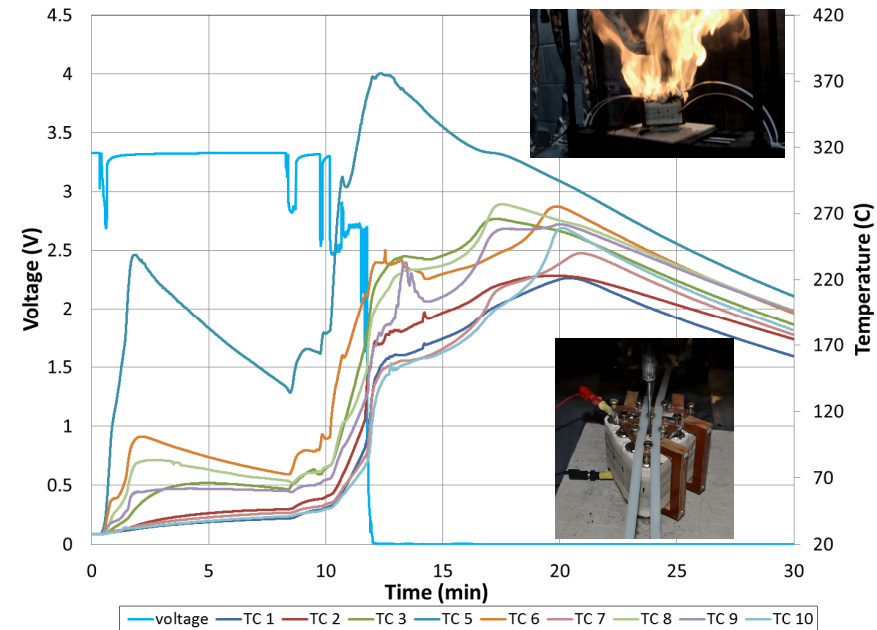
Failure Propagation: Design Effects (Connections)

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to center cell of LFP COTS packs

LFP - 1S10P connected using nickel tabs



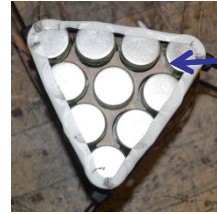
LFP - 1S10P connected using copper bus



- Packs with alternative designs were assembled using 26650 LFP COTS cells in 1S10P configurations
- The pack connected with nickel tabbing show no evidence of propagation
- Complete propagation failure occurred once a copper bus was installed
- Pack design impacts the ability for failures to propagation

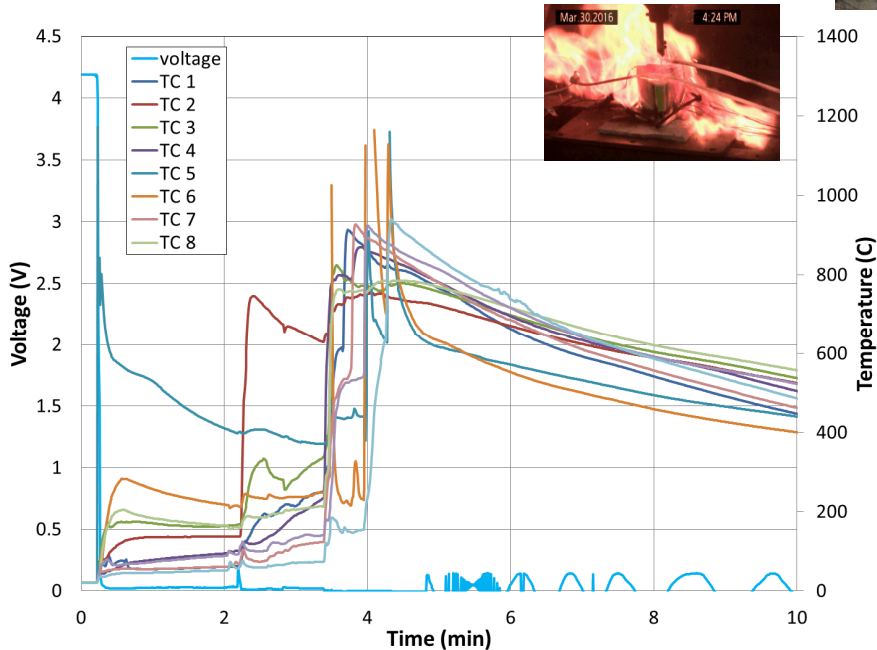
Failure Propagation: Design Effects (Air Gap)

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to the center cell: 2mm air gap between cells

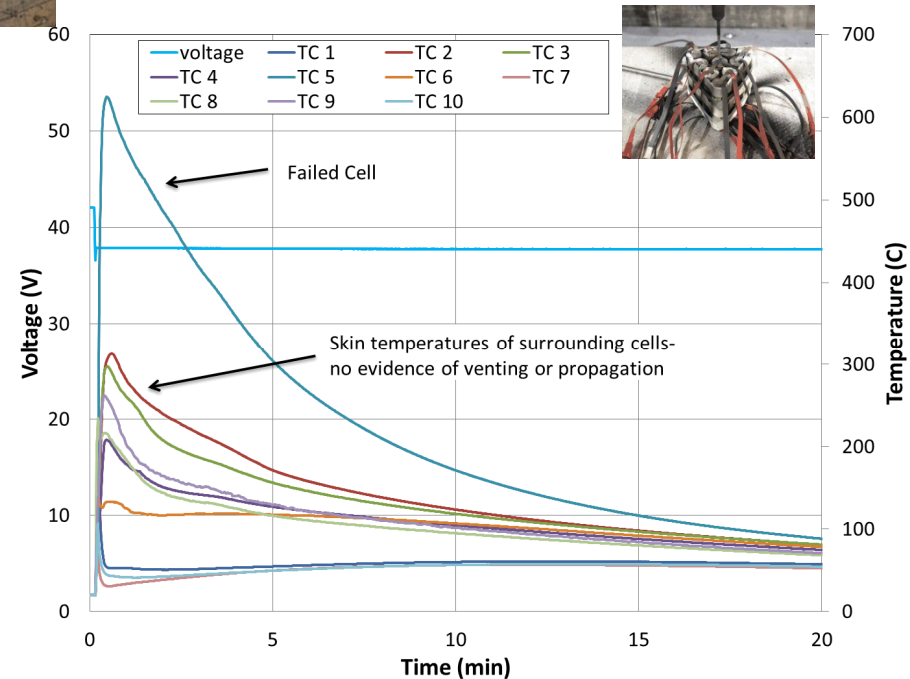


2mm spacer

18650 LiCoO₂ - 1S10P



18650 LiCoO₂ - 10S1P



- **Complete propagation in parallel pack regardless of air gap**
- **No propagation in series pack with 2mm air gap between cells**
 - Center cell went into thermal runaway and reaches 600°C
 - Neighboring cells skin temperatures see 150-300°C during failure of center cell but do not go into runaway
- **Air gap allowed for heat to dissipate quickly in the series pack to eliminate propagation**
- **The electrical configuration of the parallel pack allows for propagation to occur regardless of the air gap between cells**

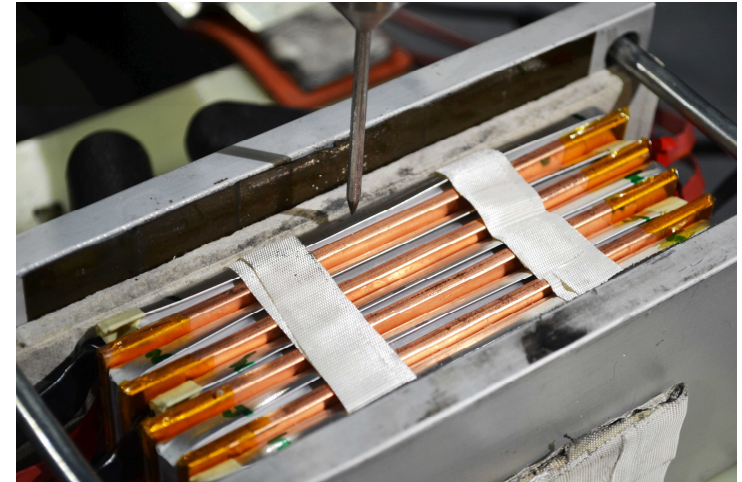
Failure Propagation Testing: Inclusion of Thermal Management

Methodology:

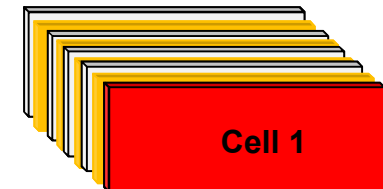
- Experimentally determine a reproducible thermal runaway initiator for each cell type
- Use this initiator to trigger a single cell thermal runaway failure in a battery
- Evaluate the propagation of that failure event

Experiment

- COTS LiCoO₂ 3Ah pouch cells
- 5 cells closely packed
- Failure initiated by a mechanical nail penetration along longitudinal axis of edge cell (cell 1)
- The current effort is focused on understanding extent of propagation with inclusion of passive thermal management in the form of heat sinks between pouch cells (aluminum and copper)



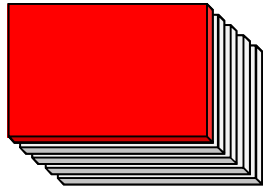
5 cell pack with aluminum or copper spacers between cells



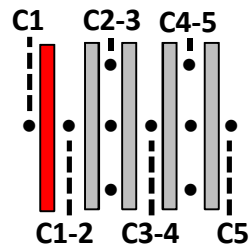
Failure Propagation: No Thermal Management

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to edge cell of COTS LiCoO₂ packs (3Ah cells)

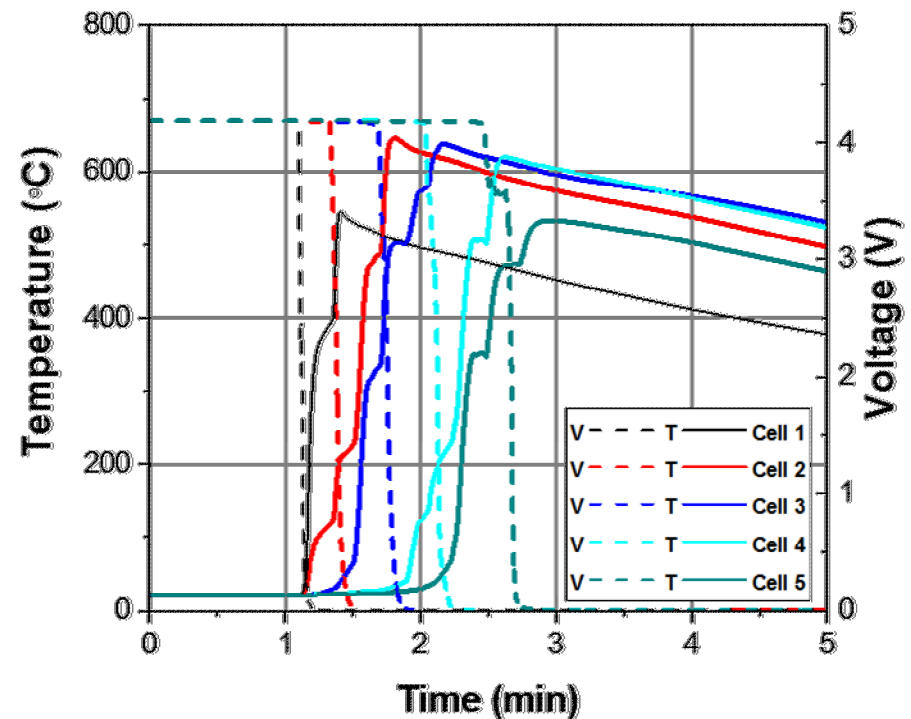
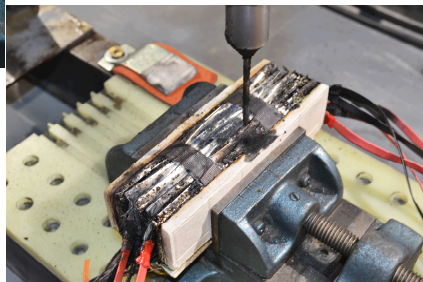
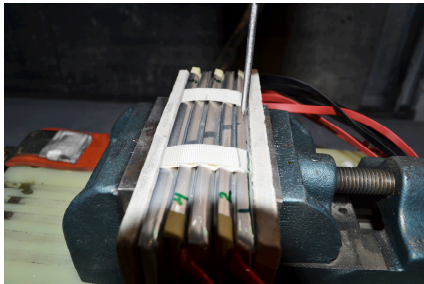
5 cell Battery



TC layout



- Successful initiation at Cell #1
- Propagation to adjacent cells
- Cascading failure to entire battery over 60 s

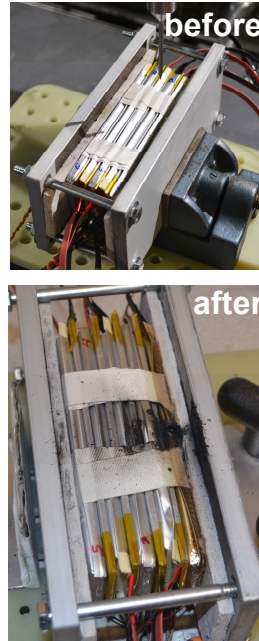
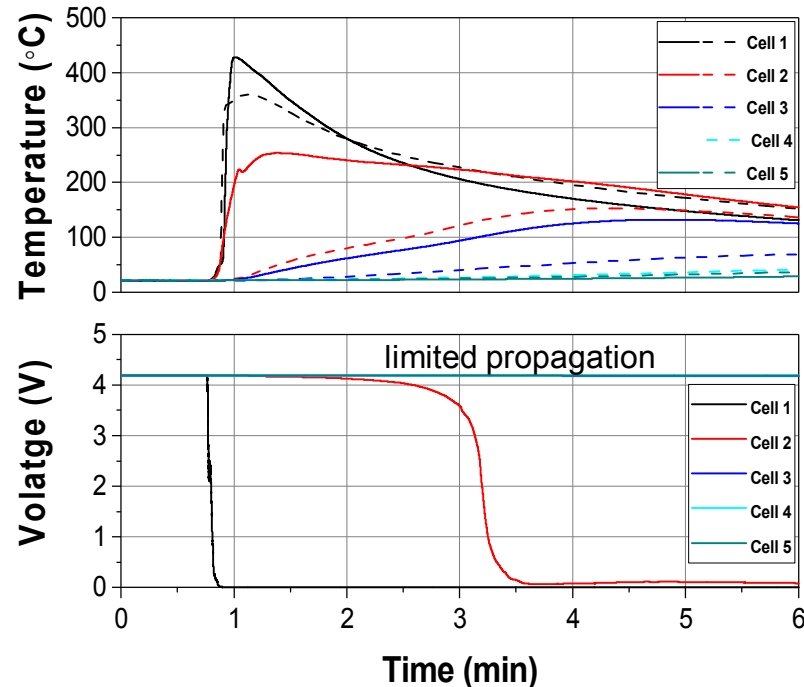


- *Observed complete propagation when cell are close packed with no thermal management*

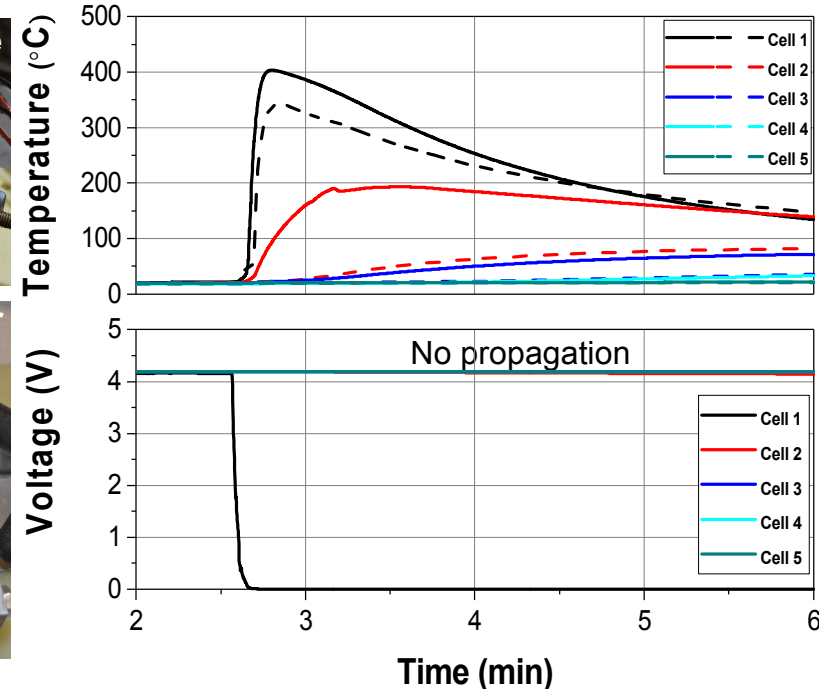
Failure Propagation: Aluminum spacer

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to edge cell of COTS LiCoO₂ packs

LiCoO₂ – 1/16" thick spacers



LiCoO₂ – 1/8" thick spacers

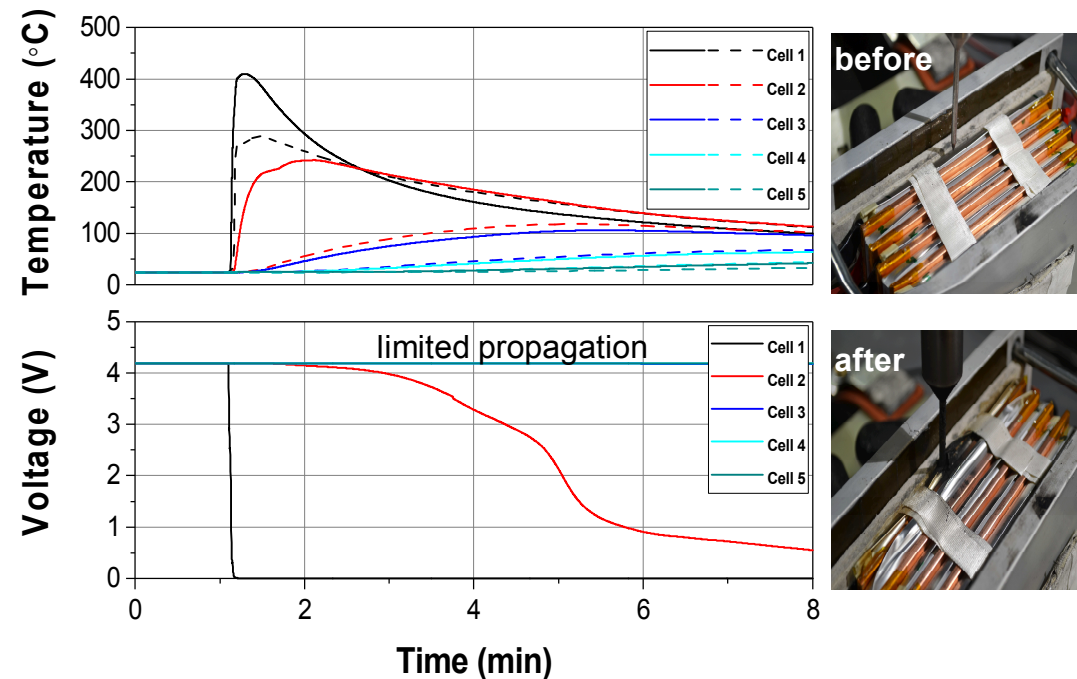


- Addition of aluminum spacers cut to the size of 3 Ah COTS cells was achieved
- Failure of cell 1 in both cases were consistent and peak temperatures reached ~400 °C
- Limited propagation (from cell 1 to 2) occurred with the thinner material (1/16")
- No propagation was realized when space thickness was increased to 1/8"

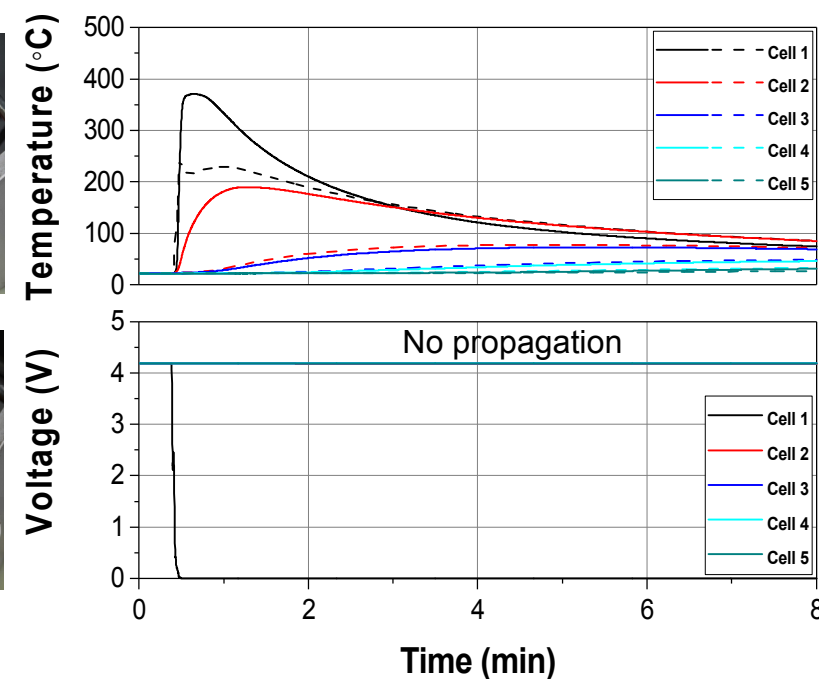
Failure Propagation: Copper spacer

Failures initiated by mechanical insult to edge cell of COTS LiCoO₂ packs

LiCoO₂ – 1/16" thick spacers



LiCoO₂ – 1/8" thick spacers

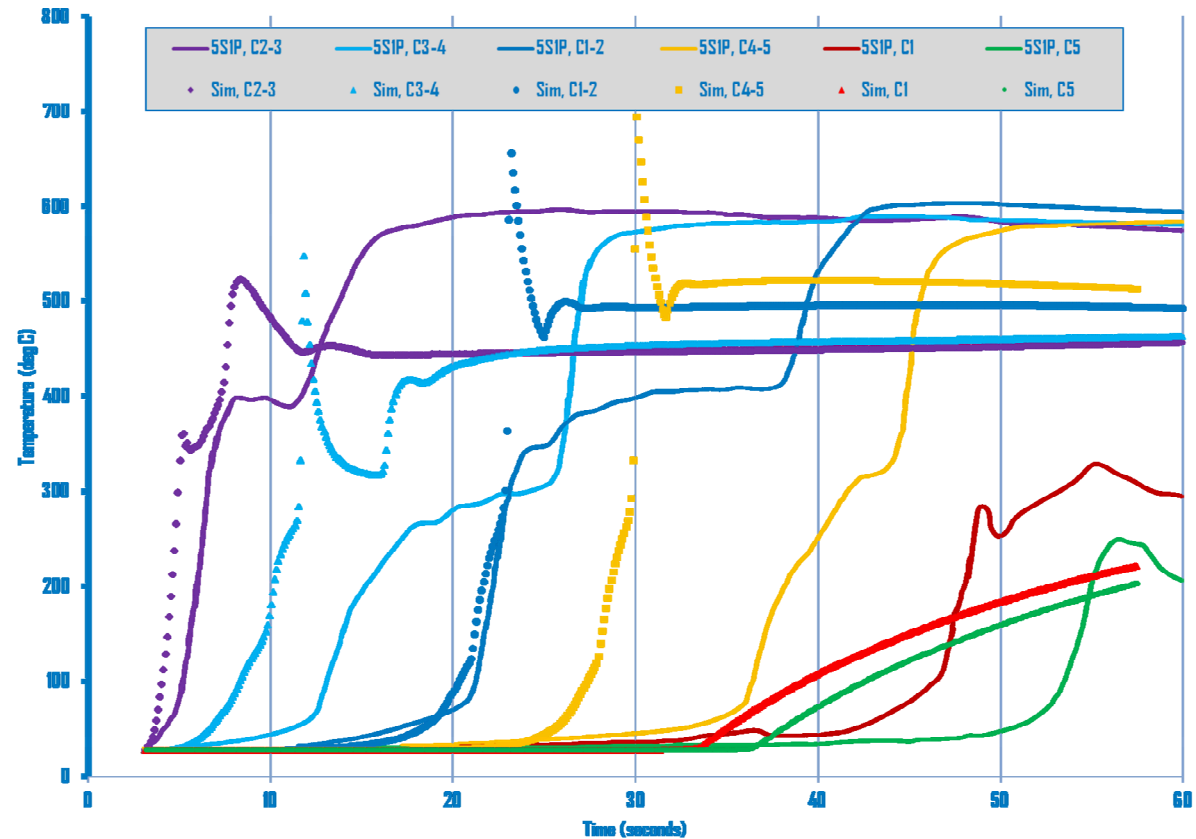
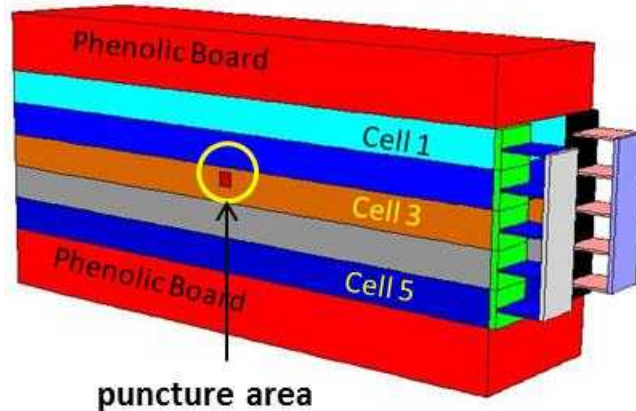


- *Addition of copper spacers cut to the size of 3 Ah COTS cells was achieved for comparisons of spacer size and material (Al vs Cu)*
- *Failure of cell 1 in all cases were consistent and peak temperatures reached ~400 °C*
- *Limited propagation (from cell 1 to 2) occurred with the thinner material (1/16")*
- *No propagation was realized when space thickness was increased to 1/8"*

Failure Propagation Model (NREL)

NREL electro-thermal and abuse model using lumped cell materials properties

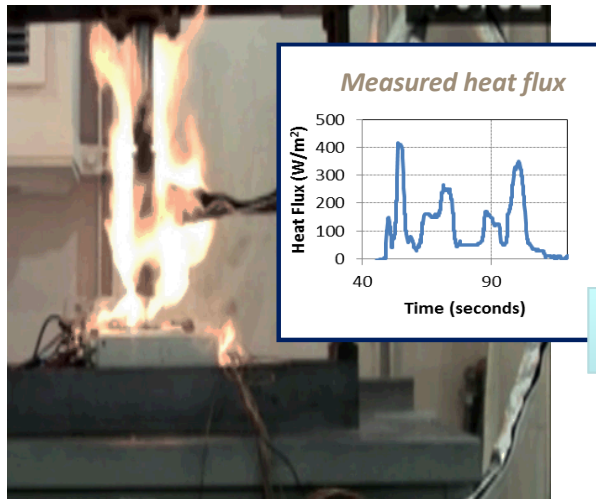
LiCoO₂ Pouch Cell - 1S5P



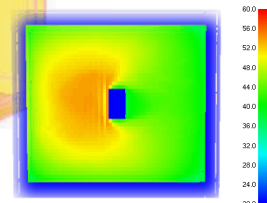
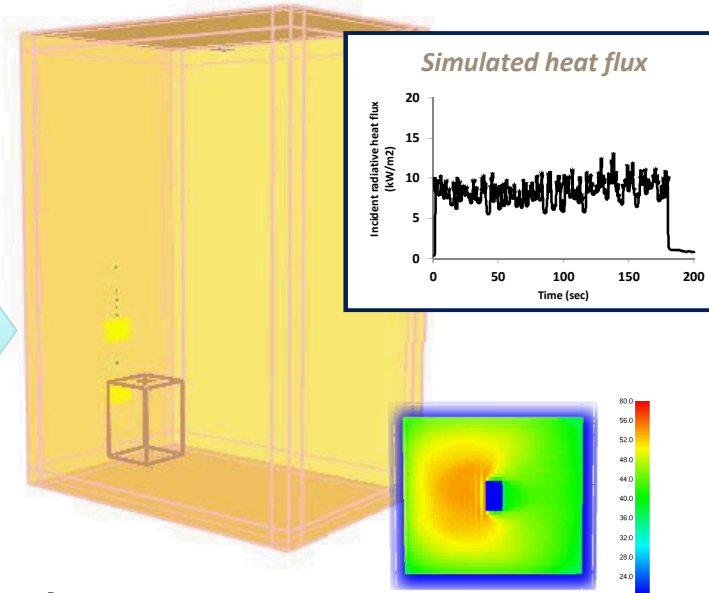
Good agreement in the initial simulations with experiments with some deviation in the long duration events likely due to electrical or connectivity changes within battery over time during the failure event

Quantifying Battery Fires

*Experimental Data from
Battery Fires*



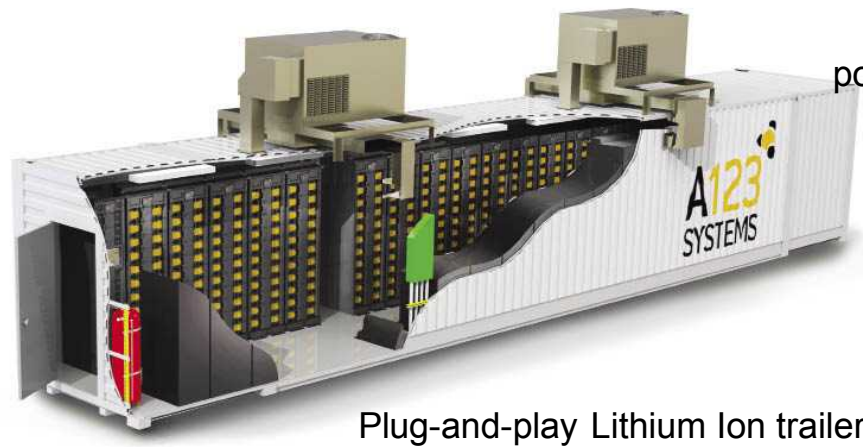
*Fire Dynamic Simulations (FDS)
of Battery Fires*



Test bay ceiling temperature

- Scale up experiments to **validate FDS models** (Wh \rightarrow kWh \rightarrow MWh)
- Feedback to **design** storage systems
- Inform **fire suppression** system design
- Provide to regulatory agencies (NFPA, IEEE, UL etc.), utility companies, etc.

Failures at scale necessitate modeling



power conditioning system

racks of batteries



Lead acid Alaska facility
designed to replace back-
up diesel

Discussion

- A cell may exhibit dramatically different failure response when in a string, module or pack than during single cell abuse testing
- Propagation can be mitigated through system engineering, however the results can be unpredictable. Further, electrical design will play a role in susceptibility to failure testing.
- Failure testing of large, complex systems is fairly resource intensive. Model based design presents a potential remedy to this, allowing us to infer a large amount of information from a relatively small number of tests.

Acknowledgements

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