TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

Application Report
SLAA471 – SEPTEMBER 2010

Flash Read Error and Susceptibility for MSP430F55xx

MSP430

1 Overview

This document provides a description of the issue referred to as "Flash Read Error" impacting the current version of the MSP430F55xx device derivatives. It also provides guidance in assessing whether and the extent to which the issue may affect a given application. Specific actions and customer recommendations are set forth in the PCN #20100910003A.

The flash read error results in the possibility that invalid data may be read from the Flash memory by the CPU. The issue is not related to Flash bit (cell) corruption: the Flash is valid as programmed. During Flash access, however, it is possible that data read out of the Flash by the CPU is corrupted. This may be undetected in the application with no ill effects; it could also result in an application error due to incorrect instruction execution or incorrect data fetch.

The root cause of the flash read error is understood and implementation of the fix within the Flash array has been completed. Device revisions incorporating this fix are currently in-process. For more information refer to the PCN.

The remainder of this document is intended to better describe the read error, how it can manifest within an application and recommendations for assessing the effects.

2 Affected Devices

The flash read error affects the MSP430F55xx device derivatives. The table below lists all affected devices by orderable part number and can also be found in the "Product Affected" section of the PCN.

Table 1. Affected Devices

MSP430F5513IRGCR	MSP430F5517IPN	MSP430F5524IRGCR	MSP430F5527IPN
MSP430F5513IRGCT	MSP430F5517IPNR	MSP430F5524IRGCT	MSP430F5527IPNR
MSP430F5513IZQE	MSP430F5519IPN	MSP430F5524IZQE	MSP430F5528IRGC
MSP430F5513IZQER	MSP430F5519IPNR	MSP430F5524IZQER	MSP430F5528IRGCR
MSP430F5514IRGC	MSP430F5521IPN	MSP430F5525IPN	MSP430F5528IRGCT
MSP430F5514IRGCR	MSP430F5521IPNR	MSP430F5525IPNR	MSP430F5528IZQE
MSP430F5514IRGCT	MSP430F5522IRGCR	MSP430F5526IRGC	MSP430F5528IZQER
MSP430F5514IZQE	MSP430F5522IRGCT	MSP430F5526IRGCR	MSP430F5529CY
MSP430F5514IZQER	MSP430F5522IZQE	MSP430F5526IRGCT	MSP430F5529IPN
MSP430F5515IPN	MSP430F5522IZQER	MSP430F5526IZQE	MSP430F5529IPNR
MSP430F5515IPNR	MSP430F5524IRGC	MSP430F5526IZQER	

Note 1: For all listed part numbers, affected silicon revisions are up to and including Revision "D"
Note 2: All MSP430F550x and MSP430F5510 devices are NOT affected by the flash read error susceptibility

3 Description

The flash read error is a read out of Flash memory by the CPU of certain data bits as a logic "1" when the actual value stored in the flash memory bit location is a logic "0".

3.1 Bus Architecture

To better describe the flash read error mechanism, it is important to understand the device architecture. The MSP430F55xx implements a 32-bit cache for memory read operation – e.g. a physical read of the flash memory is performed on 32-bit boundaries; every 4 bytes, which is stored in a cache logic array. These 32-bit values are referred to as "double words". Memory access by the CPU to individual bytes and words is then done by accessing the cache. This cache architecture is shown in Figure 1.

Note: The addresses used below are for example only and not intended to show specific susceptibility to the flash read error.

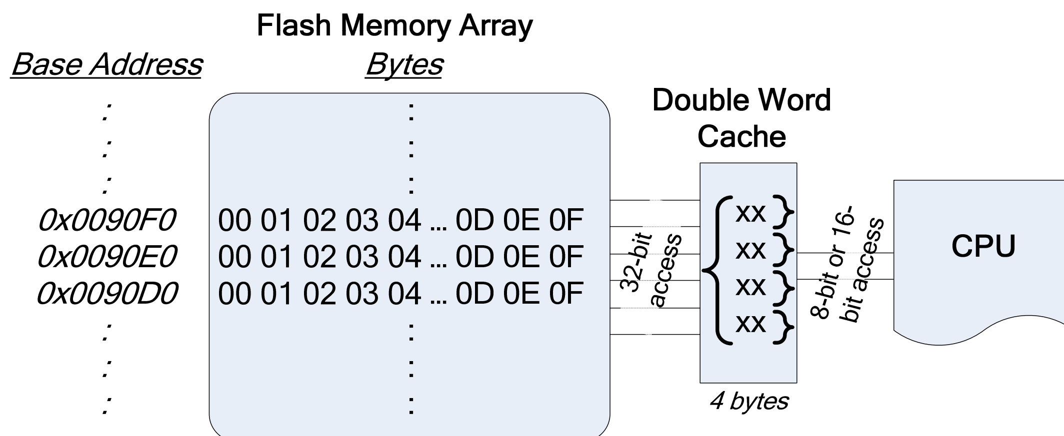

Figure 1. Simplified Cache Architecture and CPU Access

3.2 Affected Bits

The flash read error only affects the read access of the next-to-last most significant bit (MSB-1) of each 32-bit Flash access by the cache. No other bit locations are affected. Each 30th bit location - i.e. the MSB-1 of the 4th byte for each double word access, is susceptible to being read as "1" when it should be "0". Bit locations for an entire 32-bit double word are defined as 0 to 31.

Furthermore, the issue only affects the 32-bit MSB-1 when the flash bit is programmed as a "0". In cases where the actual value stored is logic "1", the bit will always read valid as logic "1" and is not susceptible to an invalid read.

Example: This illustration considers 16 bytes of flash data starting at address 0x090F0 and all contain the value 0x00. A CPU instruction execution triggers an access of the Flash word (at 0x090FE) and saves it to CPU register R5:

Instruction: `mov.w &0x090FEh, R5`

Result: Valid: R5= **0**000h
Invalid: R5= **4**000h

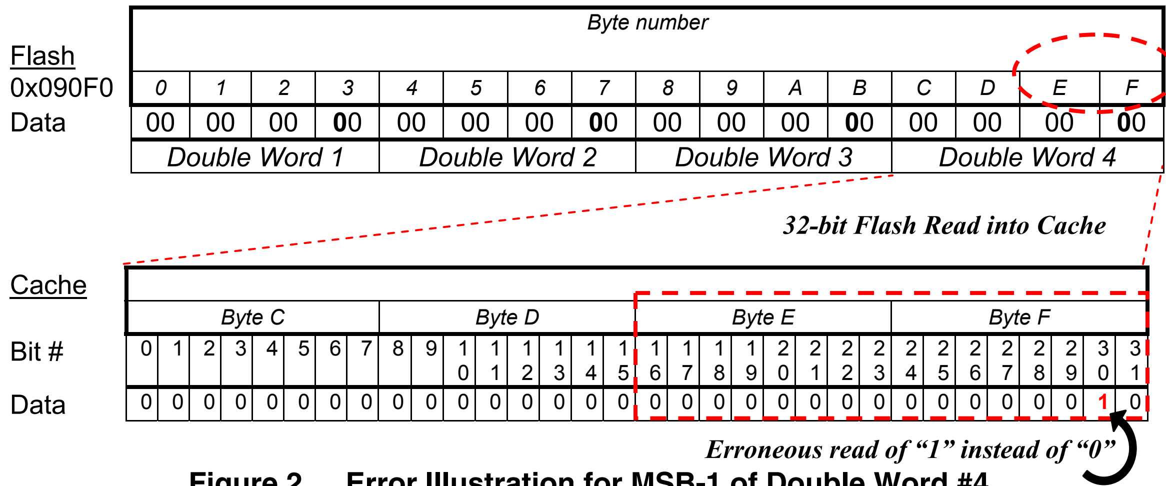

Figure 2. Error Illustration for MSB-1 of Double Word #4

The read operation by the CPU of address 0x090FE will actually trigger the reading of double word #4 from flash (data from 0x090FC to 0x090FF), which is then stored into the 32-bit cache. The uppermost two bytes (0x090FE and 0x090FF) make up the 16-bit word located at 0x090FE. The result of the read in the case of a flash read error is an invalid readout of the MSB-1 for the given double word access. Instead of the expected logic "0", a logic "1" may be erroneously read out and stored in the cache for CPU computation: 0x4000 is erroneously read out and moved to R5 instead of 0x0000. This potential error applies to the MSB-1 for each double word as indicated by the bold "**0**"s in Figure 2 at each 4th byte.

3.3 Affected Memory Locations

This flash read error is limited to specific memory locations for affected devices. MSP430F55xx device derivative flash memory organization is based on 4 banks. Each bank can be up to 32KB in size and are combined to create the different device memory configurations. Table 2 sets forth each device's memory configuration and affected banks.

Table 2. Affected Flash Memory Locations for MSP430F55xx Device Derivatives

		MSP430F5522 *MSP430F5521* *MSP430F5513*	*MSP430F5525* *MSP430F5524* *MSP430F5515* *MSP430F5514*	*MSP430F5527* *MSP430F5526* *MSP430F5517*	*MSP430F5529* *MSP430F5528* *MSP430F5519*
Memory (flash)	*Total Size*	*32 KB*	*64 KB*	*96 KB*	*128 KB*
Main: code memory	*Flash Range*	*00FFFFh-008000h*	*0143FFh-004400h*	*01C3FFh-004400h*	*0243FFh-004400h*
Main: code memory	Bank 3	N/A	N/A	N/A	32 KB 0243FFh- 01C400h
	Bank 2	**N/A**	**N/A**	**32 KB 01C3FFh- 014400h**	**32 KB 01C3FFh- 014400h**
	Bank 1	15 KB 00FFFFh- 00C400h	32 KB 0143FFh- 00C400h	32 KB 0143FFh- 00C400h	32 KB 0143FFh- 00C400h
	Bank 0	**17 KB 00C3FFh- 008000h**	**32 KB 00C3FFh- 004400h**	**32 KB 00C3FFh- 004400h**	**32 KB 00C3FFh- 004400h**
Information memory (flash)	**Info A**	**128 B 0019FFh- 001980h**	**128 B 0019FFh- 001980h**	**128 B 0019FFh- 001980h**	**128 B 0019FFh- 001980h**
	Info B	128 B 00197Fh- 001900h	128 B 00197Fh- 001900h	128 B 00197Fh- 001900h	128 B 00197Fh- 001900h
	Info C	**128 B 0018FFh- 001880h**	**128 B 0018FFh- 001880h**	**128 B 0018FFh- 001880h**	**128 B 0018FFh- 001880h**
	Info D	128 B 00187Fh- 001800h	128 B 00187Fh- 001800h	128 B 00187Fh- 001800h	128 B 00187Fh- 001800h
Bootstrap loader (BSL) memory (flash)	BSL 3	512 B 0017FFh- 001600h	512 B 0017FFh- 001600h	512 B 0017FFh- 001600h	512 B 0017FFh- 001600h
	BSL 2	**512 B 0015FFh- 001400h**	**512 B 0015FFh- 001400h**	**512 B 0015FFh- 001400h**	**512 B 0015FFh- 001400h**
	BSL 1	512 B 0013FFh- 001200h	512 B 0013FFh- 001200h	512 B 0013FFh- 001200h	512 B 0013FFh- 001200h
	BSL 0	**512 B 0011FFh- 001000h**	**512 B 0011FFh- 001000h**	**512 B 0011FFh- 001000h**	**512 B 0011FFh- 001000h**

Legend	
(orange)	***affected***
(white)	*not affected*

Only bank 0, bank 2, info A, info C, BSL 0 and BSL 2 are susceptible to the flash read error as highlighted. Within these banks, the MSB-1 locations for each double word can read out incorrectly when programmed as "0". Flash program and data stored within bank 1, bank 3, info B, info D, BSL 1 and BSL 3, independent of the value, will always be accessed correctly and are not susceptible to this issue.

3.4 Affected Flash Idle Time

The entire flash memory can be separated into two groups: affected and unaffected:

- ☐ Affected Group: bank 0/2, Info A/C, BSL 0/2 ***(affected locations)***
- ☐ Unaffected Group: bank 1/3, Info B/D, BSL 1/3 (unaffected locations)

Further narrowing the scope of this issue, this flash read error only affects the first flash access of the affected group that occurs after some period of time during which no flash accesses within the affected group has occurred. This period of no access to the affected flash is referred to as the "idle" time or t_IDLE. Additional double word reads from affected flash following the first read after the defined t_IDLE are not subject to the flash read error and will be accessed correctly by the cache when the CPU clock is running at a frequency above 10kHz.

Any affected group address flash access results in all affected flash being active. Furthermore, all affected flash is in the idle state during access to any unaffected flash location.

Testing has shown that when the device is operating at 30°C the idle time, beyond which the read error may occur, is typically 15 msec. Any read of an affected bit after an idle time that exceeds 15 msec at 30°C is potentially susceptible to this issue. This idle time reduces to 0.5 msec typical at 85°C. When flash access has been inactive for longer than this idle time the issue can occur on the first double word read upon resuming access to the flash.

4 Application Affects

The way in which a given application may be affected if the flash read error occurs is dependent upon what the corrupted data accessed is intended to be used for. This section outlines the basic ways in which the read error can manifest into improper device functionality.

NOTE: Device power up IS NOT susceptible to the flash read error described in this document. The first flash access after power up to execute device bootcode is not affected.

Resetting the device via the RST pin can also be affected by the flash read error. When RST is asserted flash access will stop. When the assertion time of the RST signal is longer than the idle time discussed in section 3.4, the first flash access after RST is released can be affected. Flash will first be accessed by the CPU at the location containing the factory programmed bootcode. The bootcode is always executed after a BOR and loads factory stored calibration values and assesses the BSL configuration. If the flash read error occurs the access to start the bootcode is invalid and the device will enter a LPM4-like state without beginning user code execution, requiring reset or power cycle to restart.

After the device has properly powered up, the flash read error can occur during flash access through CPU instruction execution – e.g. active mode operation. This typically occurs only after flash access has been idle for a time greater than the idle time discussed in section 3.4. Operation usage for this to occur in-application can be illustrated into four use-cases: (i) entering and exiting LPMx modes from Flash, (ii) switching between active operation from RAM and Flash, (iii) using while(1), (iv) using the DMA, (v) erasing flash in-system (vi) moving between groupings of flash during execution, and (vii) LPM4.5 usage.

4.1 Low-Power Mode (LPMx) Use

A commonly used feature of the MSP430 that results in periods of flash access inactivity is the low power mode operation of the CPU. When using any of the LPMx modes built into the MSP430 architecture flash access is halted until the CPU is awakened via interrupt. Waking on any interrupt resumes active mode operation and consequently flash access for program execution.

Important to highlight is that all interrupt vector addresses for the MSP430F55xx device derivatives exist in the address range 0x0FF80 to 0x0FFFE. These flash locations are in bank 1 of flash as shown in Table 2 and are therefore not affected by the flash read error.

However, if the ISR vector address points into affected bank 0 (address below 0x0C400) and bank 0 access has been idle for a time greater than discussed in section 3.4, the access of the first double word of the ISR will be susceptible to the flash read error.

4.2 CPU Code Execution From RAM and Flash

In applications where the CPU is redirected in user code to execute from RAM instead of flash, the read error can occur upon resumption of flash access; either program or data access within the flash memory range. Code executed from RAM that does not make any flash accesses for a time exceeding the idle time discussed in section 3.4 can be subject to the flash read error once flash access resumes, causing an invalid data or instruction fetch to occur. In cases where interrupts are also active while code is executed from RAM, flash access through servicing as the given ISR is not affected as outlined in section 4.1.

4.3 while(1) Use (Also JMP$ in Assembly)

Use of while(1) in C (which corresponds to the assembly equivalent `JMP$`; e.g. “jump to self”) can result in flash idle times even though the CPU is active. This is due to the manner in which the CPU and cache operate and the placement of the JMP$ instruction within flash.

Figure 3 shows the relationship of the `JMP$` instruction position in memory and the behavior of the Flash access. On the right, the `JMP$` is at the lower word of the double word fetched from flash. This placement results in the CPU being able to execute entirely from the cached double word containing the `JMP$` instruction which stops flash access activity.

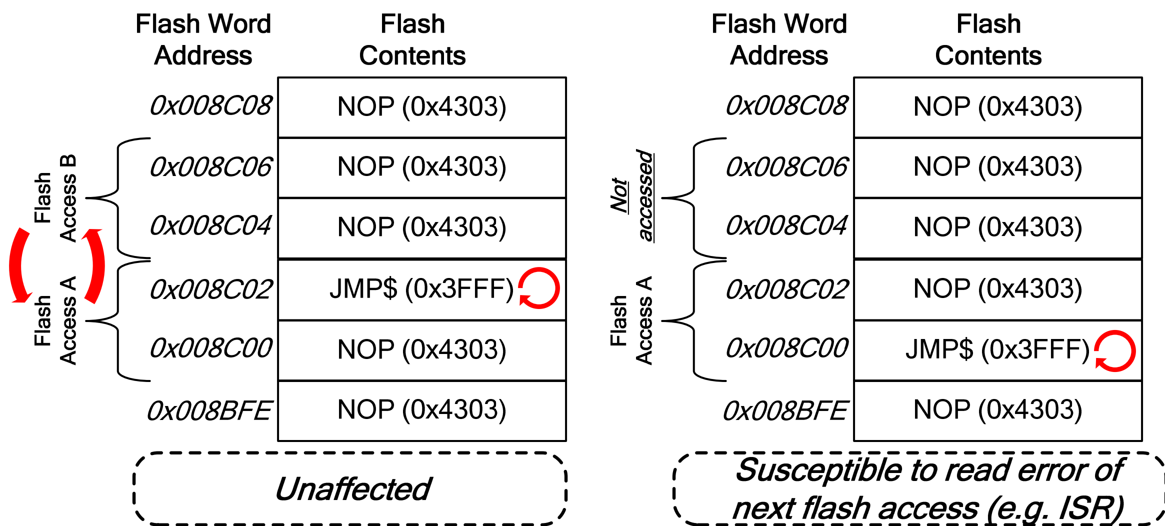

Figure 3. `JMP$` Alignment and Read Error Behavior

When the `JMP$` instruction resides in the upper word of the double word memory fetch, as shown in the left portion of Figure 3, the cache continuously alternates between flash accesses A and B which keeps the flash access constant.

It is assumed that exiting the empty while(1) occurs due to servicing an active interrupt. Susceptibility of the next flash access is dependent on the location of the access (see section 4.1 for ISR handling) and the location of the `JMP$` instruction.

4.4 DMA Use

The DMA can be used to read data from flash without any CPU activity and accesses the cache in the same way to make Flash accesses. DMA access can be configured to read flash and is triggered independently of any interrupt activity (e.g. Timers, USB, ADC, USCI). When the DMA is configured to read from flash upon receiving a given trigger, the first read of flash may be affected by the read error when the idle time discussed in section 3.4 is exceeded.

4.5 In-System Flash Segment Erase

Completion of a flash segment/bank erase (e.g. via user code) is specified to take 23 msec minimum to 32 msec maximum in the device datasheet. During this time the flash is in the idle condition. This time exceeds the idle time discussed in section 3.4 and can result in a flash read error upon the next flash access executed after the erase command.

NOTE: Writing to flash results in a maximum idle time of 85usec, well below the time discussed in section 3.4 and is not affected.

4.6 Execution Between Banks, Info and BSL Groupings

Because flash active vs idle states are dependent upon the address being accessed, it is possible that affected flash locations are in idle while other areas of flash are being accessed. This address grouping dependency is outlined in section 3.4.

The entire flash memory can be separated into two groups: affected and unaffected. When one group is being accessed the other group is idle. CPU execution moving from unaffected flash into affected flash may be susceptible to a flash read error and is limited to the first access of the affected flash. This would be possible if the idle time as discussed in section 3.4 is exceeded during execution from the unaffected flash.

4.7 LPM4.5 Use

When the device is in LPM4.5, the flash is idle. When wake-up is triggered via the RST or GPIO pin, the device may be susceptible to the flash read error as in the case of a normal reset as described earlier.

5 Influencing Factors

There are numerous factors that influence the likelihood of the flash read error occurring during application operation. One factor is the operating temperature of the device and idle time of the flash as discussed in section 3.4. Table 3 summarizes the typical idle time durations beyond which the flash read error becomes more likely to occur.

Table 3. Flash Idle Time (t_IDLE) Variation With Temperature

Temperature [°C]	Idle Time Typical [ms]
30	15
50	2
85	0.5

Note : The relationship between temperature and idle time is exponential.

External supply voltage (DVcc, AVcc) and internal core voltage (Vcore) also have an influence on likelihood of whether the flash read error may occur. Figure 4 shows Vcc vs System (CPU) clock vs Vcore valid operating conditions per the device datasheet.

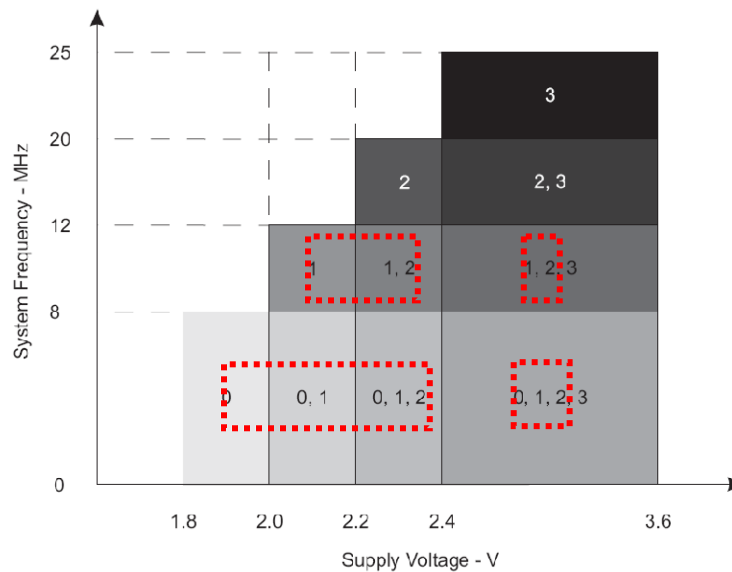

Figure 4. Core Voltage Settings With Reduced Susceptibility

The Vcore settings 0 and 1 and corresponding operating ranges are highlighted. These Vcore level settings result in reduced susceptibility to the flash read issue vs levels 2 and 3.

While all Vcore settings when used under the proper Vcc and clock frequency ranges are valid for device operation, usage of Vcore level 2 and 3 settings are twice as likely to result in flash read errors at susceptible bit locations compared to levels 0 and 1.

An additional influence on the likelihood of the flash read error occurring is process variation during fabrication of the devices. These variations are not detectable directly by the user but can result in variation of flash read error failure rates seen in production and the field.

6 Application Analysis

The following checklist highlights specific areas to assess within a given application in order to determine if the conditions previously outlined are present. It is not intended to be a complete list and sound judgment should be used for analyzing a specific application based on the information provided in this document. All items below should be considered independently.

- ☐ Is the longest time the CPU spends executing code from RAM or from unaffected flash memory > the applicable t_IDLE at the expected operating temperature of the device (see Table 3, section 3.4)?
  - o If no, the read error typically will not affect runtime operation
- ☐ Are Flash memory banks affected (see Table 2) by read error used in application (program or data)?
  - o If no, the read error will not affect runtime operation
- ☐ Is the DMA used to access affected flash source addresses as defined in Table 2?
  - o If no, the DMA susceptibility does not apply
- ☐ If used do the 16-bit values at the ISR vector address locations highlighted as susceptible in Table 3 vector into bank 0 (<0x0C400)?
  - o If no, the read error will not affect the ISR entry

7 Application Robustness

While it is not possible to completely eliminate the possibility of flash read error occurrence under all application use cases, there are steps that one can take to reduce susceptibility in instances in which changes to application functionality are acceptable.

7.1 Vcore

Operating the device at an internal core voltage level 0 or 1 can reduce the likelihood of flash read error occurrence by as much as 50% versus operation at level 2 and level 3.

7.2 Idle Time

Reducing idle time between flash accesses as low as possible will reduce the likelihood of flash read error occurring. Temperature range of the application should be taken into account given the variation on idle time relation to temperature.

7.3 ISR Placement

Manual placement of interrupt service routines into memory locations above 0x00C400 can eliminate the effect on interrupt vector processing when the idle time discussed in section 3.4 is exceeded while in LPMx.

7.4 Program and Data Placement

Manual placement of all user code and data into memory locations within banks 1 and/or 3 eliminate the possibility that the flash read error affects this code.

7.5 Device Reset

To minimize the potential of encountering the flash read error effects upon reset of the device, issuance of 2 external reset pulses externally to the RST pin where the duration of each low reset pulse and the time between pulses is less than the idle time discussed in section 3.4 is an effective methodology. For worst case, a time of 0.5msec or less as shown in Figure 5 is recommended.

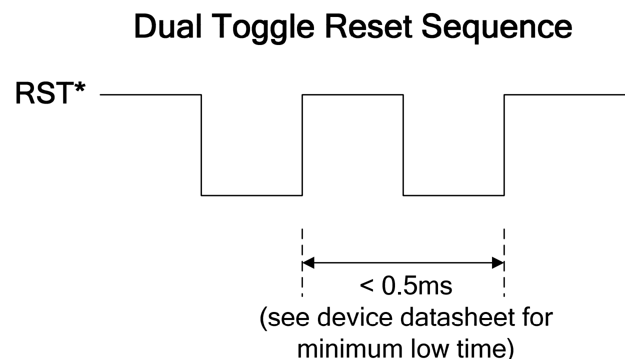

Figure 5. Recommended RST signal

7.6 In-System Flash Erase

To avoid flash read error susceptibility after an in-system Flash erase is completed, dummy instructions that include the MSB -1 = “1” placed immediately after the flash erase instruction will result in proper flash execution. Three instances of the dummy instruction are required to account for the possible upper or lower double word alignment in flash. A short code example demonstrating this is provided.

```
#include "msp430f5529.h"

void main(void)
{
  WDTCTL = WDTPW + WDTHOLD;                  // Stop WDT

  char *Flash_ptr = (char *)0x1800;          // Initialize Flash segment D ptr

  // Prepare Flash for erase operation
  FCTL3 = FWKEY;                             // Clear Lock bit
  FCTL1 = FWKEY + ERASE;                     // Set Erase bit

  // Erase Flash segment at Flash_ptr
  *Flash_ptr = 0;                            // Dummy write to erase Flash seg

  // Directly after the Flash erasure, in-line two assembly op-codes which have
  // the MSB-1 of their 16-bit op-codes set. This will ensure that in case of a
  // 32-bit Flash read the MSB-1 is already one (and hence will be unaffected by
  // any potential flash read error susceptibility). Three op-codes are needed
  // to cover both possible cases of alignment between the op-codes and the
  // 32-bit Flash fetch.
  // Note that operations with R3 as a destination register have no effect
  // (same as an actual NOP). Also, the 'bis.w' instruction was chosen since
  // it does not affect the status register (SR) bits neither.
  // It is recommended to verify the placement of these instructions right next
  // to the Flash erasure instruction using the debugger disassembly window.
  asm(" bis.w #0,R3 ");                      // Flash contents: 0x03 0xd3
  asm(" bis.w #0,R3 ");                      // Flash contents: 0x03 0xd3
  asm(" bis.w #0,R3 ");                      // Flash contents: 0x03 0xd3

  //  Lock the Flash again
  FCTL3 = FWKEY + LOCK;                      // Set LOCK bit

  while (1) {
      __no_operation();                      // Loop forever, SET BREAKPOINT HERE
  }
}
```

The three in-line assembly instructions above are the dummy instructions that will execute just after flash erase completion. These instructions have no impact to the CPU or functionality. They simply execute with no output and represent accesses to flash where the MSB-1 is set to 1 within the instruction op-code. This assures the instructions execute properly even if a flash read error occurs.

7.7 BSL Entry and Exit

NOTE: This section does not apply when using the factory programmed USB BSL for these devices.

When entering and exiting the BSL, it may be possible that the device is susceptible to the flash read error. The effect is the same as is described for the reset pulse in section 4. In order to minimize the possibility of this occurrence following the entry and exit timings as shown in figures 6 and 7 are recommended.

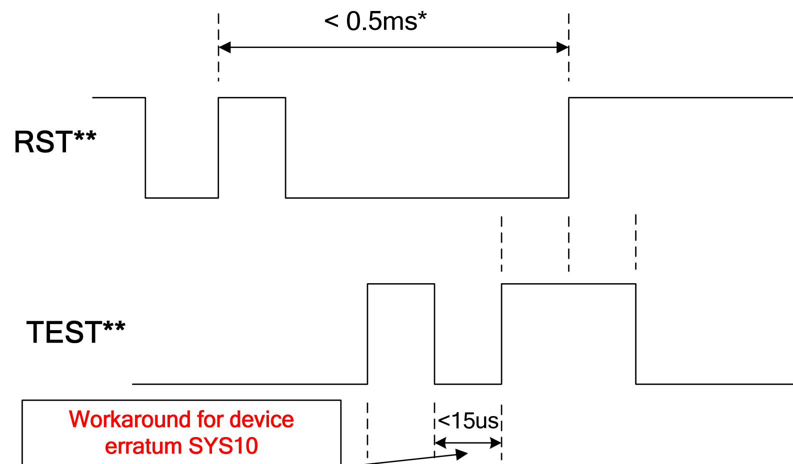

Figure 6. BSL Entry Sequence Recommended Timing

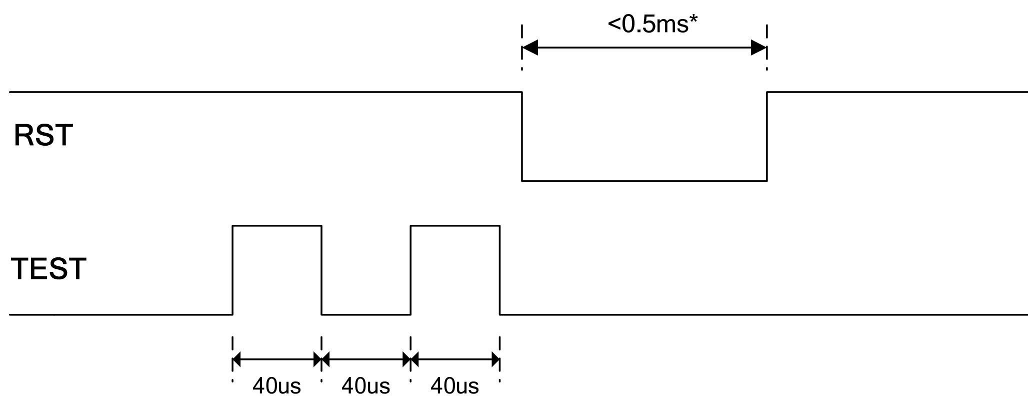

Figure 7. BSL Exit Sequence Recommended Timing

*Note: See device datasheet for minimum specified reset signal low time.

7.8 Application Testing

Production testing at the maximum specified temperature for the given application will provide the worst-case corner for occurrence of the flash read error. In addition, subjecting the application to expected operating conditions resulting in worst-case flash idle time duration will also enhance the likelihood of flash read error occurrence. While this exercise will not assure all potentially affected devices will be detected it is the most effective means to increase probability of detection.

8 Summary

The information in this document provides the reader with information that can be applied to assessing the susceptibility of an application to the flash read error described herein. In addition to the information presented here, the performance of the application being assessed should also be considered as an important data point in determining risk. Occurrence or not of failures in the field or at production of a given end equipment serve as an additional indicator of robustness and the likelihood of an application to flash read error susceptibility.

9 Revision History

Section	Page	Description
Table 1	1	Added Note 2: ‘F550x & ‘F5510 devices not affected
Table 2	4	Added INFO and BSL memory sections
Section 3.4	5	Clarified flash access location relationship and idle time definition
Section 4	5	Removed power up from affected use-cases, added application use-cases
Section 4.1	6	Updated ISR servicing susceptibility for LPMx usage
Section 4.3	7	Update JMP$/while(1) susceptibility
Section 4.5-.7	7	Updated use-cases
Table 3	8	Added note, “25” changed to “30”, 50C data point added
Section 6	9	Updated Application Analysis
Section 7	10	Updated information for improving application robustness

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