IR OSLUX
SFH 4780S in Iris Recognition Applications
Application Note

1. Introduction

This application note describes the use of the SFH 4780S (see Fig. 1) in iris recognition (iris scanning) applications. In the first part of this note the basics of iris recognition are briefly discussed. The second part deals with the use of the SFH 4780S, a component especially designed for iris scanning applications. In an iris recognition system the illumination module with its characteristics has direct influence on the overall quality of the obtained iris picture/data and subsequently on the user experience.

2. Iris Recognition System

Personal authentication is becoming a key requirement for various electronic devices. Besides the pin number, today most systems are based on so called biometric "properties".

Biometrics can include fingerprints, facial features, retina, iris, voice, fingerprint, palm-prints, vein structures, handwritten signatures and hand geometry. All these biometrics have various pros and cons. However, only iris recognition claims to be a ‘hard-to-spoof' system in combination with an ultra-low false acceptance rate (i.e. one in a million). Additionally, it also features greater speed, simplicity and accuracy compared to other biometric systems [1].

The traits of iris recognition systems rely on the unique patterns of the human iris which are used to identify or verify the identity of an individual.

Fig. 1: SFH 4780S: An infrared-LED (IR-LED) especially designed for iris recognition applications.

In general, an iris recognition system consists of only a few components (see Fig. 2a):

- illumination module, containing the SFH 4780S
- camera (including the image sensor and the lens)
- optical bandpass filter in front of the camera to increase the signal-to-noise ratio in high brightness environments
- software algorithm incl. pattern extraction

As everything can be mounted behind a glass cover it results in a very rugged system with a small footprint (compared to e.g. the size of a fingerprint ID sensor).

The optical system is the heart of the hardware. Using the right emitter is especially important as it defines the quality of the obtained iris scan data.
As empiric data suggests there are various suitable wavelengths for an iris scan system, depending on eye colour. In general, two wavelengths look suitable, depending on the colour of the human iris. For blue and green eyes infrared is a good illumination wavelength, however a visible wavelength might be superior to unveil the richness of iris details. However, for dark iris colours (the majority of eyes globally) visible wavelengths are not suitable at all (see Fig. 3). Here an infrared wavelength is required to unveil the details of the iris [1], [4].

To simplify and optimize the overall system a single high-power 810 nm illumination module is best suited for all possible eye colours to unveil the rich structures of the human iris. It also allows the use of narrow optical bandpass filters in the camera module to maximize the signal-to-noise ratio of the iris scan pattern in high-brightness environments (e.g. sunlight). Usually the optical bandpass is either integrated into the camera module or positioned on top of the camera (below the cover glass).

A single 810 nm emitter is a clear advantage compared to the more “old-fashioned” (traditional) approach of using e.g. two emitters to create a broadband illumination source between 700 nm and 900 nm.
Additionally, to get the best signal quality and to avoid unintended direct reflections from the surface of the eye a slightly tilted emitter in the range of 5° to 10° (e.g. 8°) might be favourable, depending on the overall system design. To achieve this tilt, the SFH 4780S can be mounted on a tilted pcb (see option 1 in Fig. 2b) or a light bending wedge made e.g. made out of glass or other materials. Also, special foils can be fixed on top of the IR-LED to achieve the required light bending (see option 2 in Fig. 2b).

In general the radiation characteristics of the SFH 4780S already matches the single eye iris scanning requirements. Adding a proper optics can create any desired illumination pattern in case it is required.

3. SFH 4780S

The SFH 4780S is a high-power, narrow-angle 810 nm emitter. It features the unique OSRAM nanostack technology to match the iris-scanning requirements, like:

- high irradiance level
  ⇒ high quality pictures even in bright sunlight conditions
- narrow emitting angle
  ⇒ focus illumination on the eye area between 10 cm to 40 cm
- infrared wavelength of 810 nm
  ⇒ minimized corneal specular reflections
- narrow spectral width (FWHM ~ 30 nm)
  ⇒ allows narrow optical filters for high iris picture quality
- black and compact component body
  ⇒ suitable for harmonic / discreet industrial design

3.1 Wavelength

The SFH 4780S features a typical centroid wavelength of 810 nm (see also Fig. 4), to match best the requirements for iris illumination for all eye colours.

Further wavelength specifications are

Peak wavelength ($\lambda_{\text{peak}}$) is the peak wavelength of the spectral density curve (in most applications it is of little significance). This is typically 820 nm for the SFH 4780S.

Full-width at half-maximum (FWHM, $\Delta\lambda$): sometimes also called spectral bandwidth. It is the wavelength distance between the spectral points where the spectral density $S(\lambda)$ is 50 % of the peak value. This is typically around 30 nm for the SFH 4780S (see Fig. 6 for more details).

Center wavelength ($\lambda_{0.5\text{m}}$) is the wavelength halfway between the two spectral points with spectral density of 50 %
of the peak value. This is typically around 815 nm.

Centroid wavelength ($\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$) is the mean wavelength (see Eq. (1)). It divides the spectrum in two equal parts. It is the most important definition for non-visual systems (like iris recognition) and relevant for this kind of application.

$$
\lambda_{\text{centroid}} = \frac{\int \lambda \cdot S(\lambda) \, d\lambda}{\int S(\lambda) \, d\lambda}
$$

Eq. (1)

For a symmetrical spectrum $\lambda_{\text{peak}}$, $\lambda_{0.5\text{m}}$ and $\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$ are identical. However, the high efficient SFH 4780S features a slightly asymmetrical spectrum.

The SFH 4780S has very tight wavelength specifications and no secondary peak, e.g. $\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$ is typically within ± 13 nm. Additionally, the device features a low temperature dependent wavelength drift (typ. 0.25 nm/K). Fig. 5 and 6 present the typical wavelength behaviour ($\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$ and FWHM) vs. ambient temperature and drive current.

Using short pulses minimizes temperature dependent wavelength shift as well as spectral broadening due to internal heating of the LED (e.g. pulse width < 300 µs and repetition rate > 2 ms).

Although technically no longer state-of-the-art, some iris-recognition requirements have interest in the percentage of total optical power within any given 100 nm bandwidth (e.g. NIST mobileID “best practices report” (SP 500-280)). Fig. 7 illustrates this data for a centroid wavelength of 810 nm. At least 35% of the total power per 100 nm wide subband are within 707 nm / 807 nm up to 820 nm / 920 nm range$^1$.

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1) Note that the data does not include the typical manufacturing distribution ($\lambda_{\text{centroid}} \pm 13$ nm) as well as spectral changes due to ambient resp. the components junction temperature.
Fig. 8: Spectrum of the SFH 4780S (black line) with FWHM = 30 nm, centered around $\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$. Total optical power accumulated from low wavelength up to the actual filter cut-off wavelength is indicated by the dark blue line (ideal shortpass filter). The light blue line indicates the total optical power accumulated down to the actual filter cut-off wavelength (ideal longpass filter). To transmit e.g. 75 % of total optical energy an optical shortpass filter can cut-off at $\lambda_{\text{cut-off-upper}} = \lambda_{\text{centroid}} + 9$ nm (not considering filter losses).

Fig. 9: Spectrum of the SFH 4780S (black line) with FWHM = 42 nm, centered around $\lambda_{\text{centroid}}$. Total optical power accumulated from low wavelength up to the actual filter cut-off wavelength is indicated by the dark blue line (ideal shortpass filter). The light blue line indicates the total optical power accumulated down to the actual filter cut-off wavelength (ideal longpass filter). To transmit e.g. 75 % of total optical energy an optical shortpass filter can cut-off at $\lambda_{\text{cut-off-upper}} = \lambda_{\text{centroid}} + 12$ nm (not considering filter losses).

As the data in Fig. 7 suggests, the SFH 4780S is an excellent single emitter fit for the NIST mobileID “best practices report” (SP 500-280) recommendation. It is also an excellent candidate for the requirements from the Universal Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and its requirements\(^2\).

3.2 Optical Bandpass Filter

To determine the required passband of the optical bandpass filter the following typ. key factors need to be considered:

- centroid wavelength (810 nm ± 13 nm)
- operating condition (on-time and drive current)
- ambient / junction temperature
- angular dependent shift of optical filter passband

Note that the FWHM (the actual spectral

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\(^2\) Please note that this requirements are not 100 % fulfilled by the SFH 4780S. OSRAM OS considers the properties of the SFH 4780S in combination with a suitable camera / software to be superior to the UIDAI requirements.
shape and width) depends on junction temperature and drive current of the IR-LED. Fig. 6 in combination with Fig. 8 and Fig. 9 give a good indication of the basic relationships.

The following example provides a basic approach to calculate the required optical filter passband (by using the following operating condition):

- $I_F = 1$ A, 10 ms on-time with low duty-cycle
  - $T_J \sim 55^\circ$C (at $T_a = 25^\circ$ C)
  - FWHM $\sim 30$ nm (at $T_a = 25^\circ$ C)
- $T_a = -20^\circ$ C ... +65$^\circ$ C
- good heat sink (low $R_{th}$)
- $T_{Centr} = 0.25$ nm/K
- $I_{E} = -0.3$ %/K (temp. coefficient of $I_e$)
- transmission (optical bandpass filter):
  - >75% at the ambient temperature extremes (-20$^\circ$ C and 65$^\circ$ C)

At -20$^\circ$ C the actual output power is increased by ~ 13 % vs. $T_a = 25^\circ$ C. Thus the required transmission at the lower cut-off wavelength needs to match > 62 % to transmit 75 % of the optical power at 25$^\circ$ C. Assuming a FWHM $\sim 25$ nm, the actual lower cut-off wavelength can be estimated to be:

$$\lambda_{cut\_off\_lower} = 810 \text{ nm}$$

+ 13 nm (centroid distribution)
+ 0.25 nm/K·45 K (thermal shift)
+ 6 nm (cut-off to transmit > 62 %)
= ~ 780 nm

This results in a required filter transmission function according to Fig. 10 (total passband width $\sim 70$ nm). For a high $R_{th}$ connection or operation with higher duty-cycle, the IR-LED’s junction might heat-up to higher degrees and subsequently the upper cut-off wavelength might be shifted to longer wavelengths by an additional ~ 10 nm (if heated up to the max. junction temperature of 145$^\circ$ C).

A derived passband specification must additionally consider the filter shift due to tilted rays hitting the filter (e.g. an angle of incidence (AOI) of $\pm 15^\circ$ results typ. in a blue shift of the filter characteristics of 15 nm).

### 3.3. Eye / Face Illumination

The SFH 4780S features a high radiant intensity $I_e$ combined with a narrow angular characteristic (half-angle typ. $\pm 10^\circ$). This feature ensures a high irradiance $E_e$ level at the users face / eye / target. Note that the illumination of the target is radial symmetric due to design.

Fig. 11 presents graphs which indicate the irradiance distribution vs. distance between the SFH 4780S operated with 1 A / 10 ms (nominal datasheet conditions, $I_e = 2.9$ W/sr) and a face / target. The graphs are done by averaging the $E_e$ value over $1 \text{ cm}^2$ area.

Note that the influence of cover glasses or steering / beamshaping optics is not considered here.

### 3.3 Thermal Considerations

The SFH 4780S features a low $R_{th}$ package.

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3) Please note that the testing procedure of the SFH 4780S is done to mimic the application: For IE test a circular detector with diameter of 1.12 cm is located in 31.6 cm distance (0.001 sr measurement). This setup is in excellent agreement with the typ. iris scanning application.
However, to utilize the full potential of the device, especially under high duty cycle resp. DC operation, requires some good thermal management.

The typical heat transfer time from junction-to-solder-point is in the range of between 1 ms to below 10 ms. Thus for pulses > 10 ms or shorter pulses with high duty-cycle a good thermal heat buffer is recommended. Practical solutions might feature a direct connection between the pcb where the SFH 4780S is mounted on and the metal frame of the mobile housing or other metal structure to support the heat transfer to the ambient. This is especially important as otherwise an increased junction temperature might require to limit the maximum drive current at higher ambient temperatures. In addition an increased junction temperature automatically leads to a reduced optical output power vs. time (at a given drive current).

### 3.4 Red Glow

During high-power operation, dependent on the drive mode (pulse-on time, duty cycle), the radiation of the IR-LED might be visible during operation. Depending on the individual user this can be observed as a dark red glowing of the device. During iris recognition this can be used as an indicator...
that the system works. Additionally it gives the user some idea where to focus his eyes in order to improve the overall system performance.

Note that placing the IR-LED behind cover glasses or special optical bandpasses (inks, filters) does not change this user experience significantly.

3.5 Eye Safety

For the SFH 4780S used for iris recognition the IEC-62471 standard is relevant\(^4\). In general three exposure limits are given for IR-A radiation:

- infrared radiation hazard exposure limits for the eye (cornea)
- thermal hazard exposure limit for skin (t < 10 s)
- retinal thermal hazard exposure limit

To calculate the irradiance for any given distance \(d\) Eq. (2) can be used:

\[
E_e = k \cdot \frac{I_e}{d^2} \quad \text{Eq. (2)}
\]

Note: The distance dependent irradiance correction factor \(k\) in Eq. (2) is \(k \sim 1.0\) for distances > 5 cm from the SFH 4780S top surface. For distances below 5.0 cm the correction factor is \(k < 1.0\) (see Fig. 12). Empirically \(k\) can be expressed as (for the SFH 4780S):

\[
k \approx 1 - e^{-13.5 \sqrt{d} - 0.5 \cdot e^{-50d}} \quad \text{Eq. (3)}
\]

For repetitively pulsed IR-LEDs the weighted radiant exposure \(E_{e,\text{time,avg}}\) \((t_{\text{avg,max}} = 0.25 \text{ s})\) shall be compared with the continuous wave exposure limits (EL) by using the time averaged values of the pulsed emission as long as \(E_e\) of the single pulse does not exceed any limit on its own.

\[
E_{e,\text{avg}} = E_{e,\text{pulse}} \cdot D = E_{e,\text{pulse}} \cdot \frac{t_{\text{pulse}}}{t_{\text{period}}} \quad \text{Eq. (4)}
\]

With \(D\) as the duty cycle, \(t_{\text{pulse}}\) as the pulse-on time and \(t_{\text{period}}\) the repetition time \((t_{\text{period,max}} = 250 \text{ ms})\).

To consider the nearest distance the following extract from [3] might be helpful:

For analysis of the retinal exposure for small sources, such as a small diameter optical fiber, the closest distance at which the human eye can sharply focus is about 100 - 200 mm. A viewing distance of 100 mm requires extreme near-point accommodation and really applies only to small children and to very myopic individuals. Therefore, 100 mm viewing distance is generally only applied for worst-case assessment of point-source divergent beam lasers. For evaluation of both the retinal thermal hazard and the blue-light photochemical hazard, a closest viewing distance of 200 mm from the source can be assumed to represent the worst-case exposure. At shorter distances, the image of a light source would be out of focus and blurred. In most situations, such short viewing conditions are unrealistic. A 20-cm worst case assessment distance is realistic for conventional lamp sources (including LEDs).

3.5.1 Cornea Limit

The IEC-62471 standard defines the

\[^4\] Please note that the following discussion is based on \(T_s = 25^\circ C\). At lower temperatures the limits can be higher, please refer to the IEC-62471 standard.
irradiance limit \( E_{\text{e,lim(cornea)}} \) for the cornea exposure as (valid for exposure times \( t \leq 1000 \) s)

\[
E_{\text{e,lim(cornea)}} \leq 18000 \cdot t^{-0.75} \cdot W/m^2 \quad \text{Eq. (5)}
\]

Fig. 13 presents the irradiance exposure limits for the cornea limit case.

**Example 1**: SFH 4780S biased with 500 mA (DC) for 9 s, assuming \( I_e = 2.2 \) W/sr (est. max. \( I_e \) level at 500 mA). According to Eq. (5) / Fig. 13 \( E_{\text{e,lim(cornea)}} = 3464 \) W/m². This level is reached at a distance from the SFH 4780S of around 2.5 cm (considering the correction factor \( k = 0.75 \), the actual \( E_e \) level at 2.5 cm is 25 % below this limit, resulting in an actual eye safe threshold of around 2.0 cm (not considering any optics / cover glass which cause additional losses).

**Example 2**: SFH 4780S biased with 500 mA, 50 ms pulse-on time (\( I_e = 2.2 \) W/sr), four pulses per second, and total operating time of 9 s. The limit according to Eq. (5) / Fig. 13 once again is 3464 W/m². At a distance of 2.5 cm \( E_{\text{e,avg}} \) is around 528 W/m² (with \( k \sim 0.75 \)). At 0.6 cm distance (\( k \sim 0.28 \)) the \( E_{\text{e,avg}} = 3409 \) W/m², thus reaching the limit concerning eye safe operation.

### 3.5.2 Skin Limit

Compared to the cornea limit this case can be neglected as the limits for skin are more relaxed. However, it might be possible to get in direct contact with the light source. In this case, the skin is only irritated at a small spot (typ. \( \Theta \sim 3 \) mm). Additionally, heat transfer inside the skin due to perfusion and the cooling effect from a cover glass might prevent the skin from reaching the critical temperature (e.g. 47° C for 10 s [3]) at all. For reference, the limit in Eq. (6) is valid for exposure times \( t \leq 10 \) s only (as the impact of longer exposure times is sensed by humans and lead to a turn-away reaction).

\[
E_{\text{e,lim(skin)}} = 20000 \cdot t^{-0.75} \cdot W/m^2 \quad \text{Eq. (6)}
\]

### 3.5.3 Retina Limit

To get a better understanding on the limits concerning the retina some pre-considerations need to be taken.

To calculate the radiance of the SFH 4780S the following Eq. (7) can be used:

\[
L_e \approx \frac{I_e}{Z^2} = \frac{I_e}{(2.8 \text{ mm})^2} \quad \text{Eq. (7)}
\]

with \( Z \) as the mean source extension (i.e. virtual emitter size). For the SFH 4780S the virtual emitter size can be estimated to be around \( Z \sim 2.8 \) mm (by applying the law of the conservation of the radiance, IEC 62471-2).

An additional parameter, \( \alpha \) (in rad), the angular subtense, can be calculated by
\[ \alpha = \frac{Z}{d} \approx \frac{2.8 \text{ mm}}{d} \]  
\text{Eq. (8)}

In any way, the upper limit of \( \alpha = 0.1 \) rad.

As the thermal stress depends on the wavelength, the so-called burn-hazard weighting function \( R(\lambda) \) is defined as:

\[ R(\lambda) = 10^{\left(\frac{700-\lambda}{500}\right)} \]  
\text{Eq. (9)}

for the SFH 4780S \( R(\lambda) \) becomes

\[ R_{SFH \ 4780S}(810 \text{ nm}) \approx 0.6 \]  
\text{Eq. (10)}

Finally, the actual burn-hazard weighted radiance level \( L_R \) from the SFH 4780S can be calculated to be:

\[ L_R = \sum_{\lambda=300 \text{ nm}}^{1400 \text{ nm}} L_\lambda R(\lambda) \Delta \lambda \approx L_\nu \cdot R(\lambda) = \frac{0.6 \cdot I_e}{(2.8 \text{ mm})^2} \]  
\text{Eq. (11)}

At last, \( L_{R, \text{lim}} \), the retinal thermal hazard exposure limit (EL) for exposure is defined as:

\[ L_{R, \text{lim (\leq 10 sec)}} \leq \frac{50000 \text{ W/m}^2/\text{sr}}{\alpha \cdot I_e^{0.25}} \]  
\text{Eq. (12)}

**Example 1:** SFH 4780S biased with 500 mA (DC) for \( t = 9 \) s, assuming \( I_e = 2.2 \) W/sr (est. max. \( I_e \) level at 500 mA). The limit according to Eq. (12) (\( \alpha = 0.1 \) rad, for distances < 2.8 cm) is 288.7 kW/(m^2sr). This compares favorably to the actual \( L_R = 168 \) kW/(m^2sr) from to Eq. (11). This essentially means that this operating condition is eye safe concerning the retina case.

**Example 2:** SFH 4780S biased with 500 mA, 50 ms pulse-on time (\( I_e = 2.2 \) W/sr), four pulses a second, and total operating time of 9 s. The limit according to Eq. (12) (with \( \alpha = 0.1 \) rad at < 2.8 cm distance) is 288.7 kW/(m^2sr). Comparing this with the actual average radiance of 34 kW/(m^2sr) indicates
that this operating condition causes no harm to the human retina.

3.5.4 General Considerations

As seen, eye safety can be a concern for this kind of high-power, high-radiant intensity devices. However, certain operating conditions (drive current, pulse width, duty cycle) and the use of cover glasses / optics in front of the SFH 4780S might alter the overall radiation level in a way that it complies with the IEC-62471 standard.

In case eye safety is a concern it is recommended to use a proximity sensor, e.g. SFH 7776 or directly the SFH 4780S in connection with e.g. SFH 7771 to ensure that the high-power operation of the IR-LED is disabled / reduced to reasonable levels in case “something” is close to the SFH 4780S. In this context one might highlight again the fact that for the retinal exposure case the human eye is not able to focus on elements as close as 1 cm [3].

Please note that eye safety classification of the final product, using IR-LEDs, is the responsibility of the final equipment manufacturer. In doubt, consult specialists to ensure eye safety in the application.

For further details on this topics please refer to the OSRAM OS Application Note “Eye Safety of IREDs used in Lamp Applications” [2] and the relevant local standards.

4. Summary

The SFH 4780S is a component specially designed to optimize iris recognition systems. The high-power, narrow-angle features make the SFH 4780S ideally suited for the next generation of mobile devices as it unifies compact design and high performance for maximum user experience.

5. Literature


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Appendix

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www.ledlightforyou.com

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