

Protecting Data in Serial EEPROMs

National Semiconductor
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National offers a broad line of serial interface EEPROMs which share a common set of features:

- Low cost
- Single supply in all modes (+5V ± 10%)
- TTL compatible interface
- MICROWIRE™ compatible interface
- Read-Only mode or read-write mode

This Application Brief will address protecting data in any of National's Serial Interface EEPROMs by using read-only mode.

Whereas EEPROM is non-volatile and does not require V_{CC} to retain data, the problem exists that stored data can be destroyed during power transitions. This is due to either uncontrolled interface signals during power transitions or noise on the power supply lines. There are various hardware design considerations which can help eliminate the problem although the simplest most effective method may be the following programming method.

All National Serial EEPROMs, when initially powered up are in the Program Disable Mode*. In this mode, the EEPROM will abort any requested Erase or Write cycles. Prior to Eras-

ing or Writing it is necessary to place the device in the Program Enable Mode†. Following placing the device in the Program Enable Mode, Erase and Write will remain enabled until either executing the Disable instruction or removing V_{CC} . Having V_{CC} unexpectedly removed often results in uncontrolled interface signals which could result in the EEPROM interpreting a programming instruction causing data to be destroyed.

Upon power up the EEPROM will automatically enter the Program Disable Mode. Subsequently the design should incorporate the following to achieve protection of stored data.

- 1) The device powers up in the read-only mode. However, as a backup, the EWDS instruction should be executed as soon as possible after V_{CC} to the EEPROM is powered up to ensure that it is in the read-only mode.
- 2) Immediately preceding a programming instruction (ERASE, WRITE, ERAL or WRAL), the EWEN instruction should be executed to enable the device for programming; the EWDS instruction should be executed immediately following the programming instruction to return

*EWDS or WDS, depending on exact device.

†EWEN or WEN, depending on exact device.

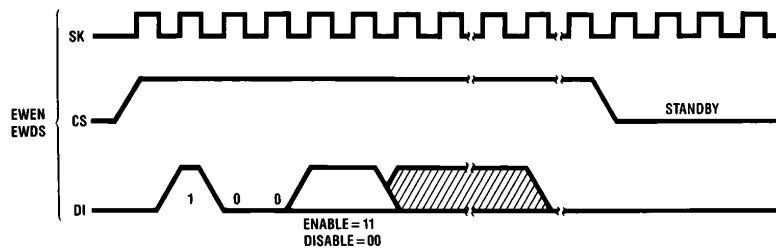
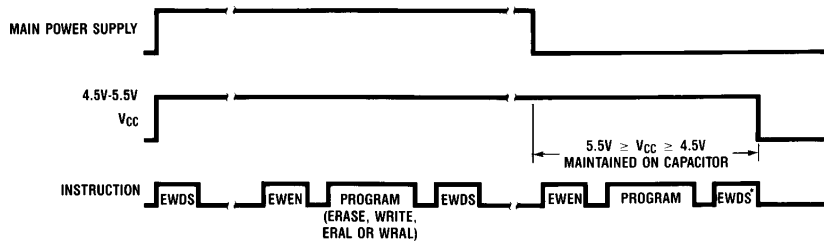


FIGURE 1. EWEN, EWDS Instruction Timing

TL/D/7085-1



*EWDS must be executed before V_{CC} drops below 4.5V to prevent accidental data loss during subsequent power down and/or power up transients.

FIGURE 2. Typical Instruction Flow for Maximum Data Protection

TL/D/7085-2

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the device to the read-only mode and protect the stored data from accidental disturb during subsequent power transients or noise.

- 3) Special care must be taken in designs in which programming instructions are initiated to store data in the EEPROM after the main power supply has gone down. This is usually accomplished by maintaining V_{CC} for the EEPROM and its controller on a capacitor for a sufficient amount of time (approximately 50 ms, depending on the clock rate) to complete these operations. This capacitor

must be large enough to maintain V_{CC} between 4.5 and 5.5 volts for the total duration of the store operation, INCLUDING the execution of the EWDS instruction immediately following the last programming instruction. FAILURE TO EXECUTE THE LAST EWDS INSTRUCTION BEFORE V_{CC} DROPS BELOW 4.5 VOLTS MAY CAUSE INADVERTENT DATA DISTURB DURING SUBSEQUENT POWER DOWN AND/OR POWER UP TRANSIENTS.

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