

IC maker Power Integrations invests \$30m in SiC device firm SemiSouth

Medical Design Technology

Founded in 2000 as a spin-out from Mississippi State University, SemiSouth is a privately held firm that designs and manufactures high-voltage silicon carbide (SiC) semiconductor power devices and electronics for high-efficiency, harsh-environment power management and conversion in applications ranging from 3kW to 100kW (with products in development to serve applications up to 1MW). With a 10,000-square-foot cleanroom and more than 70 staff at its Starkville headquarters, products include 1200V and 1700V transistors as well as high-voltage diodes and power modules.

Power Integrations' EcoSmart energy-efficiency technology cuts standby energy consumption. Since 1998, the firm has sold nearly 4bn of its EcoSmart chips (used in electronic products including computers, appliances, mobile-phone chargers, consumer electronics and LED lights), saving an estimated \$4.4bn of standby power and millions of tons of CO2 emissions.

Power Integrations' commitment of \$30m (which includes an equity investment in SemiSouth, a technology license and other financial commitments) should help to drive the continued expansion of SemiSouth's SiC fabrication facility. The firms will also collaborate to drive adoption of SemiSouth's SiC technology, aiming to speed the development of efficient power conversion devices for applications including solar and wind inverters as well as hybrid/electric vehicles.

The new relationship was announced at SemiSouth's Starkville headquarters in the Thad Cochran Technology Park in the presence of public officials including Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, US Representative Gregg Harper, and Mississippi State University president Dr Mark Keenum.

"SemiSouth has made impressive breakthroughs in the development of silicon carbide technology, attaining exceptionally high levels of efficiency and establishing SiC as an enabler of clean technologies such as solar energy and hybrid/electric vehicles," says Power Integrations' president & CEO **Balu Balakrishnan**. *"With a mutual focus on energy-efficient high-voltage semiconductor technology, Power Integrations and SemiSouth are natural strategic partners,"* he reckons. *"We are particularly enthusiastic about investing in Mississippi's emerging high-tech sector, where strong support from government and the academic community has created an environment highly conducive to innovation and private-sector investment,"* **Balakrishnan** notes.

"Today's announcement is a testament to SemiSouth's success and to Mississippi's growing stature as a center for technology and innovation," asserts **Barbour**. *"As a leader in automotive manufacturing, Mississippi understands the strategic*

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importance of advanced power electronics, which are becoming a critical part of the supply chain as the industry migrates to hybrid/electric vehicles. Home-grown innovations like SemiSouth's SiC technology represent a tremendous economic opportunity for our state," he adds.

*"In response to unprecedented global demand for our products in energy-sensitive markets such as solar inverters, server power supplies, wind inverters, and electric vehicle development, we needed to find the right investor willing to share our vision of expansion," says SemiSouth's president & CEO **Kenney Roberts**. "We welcome Power Integrations' investment in SemiSouth's future, to allow us to quickly expand and serve our customers on a much broader scale."*

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