bq76920, bq76930, bq76940 AFE FAQ

This document is a collection of frequently asked questions (FAQ) for the bq76940 family of analog front end (AFE) devices

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1 Device Features

1.1 Can I use the part as a standalone protector?

The device is an AFE. It requires a host to set registers, turn on FETs, and recover from faults. It does not function as a standalone protector.

1.2 Can I use my microcontroller with the AFE?

Yes, communication with the AFE is through an I^2C-like interface. The ALERT signal should also be connected to a GPIO to signal interrupt to the microcontroller. Analog signals may be desired based on the system design. A companion controller family offers various features for protection and gauging without the designer having to develop code.

1.3 I have a design with the bq76925 AFE. Can I extend that design to more cells with this AFE?

bq76940 is not a drop-in replacement for the bq76925. Modification of the circuit and code will be required since the architecture is different. The cell voltages are available through the digital interface rather than as an analog signal with the bq76925. Study the data sheets and system schematics.

1.4 Which cells should I short to reduce the cell count?

The top cell and bottom two cells of each cell group should be used. For a recommendation on which cells to short, see the table in the data sheet.

1.5 The VC1 pin has a higher absolute maximum than VC0. Can I short cell 1 and get the benefit of the additional margin to VSS on my lowest cell?

No. The bottom cell must be used.

1.6 Open cell detection is not mentioned in the data sheet. Does the device have this feature?

No. It may be possible to implement a cell connection test using the balancing control; however, the part may be damaged by open connections.

1.7 When does the device recover from a fault?

The fault recovery is determined by the host controller. For the controller used, refer to the data sheet or system design documentation.

1.8 How do I clear the status register bits, address 0x00?

The status register bits are cleared by writing 1 to the set bit. To clear all bits, write 0xFF to register 0x00. Writing 0x00 to the register does not clear the bits.

1.9 When the fault bit is cleared in the SYS_STAT register, the FETs do not turn back on. Is this correct?

Yes, the AFE requires control by the host to recover the system from the fault. The host must turn on the FET controls after appropriate recovery delay or conditions. Clearing the status is not sufficient.

1.10 Is an automotive grade version available?

The bq769x0 devices are intended for the industrial market, automotive grade devices are not planned. For automotive designs consider a system with the bq76PL536A-Q1 or other automotive parts as these become available.

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1.11 For higher cell counts such as 20 cells, is there any recommendation on how to stack the bq76940 devices?

The bq76940 devices are not designed with features for external stacking. The communication and data transfer is mostly on I^2C with a few other status and control signals needed, so interfacing to a host for higher cell count may be possible, but no stacked application diagram is currently planned or available.

1.12 Why is the DEVICE_XREADY bit high on my part and it cannot be cleared?

For the bq76930 and bq76940 it typically indicates that the voltage on the bottom cell group is adequate, but one of the upper cell groups' supply voltage is below V_{SHUT}. Raise all cell group supply voltages above V_{PORA} and clear the status bit. Another possibility is that the part has been damaged.

DEVICE_XREADY on the bq76920 typically indicates a malfunctioned part which may need replaced.

1.13 How can I tell if the voltage readings are correct or dormant values?

If the DEVICE_XREADY is set, the voltage register values from the device should not be used. If the user would like a way to check if the part is alive, construct a circuit that can be controlled by the system microcontroller, which would short the thermistor on an upper cell group. The microcontroller could then observe the voltage change based on its control and know that the part was functioning. This could be used even if the thermistors are not used by selecting the external temperature sensing for this test. Note that the temperature selection change may take 2 seconds to update.

1.14 Will the bq769x0 share the bus with a bq34z100?

Yes, the default (-00) bq769x0 device address (7 bit) is 0x08 while the bq34z100 address is 0x55, so they should share the bus without issue.

1.15 What is the ALERT pin timing?

The alert pin does not have noise discrimination. It is sampled at about 256 kHz. If it is sampled high, it will be driven high approximately 3 clocks (12 µs) later. A pulldown resistor or capacitor may help avoid false detection on the pin. The time constant on the pulldown should allow the pin to settle below the 1-V threshold within approximately 250 µs to avoid the part from detecting the residual ALERT pin voltage after a status register clear.

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2 Unused Pins

How should I connect pins if I am not using them?

2.1 SRP and SRN

These pins should be connected to VSS.

2.2 TS1, TS2, TS3

TS1, TS2, and TS3 are inputs and should have a pulldown. TS1 is needed as an input to boot the part. A 1- to 100-kΩ pulldown may be suitable.

2.3 CHG and DSG

CHG and DSG are outputs and have pulldowns when set low. These pins may be left unconnected.

2.4 NC pins

Some pins named NC need to be connected, refer to the data sheet Pin Function tables.

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3 FETs

3.1 When does the AFE turn on FETs?

The AFE only turns on FETs under command of the host and if there is not a latched fault present.

3.2 Can the device drive high-side FETs?

Not directly. An external circuit is required to control high-side FETs.

High-side P-channel FETs can be controlled by a N-channel FET controlled by the CHG and DSG outputs.

High-side N-channel FETs need a charge-pump type driver or other supply to provide a voltage above the FET sources.

3.3 Will load detection work with high-side FET configurations?

No. The load detection is sensed through the CHG pin. With typical high-side FET applications, there is no path to pull up the CHG pin for the load detection circuit to operate. If a load detection is desired, TI suggests that the microcontroller read the pack voltage.

3.4 Does load present detection work with the charge FET on?

LOAD_PRESENT does not work with the CHG_EN set high (1). To use the load detection feature, set DSG_ON and CHG_ON low (0). When a load is on the PACK terminals, the CHG pin will be pulled up through the FET drive circuit and LOAD_PRESENT will be set when the voltage is above the V_{LOAD_DETECT} threshold.

3.5 How does the part detect a load?

The PACK– pin is pulled down by the FET leakage and the internal R_{DSG_OFF}. If there is a residual load, the PACK– voltage will remain high and LOAD_PRESENT will be set. If there is no residual load, the PACK– voltage will normally return to near GND and will fall below the V_{LOAD_DETECT} threshold and the LOAD_PRESENT bit will be cleared.

3.6 Will load detection work with parallel FET configurations?

Load detection will not work if the charge FET connects directly to the sense resistor. If the charge FET connects after the discharge FET, the charge pack terminal will be pulled up through the charge FET body diode and load detection should work.

3.7 The charge FET driver uses resistive turn off of the FET. Would this affect the turn off speed of the charge MOSFET, and would this be the way too long?

The standard circuit diagram does not drive the charge FET off; it is turned off by the gate source resistor. Turn-off time for the circuit shown in the data sheet can be long. Because charge current is typically low, a long turn-off time is considered okay, but the designer must check the safe operating range of the FETs used. In many cases, the resistive turn off of the charge FET is typical. In some cases, a push-pull driver may be needed for the system. TI does not have a typical application diagram with a push-pull driver.

3.8 The source capability for both CHG and DSG pin is not in the data sheet. What is the typical output voltage for CHG and DSG pin?

When on, the typical output voltage is 12 V, as shown in the data sheet (VFETON). For low REGSRC voltages, VFET will be up to 2 V below REGSRC. The drive current is low as noted by the long rise-time specification. When off, there is a resistor pull down to VSS, as shown in the data sheet. The data sheet does not include DC drive current; load is expected to be about 1 MΩ or higher resistance.

While limits can be calculated from rise and fall times in the data sheet, the nominal pullup resistances when the outputs are high is 5 kΩ. The data sheet shows the nominal pulldown resistances for the outputs.

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3.9 Does the AFE turn off the FETs when it loses adequate drive voltage for the FETs?

No, the user must account for voltage drop in their system design and be sure the system operates safely in all conditions. Controller software should be written to understand system voltage drops and turn off FETs when needed to prevent damage. Protection delays should be set to allow adequate voltage for FETs at the protection time.

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4 ADC

4.1 Why is the ADC not reading 0x3FFF at 6 V?

The ADC is scaled and does not use the full 14-bit data range. The input range is limited to 6 V. The maximum data range of the ADC register is limited to 0x3DE1 or about 6.075 V.

4.2 How do I calculate the battery voltage from the BAT_HI and BAT_LO ADC registers?

The BAT_HI and BAT_LO registers are not directly from the ADC. The cell voltages are summed and the result (divided by 4) is stored in the registers. To get the battery voltage, concatenate the register values and multiply by 4, multiply by the gain, and add the offset multiplied by the number of cells. The equation is shown in the data sheet.

4.3 How do I apply the calibration voltages?

Calibration values must be read from the IC and applied to the ADC readings in the microcontroller. Refer to the description in the data sheet.

4.4 Can I calibrate the voltages?

You may choose to calibrate the cell and battery voltages in your microcontroller in addition to the calibration data provided in the IC. You might choose a single-point or multiple-point calibration. These values will need to be entered, retained, and used in your microcontroller.

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5 Coulomb Counter (CC)

5.1 How do I understand the data range of the CC?

The CC uses 16 bits, but the full 16-bit data range is not used. Full scale data range is ±32000 or ±270 mV. However the recommended range for the CC is ±200 mV. The bit value is approximately 270 mV/32000 = 8.44 µV. Positive values are charge current; negative values are discharge current. Data is 2's complement, so negative current has the highest bit set. For details, refer to the latest data sheet description.

5.2 How does the CC range match to the SC protection levels?

The CC has a recommended range of ±200 mV. When the RSNS bit is set to 1, the SCD threshold has the range of 44 to 200 mV. The current protection thresholds correspond to negative CC reading values. However, the protection threshold is expressed without units. Further, the two values are not directly related: The protection thresholds are comparator-based while the CC is an integrating ADC.

5.3 How does the CC support the current protection thresholds?

The CC is not used for the current protection thresholds. The CC is an integrating converter and does not respond fast enough for the SCD or OCD delays. The system microcontroller could use the CC value to implement system current thresholds which respond more slowly than the hardware protections in the AFE.

5.4 How do I measure instantaneous current with the CC?

The CC is an integrating converter and cannot measure instantaneous current. It may be considered an average over the 250-ms integration period.

5.5 The CC resolution is described in volts (mV, µV). How do I determine current?

Divide the CC voltage by the sense resistor value, or:

Current = CC value × CC LSB value / sense resistor

Be sure to convert units where needed. Remember that the CC is an integrating converter and the calculation will give an 'average' current.

5.6 Why does the CC value read not change when I set the CC_ONESHOT bit?

The CC_READY bit must be cleared before the CC_ONESHOT bit is set. Note also that the CC_EN bit should be cleared or a CC conversion may already be in progress.

5.7 Why does the CC show a different value after shutdown and wake up?

The CC_CFG register (0x0B) defaults to 0x00 after power-on reset; however, the recommended setting is 0x19. After waking the part, be sure to set the CC_CFG register. In the bq76940, bq76930, or bq76920 software, this register may be written separately, or it is set by the Read Device button.

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6 Communications

6.1 Is the communications interface fully I²C compliant?

No, refer to the data sheet for supported modes, operation, and timing.

6.2 Does the communications interface support sequential register reads?

Yes.

6.3 Why does my voltage (or current) read erratically?

Any 16-bit value should be read with a sequential read to obtain an atomic value. Imagine a situation where the data value is varying between 0x07FF and 0x0800. Reading as separate bytes and re-assembling the value could result in 0x0700, 0x07FF, 0x0800, or 0x08FF if the byte reads fall across the update boundary.

6.4 Where can I get information on the communications CRC?

Refer to the data sheet.

6.5 Can I use the CRC part without CRC?

No. The part will not accept writes without the CRC. The part will read the current register, and the controller can ignore the CRC.

6.6 Does the part need pullups on the SDA and SCL lines?

Yes, the bq769xx devices do not have internal pullups.

6.7 Does the bq769x0 AFE ever drive the SCL line?

No, it is a slave device only and does not drive the SCL line.

6.8 When does the CC_Ready bit in the SYS_STAT release?

The CC_Ready bit must be cleared by the processor. The processor timeline must allow recognition of the status, read the CC value, and clear the status before the next update. If the processor misses an update, the CC value for that interval is lost and the accumulated charge value in the processor will be incorrect.

6.9 What is the communication protocol for the cell groups (internal stacked device)? Is it still I²C?

No. The internal communication interface and protocol are proprietary. It is sealed inside the package, cannot be observed externally, and no data is available.

6.10 When the PACK– is switched off, will the part be damaged when the communication signals pull to PACK+?

If the communication ground is PACK–, damage is very likely. Clamp circuits on SDA and SCL to VSS may cause an uncontrolled current path through the interface. Using a separate communication ground as with the EVM will also provide an unprotected current path and may not be acceptable. For protecting the communication lines referenced to PACK–, some methods may include:

- ISO isolation device
- High-side protection FETs
- Alternative external circuitry to AC-couple the communications signaling lines, if possible
- Some external circuit to detect if FETs are off and isolate the communication bus (if communication is not required)

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6.11 Is there a version or can I get the part with a SMBus interface?

No. The bq769x0 family of AFEs use I^2C-like communication. To communicate with your battery via SMBus, a microcontroller or companion controller would handle protection functions and provide SMBus interface.

6.12 Is the companion controller interface SMBus and does it use SBS Data format?

Compatible companion controllers are separate devices and will have separate data sheets. For example, the planned bq78350 will have SMBus interface to external systems. The SBS Data 1.1 standard does not support 15 cells, so the controller will not be compliant and other adjustments may be made. Refer to the latest data sheet for information.

6.13 Why does the AFE not ACK its address?

Be sure power is applied to REGSRC as well as BAT (and VC5X, VC10X when appropriate). A voltage could be present on REGOUT due to a pullup of SCL, SDA, or ALERT, but the part needs power from the REGSRC supply pin to operate. REGOUT should be supplied by the part after it is booted.

Also, be sure 3.3 V present on the CAP1 pin after the part is booted.

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7 Temperature Sensing

7.1 Where are the temperature sensing thresholds?

The AFE does not have temperature protection thresholds. It allows measurement of temperature as a voltage from either an internal sensor or external thermistor. The number of sensors varies with the device type. Temperature must be read by the system microcontroller and protection thresholds implemented appropriately. When a FET action is desired from the temperature threshold, the microcontroller must write the FET control bit off in the bq769x0 AFE.

7.2 I'm switching the temperature source selection bit TEMP_SEL, but I don't see the temperature change, why?

Temperature is only measured every 2 s. Be sure to allow sufficient time after changing the selection before reading the temperature register value or values.

7.3 I only want to use one temperature sensor. Can I leave the others unconnected?

Although the TS pins are not digital logic input signals, they are inputs and should not be left floating or unexpected operation may result. Provide a pulldown resistor in place of the thermistors, typical values in the range of 1 to 100 kΩ would be acceptable.

7.4 Are the NTC temperature sensors required for operation?

No, thermistors are not required for operation of the device. The TEMP_SEL bit defaults to 0 to measure die temperature rather than the thermistor. TS1 needs to be allowed to be pulled above the 1-V max boot threshold to start the device. Because the TS pins are identified as inputs, TI recommends a pulldown to avoid unexpected operation. The TS2 and TS3 should not be pulled up.

7.5 I want more than three temperature sensors on the bq76940. Can I multiplex more sensors?

This operation is not supported by the device. The device will not tell you when it is making measurements, so if you multiplex sensors externally, be sure to allow sufficient time for measurements to settle. Consider adding temperature sensors to your microcontroller.

7.6 Previous gas gauge designs have had a resistor in parallel with the thermistor. Is this needed with the bq769x0?

A parallel resistor is not required for operation. It may alter the range and shape of the temperature characteristic for easier conversion of voltage to temperature, so use of a resistor may depend on your measurement system.

7.7 Do I need a capacitor across the thermistor like my previous bq20z40 design?

Because the TS pin is switched, a small capacitor will slow the edge rate and stabilize the voltage, both may be desirable. However, the device should operate without the capacitor.

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7.8 How do I understand the die temperature drift specification?

The die temperature drift is the characteristic which allows temperature measurement. The voltage will decrease with temperature. Over the specified range of –25 to 85°C, the behavior may look like Figure 1. Calibration of the system will be needed to obtain a good temperature reading.

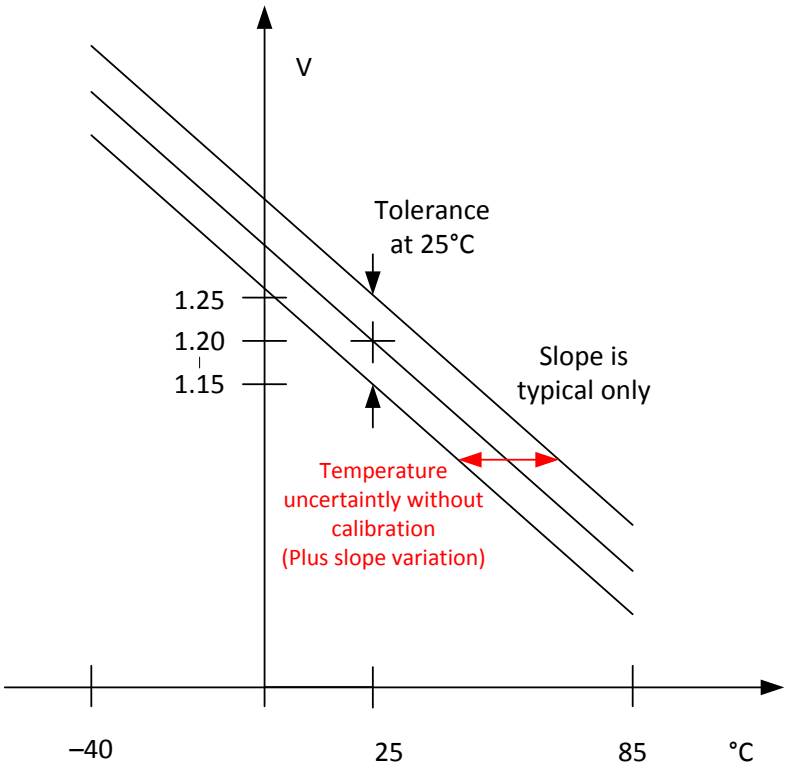

Figure 1. Die Temperature Characteristic

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8 Calibration

8.1 How do I calibrate current and voltage on the device? Is calibration done on the part at the factory, or do I need to do something at production?

The part is calibrated at the factory to the data sheet limits. The host should do calculation of the cell voltages based on the gain and offset values stored in the device. Additional calibration could be done based on the microcontroller implementation. The device does not have stored current calibration values. Current calibration may be done at the system level to compensate for gain and offset due to device variations and for outside factors such as sense resistor tolerance.

8.2 Can I set each device to a different voltage setting?

Yes. The device is calibrated at the factory during production, and default thresholds are programmed into the part. However, the device operates from thresholds in the registers. When installed in a system, the settings can be overwritten by the battery system microcontroller. If your code design provides it, each system can be calibrated and result in a unique setting for that board or device combination. The step size for voltage protection settings is 16 counts or about 6.1 mV (see the latest data sheet).

8.3 Can I set a different threshold for each cell input?

No, all cell measurements use the same threshold. Variation between cells is set at production and will be within the data sheet specifications.

8.4 Can I make adjustments to calibration for higher accuracy in my system?

Not inside the device. System calibration factors could be applied by the microcontroller if its firmware is designed to provide those.

8.5 Other TI protectors have had coarse OV settings. Can I achieve better accuracy with the bq769x0?

Yes. Because the bq769x0 is an AFE rather than a protector, it has default settings, but operates from registers so the thresholds can be overwritten by the host. While the default protection thresholds are fixed, the voltage protection step size is about 6.1 mV and may be calibrated by the host for each system. Additionally firmware protection could be implemented.

8.6 Can I change the thresholds dynamically during operation, and if so what is the timing on register writes to take effect?

Register writes are not restricted. If the protection threshold is changed while a fault is being evaluated before the final comparison, the fault timer is cleared and the fault is not expected to be set. Timing will not be apparent to the user.

8.7 Can I block write to the EEPROM?

The bq769x0 is register-based; it does not have a user selectable EEPROM.

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9 Cell Balancing

9.1 How does balancing work?

The bq769x0 uses resistive balancing. The basic balancing circuit is a FET internal to the device between each adjacent VCx pin pair of the cell group. When the FET is turned on by a register command, it pulls the VCx pins together and current is drawn from the cell through the VCx input resistors which limit the current. When charging, part of the charge current bypasses the balanced cell. When not charging, current is drawn from the cell. Either way, the power is dissipated as heat in the input resistors and device. Control of which cells to balance is left to the controller algorithm. There are no restrictions on which balance bits can be set by the controller. The controller algorithm must be designed to prevent unsafe bit combinations and achieve the desired balance. Certain events in the AFE will clear the balance registers, refer to the data sheet.

9.2 Can I balance all cells at once?

The device will allow you to write the balance register to turn on all balancing FETs, however typically you should not do this since this may damage the IC.

As an example, if a bq76920 has all 5 cells at 4 V with a 20-V pack voltage and all balance bits are set in the register, the VCx inputs will attempt to pull to the same value, or half the pack voltage. The resulting potential 10 V on all VCx inputs will cause the absolute maximum voltage of VC0 to VSS of 3.6 V to be exceeded. While there are input resistors which may limit current, the device may clamp the voltage to a lower value and the device may be permanently damaged.

9.3 Is it safe to balance every other cell?

Typically, yes. Because balancing will typically increase the adjacent cell voltage by ½ of the normal cell voltage, balancing every other cell would double the voltage of the middle cell. Because the absolute maximum differential voltage is 9 V, balancing every other cell should be okay up to 4.5 V/cell.

9.4 How many cells can I balance at once?

With every other cell in a cell group or set being allowed, 9 cells could be balanced in a bq76940. Power dissipation of the package may limit the number of cells which can safely be balanced.

9.5 Is it okay to balance adjacent cells?

The data sheet states that adjacent cells should not be balanced simultaneously. The part does not restrict selection of adjacent cells.

Whether it is safe depends on which cells are balancing and the cell voltages. If 2 adjacent cells are balanced, the VCx pin between the cells does not change significantly in voltage. The differential input voltage of the next cell effectively doubles. If voltages impressed on the device are within the absolute maximum limits (both single-ended and differential), this is okay.

As an example, assume all cells are at 4 V. If cells 4 and 5 are balanced, the VC3 input pulls to VC4, which is approximately the cell 4 voltage or 16 V. This is within the single-ended absolute maximum voltage of 3 × 7.2 = 21.6 V. VC3-VC2 voltage doubles, or is 8 V; this is within the 9-V absolute maximum differential voltage for this input pair. So this balance combination should be okay. However, if cell 1 and cell 2 are balanced, VC0 pulls to the cell 1 value of 4 V. Because this is above the absolute maximum of 3.6 V, this combination of balancing could damage the device and should not be selected.

As another example, if the cell voltages are 3.6 V, the absolute maximum on VC0 from the above example would not be violated, and cells 1 and 2 could be balanced at the same time. However, if cells 4 and 5 were also simultaneously selected for balancing, VC2 would be approximately the cell 1 voltage of 3.6 V and VC3 would be approximately the cell 4 voltage of 14.4 V. VC3-VC2 would be 10.8 V and would exceed the absolute maximum of 9 V.

When external balancing is used, the control voltage for the external FETs is developed across the input resistor. With adjacent cells selected for balancing, one of the FETs may not receive an adequate control voltage and its balancing will be ineffective.

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Adjacent cells in adjacent groups may be balanced simultaneously, for example cells 5 and 6 with a bq76930. Because the cells are in different groups, they have separate input resistors for each group and the balancing can operate independently, even with external balancing.

Because of the complexity of determining when adjacent cell balancing may be safe, the user should follow the data sheet recommendation.

9.6 The standard schematic uses large value input filter resistors. How can I achieve the maximum internal balance current?

The standard schematic has large input filter resistors to reduce transient voltages to the inputs. This results in a low balance current. A higher balance current can be achieved by reducing the value of the input filter resistors. The power filter must also be reduced (filter for the VCnX pins) to prevent the cell inputs from swinging faster than the power pins and exceeding the device absolute maximum limits. Significant pack level transient suppression may be required.

9.7 Can the bq769x0 support external balancing?

Yes, external N-channel or P-channel FETs may be used. This allows maintaining large input filter resistors for better transient filtering. The system designer should be aware that some combinations of balancing may not work with external balancing.

9.8 Can I use single-ended capacitor connections for my input filter rather than the differential connection shown in the system diagram?

Yes, as long as absolute maximum values are not exceeded this should be okay. A typical risk to the AFE is when an upper cell input is connected before a lower one, a high voltage is impressed across the VC(n+1) – VCn pin pair and the input could be damaged. Differential capacitors tend to divide the voltage across the unconnected inputs and allow the voltages across the inputs to change slowly. Using single-ended capacitors should provide more consistent filtering across the inputs, but may require additional protection components such as Zener diodes at the inputs.

9.9 Can the device turn off balance FETs by itself?

The device will turn off the balance FETs during certain fault conditions as described in the data sheet. However, it does not turn off the FETs when the pack is balanced or to prevent discharge of the cell or cells being balanced.

9.10 How much balance current can I get using 10-Ω input resistors?

The minimum recommended RC input resistance is 40 Ω for the bq76920 and higher for the other family parts. Do not use 10-Ω input resistors.

9.11 How much does the temperature rise during balancing?

The temperature rise will depend on the balancing current used and the cell voltages during balancing as well as the package thermal characteristics. See thermal data for the package in the data sheet. The package is not a high power package however, so realize that the thermal resistance will be rather high and the allowable balance power will be limited. The 85 deg C maximum recommended operating temperature may also limit the balance current or power for a system.

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9.12 Why does the cell voltage change during balancing?

The bq76930EVM and bq76940EVM use large (1-µF) Cc filter capacitors. The voltage measurement starts while the voltage is still settling after the balance on-time. The bottom cells in each cell group or set are affected depending on the cell voltage and the number of cells balanced. To avoid this, use a shorter time constant for the input filter network, such as 0.1-µF Cc capacitors.

The cell groups operate on independent timelines for balancing and measurement. The balance current on the top or bottom cell of a group will act on any common path resistance to create a voltage which can be measured by the adjacent cell in the adjacent group. Cell 5 voltage can be influenced by cell 6 balance current, and cell 6 voltage can be influenced by cell 5 balance current. The same situation can occur at cells 10 and 11. To avoid this, minimize the resistance in the path between the high-current balance path and the cells.

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10 Power

10.1 Can I short all cell inputs to ground while applying BAT?

For the bq76940 and bq76930, this is likely to violate the absolute maximum limits of the device, and TI does not recommend it. For the bq76920, no damage is expected, but TI does not recommended it.

10.2 What is the limit of VC15 (or the top used cell input) with respect to BAT?

The maximum voltage between the top cell input and the BAT pin or between the top VCn pin and its group power pin is 7 V. A diode should be used between the top VCn pin of each group for the bq76930 and bq76940, as shown in the data sheet simplified schematics. For the bq76920, a diode may be added if needed to avoid damage.

10.3 Can REGSRC operate at a higher voltage than VC5X?

Yes. REGSRC does not have a limit with respect to VC5X in the data sheet. The pins power different circuits in the device. Both should be within their recommended operating condition range.

10.4 Can I connect cells randomly?

Yes, this was considered in the design of the device. The board connections including the unconnected inputs and pack outputs should not be connected to tools or fixture signals which would induce voltages exceeding absolute maximum limits of the bq769x0 during the connection sequence. Some connection situations may require protection devices to prevent damage during random cell connection.

10.5 Why does the application diagram have Rf and Cf and why points A and B?

The cells are separated into groups of 5, or sets, which need a lower impedance connection back to the cells. The BAT and VCnX pins are “power” pins and should be filtered to prevent transients. When the diagram was drawn in this way, the A and B points allowed fewer lines crossing on the diagram.

10.6 Will the part be damaged if points A and B are floated?

Points A and B are expected to be connected on the circuit board before power is applied. If the points are floated, one or more absolute maximum voltage limits could be exceeded and the part could be damaged.

10.7 Can the Cf have a lower voltage rating than the PACK voltage?

The BAT voltage is split into “sets” of cells (3 for the bq76940), which have an absolute maximum voltage. Because the capacitor voltage must be limited to the absolute maximum voltage of the IC connected, capacitors with voltage rating lower than BAT pin voltage might be used. However, be aware of the capacitance versus voltage characteristics of capacitors and follow the derating guidelines of your organization.

10.8 The data sheet shows a large variation in power supply current ($I_{NOMINAL}$). Will this cause large offset currents between cell sets?

No, the large variation is due to operating modes shown and manufacturing variations in lots. Also, the power includes both the BAT and REGSRC current. Offset current is shown separately in the data sheet.

10.9 Is there a load mismatch on the cell groups?

In general, no, the design uses power from the top of the stack. Any current through VCnX should be only a small bias current. This bias current is shown in the data sheet for different modes in the Leakage and Offset Currents section of the electrical characteristics. An exception is the increase in current on VC5X when ALERT is high, as shown in the data sheet. Clearing ALERT promptly when set will reduce the effect of this current.

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10.10 When I measure supply and offset currents, why do I see peak values much higher than the data sheet maximums?

The part has a sampling characteristic when measuring cell voltages. The data sheet values are average currents at a specific mode of operation. Additionally, REGSRC current does not include the currents for external loads from circuitry attached to REGOUT or I^2C communication. Refer to the latest data sheet for possible clarifications of current measurement conditions.

10.11 Does connecting fewer than the maximum cells, for example, 13 cells, on a bq76940 create an imbalance in the cell groups?

No, the device supply current (I_{DD}) is always drawn from the top of the stack, regardless of the cell count. The designer should be careful to source the current for REGSRC from the top of the stack, also.

10.12 How can I reset the part?

Send the part to ship mode, then boot the part with a momentary voltage on TS1.

10.13 Can the device be reset by a power transient?

Each cell group or set may shut down if the voltage transitions into the VSHUT region. This may require the device to have XREADY cleared or be rebooted.

A sufficient transient on the CAPx pins may cause a POR of the group and may also result in XREADY or apparent shutdown. The CAPx pin capacitors for the device should be routed appropriately with the connections shown in the data sheet to avoid noise coupling into these pins.

10.14 Will an excessive load (short circuit) on REGOUT reset the part?

No. Short circuit or excessive load will cause loss of some functionality of the IC. Expected influences are on the current measurement and communications with the device. A secondary effect is that if the load causes the voltage of REGSRC to drop, the FET drive voltages may drop without the regulator voltage being affected.

10.15 Why is a FET source follower used for REGSRC?

The FET is used with the bq76930 and bq76940 to provide current for REGSRC from the battery positive while reducing the voltage to a suitable value for the IC. The FET also dissipates the power resulting from the load current and dropped voltage external to the IC. The bq76920 does not use a FET because the battery voltage is within the REGSRC range.

10.16 Do I need a large package on the REGSRC FET?

You may not need a large FET. REGSRC must provide power for the internal circuitry, FET drive, and external load on REGOUT. The package should be selected for the power dissipation expected from the battery voltage, REGOUT load current, and thermal characteristics of the board. If regulator current is low, a small package and inexpensive FET may be used.

10.17 Why did some data sheet versions show two FETs for REGSRC?

Preliminary data sheets showed two FETs in series to provide current for REGSRC. The two FETs allow lower voltage and lower power FETs to be used. However, this configuration resulted in instability. To avoid the complexity of compensating the circuit to eliminate instability, TI recommends a single FET.

10.18 Can I use a single FET for REGSRC rather than connect a second FET at VC10X as shown in the preliminary data sheet?

Yes, TI recommends a single FET. The pack designer should trade off voltage, power, and cost to select an appropriate design for their system.

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10.19 Does the external REGSRC FET gain affect the LDO response?

Not significantly. The external FET provides a source follower to provide a roughly regulated voltage to the REGSRC pin to reduce dissipation in the device because the regulator current flows from the top of the battery through the FET to the REGSRC pin. Final regulation is done internal to the device.

10.20 What is the efficiency of the LDO?

It is a series regulator and is not efficient. Any current drawn from the LDO will cause a power loss in the part of the current times the voltage between REGSRC and REGOUT. Consider the load current and use external components to drop the voltage to REGSRC and reduce power in the IC if appropriate.

10.21 What is the maximum LDO current?

The data sheet does not provide a recommended maximum current. The 20 mA shown in the test conditions may be a good recommended maximum.

10.22 What is the LDO accuracy over temperature?

Refer to the data sheet electrical characteristics.

10.23 Will the part operate properly with transients below VSHUT?

No. The part will shut down if the supply voltage drops slowly below its VSHUT threshold, such as when cells self-discharge or are pulled to a very-low voltage before UV protection. Rapid transitions below VSHUT caused by load transients can disrupt operation of the IC causing DEVICE_XREADY status. System design must keep cell group supply voltages above VSHUT for all transient conditions.

10.24 Can I use a hold-up circuit on the BAT or REGSRC pin, or both, to extend the operating time under pack short circuit or overcurrent conditions?

For the bq76920, yes, a hold-up circuit can be used to maintain a voltage above VSHUT during heavy pack loads.

Similarly a hold-up circuit can be used on REGSRC to maintain voltage for FET drive and REGOUT. Because the FET drive comes from REGSRC also, realize the FET drive voltage will drop before the REGOUT voltage. Be sure to size the circuit components and set protection delays to maintain an adequate FET drive voltage with maximum REGOUT load.

For the bq76930 and bq76940, a hold-up circuit on BAT is not suitable. Implementing a hold-up circuit on BAT, VC10X, or VC5X may cause device absolute maximum limits to be exceeded and may result in device damage. For these devices, set the protection thresholds and timing to provide protection while the part has adequate power.

10.25 I will not use the REGOUT voltage from the AFE. Do I still need to supply REGSRC and a capacitor on REGOUT?

Yes, REGSRC and REGOUT are required. REGSRC powers the FET drivers, and REGOUT powers assorted internal circuitry, including the communication buffers and coulomb counter. If you are not using the REGOUT voltage externally, a capacitor value on the low side of the recommended range should be fine. The REGSRC pin should have an approximately 1-µF capacitor.

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11 Power State Switching

11.1 When entering SHIP mode, will the AFE or controller enter the low power state first?

The controller must write to the AFE to change the power mode, so it must remain active long enough to complete the register write. When the AFE transitions to SHIP mode, the external regulator is turned off. The controller must complete operations before power is lost. The controller will likely be off before voltages have settled in the AFE.

11.2 When the pack wakes up, will the AFE or controller wake up first?

This depends on the system design. If the AFE powers the microcontroller, the AFE wakes first. If the microcontroller is operated from a separate supply, the microcontroller may provide the wake signal for the AFE.

11.3 What happens if my boot switch sticks or the boot signal is left on?

If the boot switch sticks or the boot circuit drives a voltage onto the TS pin continuously, the device will convert that voltage during the temperature measurement interval if the external temperature sense option is selected (TEMP_SEL = 1). The converted value in the register will not correctly represent temperature. If the voltage is within absolute maximum limits for the TS pin, the part should not be damaged. The controller may respond to the inaccurate voltage as a temperature fault or fail to respond to a fault depending on the value forced on the pin.

If the bottom cell voltage is used for boot as shown in the data sheet simple diagram, the cell voltage may exceed the absolute maximum. A resistor should be used to limit the input. After the part has been booted and if external temperature monitoring is enabled, a cell voltage on TS will be switched to the internal regulator and could push up the 3.3-V regulator voltage. A limiting circuit may be required to accommodate the dynamic range of the cell voltage and the thermistor resistance.

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12 EVM

12.1 Will there be an evaluation module (EVM) for the devices or family?

Yes, there are three separate EVMs each using the -00 version of the device. See the Tools & Software section of the device product folders or EVM tool folders for information on the bq76920EVM, bq76930EVM, and bq76940EVM.

12.2 The EVM has a TI controller, can I use my own?

Yes, although the EVM has a TI controller, it can be disconnected from the I^2C lines and the bq769x0 I^2C lines connected to your controller. When using your own controller, be sure to remove the connection to the TI controller to avoid bus conflicts. Note that the device version on the EVM is -00 and provides REGOUT at 2.5 V.

12.3 My controller is 5 V. Can I use this with the bq769x0 and EVM?

The absolute maximum and recommended maximum voltage on the SDA, SCL, and ALERT pins is 3.6 V. If your controller can accept the low signaling levels, it should work fine. Be sure to use pullups from the lower voltage side. In some cases, a level translator may be needed. ALERT will need a level translator to prevent forcing REGOUT to a higher voltage. Refer to the EVM user guide for options on pullups. The EVM does not have level translators.

12.4 Can I talk to both the SMBus and I^2C on the EVM at the same time?

If you are communicating to the TI controller over SMBus, the I^2C should not be connected to an external interface to avoid collisions. Similarly, if you are talking to the AFE using I^2C, the controller should be disconnected. If the controller is disconnected from the AFE, communications could take place on both busses at the same time, but the value of this is uncertain.

12.5 Can I configure fewer than the maximum cells on the EVM?

Yes. Unused cells can be shorted at the terminal block for basic operation. Refer to the EVM user's guide or schematic.

12.6 I want to configure fewer cells on my EVM. Which cells should I short?

See the limits and recommendations in the data sheet. Cells should be shorted on the upper group first maintaining at least 3 cells on each group. The top cell on each group should be used to provide best voltage measurement of the used and unused cells. The bottom 2 cells of each group should also be used.

12.7 What TI interface can I use to communicate with the device?

The EV2300 and EV2400 are supported by the TI evaluation software. Any TI interface which can communicate with I^2C or SMBus at the appropriate levels and speed can communicate with the devices, but will not be supported by the software. Similarly, third party interfaces are not supported by the software.

12.8 Can I use my existing bqxx EVSW for communication with the EVM?

No. Each gauge device has a customization of the selected evaluation software. The legacy TI bqEasy or EVSW will not communicate with the AFE. A newer software platform was selected for the gauge; the AFE uses a separate tool. The tools (GUIs) are presently expected to be separate.

12.9 Can I implement external balancing on the EVM?

The bq76930 and bq76940 EVMs use external P-channel FETs for balancing. N-channel FETs could also be used with the devices, but are not supported on the boards. External balancing could be used with the bq76920 but is not supported on the board.

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12.10 Where can I get the AFE software for the EVM?

The bq76940, bq76930, and bq76920 evaluation software is available from the device product folders and the EVM tool folders.

12.11 Is the EVM a finished design?

No, the EVM is intended to provide a demonstration of the device and a platform for evaluation. It is not a finished system. Additional circuitry may be required for implementation of a battery system.

12.12 The bq78350 gauge on the EVM does not respond. How do I get the gauge to work?

The gauge section of the bq769x0 EVM is provided for future use. The bq78350 gauge on the board is blank. After the firmware and tools become available, download the gauge firmware and software tools from the TI website, www.ti.com. Install the firmware before using the gauge. Instructions will be provided when the firmware is released. Check the TI website or contact your TI representative for information on the bq78350.

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