

AERO: Adaptive Erase Operation for Improving Lifetime and Performance of Modern NAND Flash-Based SSDs

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Abstract

This work investigates a new erase scheme in NAND flash memory to improve the lifetime and performance of modern solid-state drives (SSDs). In NAND flash memory, an erase operation applies a high voltage (e.g., > 20 V) to flash cells for a long time (e.g., > 3.5 ms), which degrades cell endurance and potentially delays user I/O requests. While a large body of prior work has proposed various techniques to mitigate the negative impact of erase operations, no work has yet investigated how erase latency should be set to fully exploit the potential of NAND flash memory; most existing techniques use a fixed latency for every erase operation which is set to cover the worst-case operating conditions. To address this, we propose AERO (Adaptive ERase Operation), a new erase scheme that dynamically adjusts erase latency to be just long enough for reliably erasing target cells, depending on the cells' current erase characteristics. AERO accurately predicts such near-optimal erase latency based on the number of fail bits during an erase operation. To maximize its benefits, we further optimize AERO in two aspects. First, at the beginning of an erase operation, AERO attempts to erase the cells for a short time (e.g., 1 ms), which enables AERO to always obtain

the number of fail bits necessary to accurately predict the near-optimal erase latency. Second, AERO aggressively yet safely reduces erase latency by leveraging a large reliability margin present in modern SSDs. We demonstrate the feasibility and reliability of AERO using 160 real 3D NAND flash chips, showing that it enhances SSD lifetime over the conventional erase scheme by 43% without change to existing NAND flash chips. Our system-level evaluation using eleven real-world workloads shows that an AERO-enabled SSD reduces read tail latency by 34% on average over a state-of-the-art technique.

CCS Concepts: • Hardware → External storage.

Keywords: solid state drives (SSDs), NAND flash memory, erase operation, SSD lifetime, I/O performance

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1 Introduction

NAND flash memory is the prevalent memory technology in architecting modern storage systems. NAND flash-based solid-state drives (SSDs) offer various advantages over traditional hard disk drives, such as high performance and small form factor, while providing high device capacity (e.g., several tens of terabytes per SSD [1–4]). Although there exist several emerging non-volatile memory technologies (e.g., [5–8]), NAND flash memory is (expected to be) the predominant technology for storage systems to meet the increasing capacity demands of modern data-intensive applications.

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The efficiency of erase operation performed by NAND flash chips significantly affects SSD lifetime and I/O performance due to two key reasons. First, the high erase voltage physically damages flash cells. After experiencing a certain number of program and erase (P/E) cycles, a flash cell cannot reliably store data, thereby limiting SSD lifetime. Second, erase latency is significantly higher (e.g., 3.5 ms [9, 10]) than read and write latencies (e.g., 40 μ s and 350 μ s, respectively [9]) due to the orders-of-magnitude larger granularity of erase operations (i.e., a block) compared to read and program operations (i.e., a page). From the lifetime perspective, such a long latency leads an erase operation to have a much higher impact on cell endurance compared to a program operation that also applies a high voltage to target cells [11]. From the I/O performance perspective, an erase operation often delays I/O requests for a long time (e.g., several milliseconds), which significantly increases the SSD tail latency [12, 13].

An erase operation in modern SSDs often requires *multiple erase loops*, which further increases the performance/lifetime impact of erase operations. A flash cell becomes more difficult to erase as it experiences more P/E cycles [11, 14, 15], so an erase operation with the default erase voltage may fail to sufficiently erase every cell in the block, which we call an *erase failure*. To ensure data reliability, modern NAND flash memory commonly employs the ISPE (Incremental Step Pulse Erasure) scheme [16]; when an erase failure occurs, the ISPE scheme *retries* an erase loop with progressively higher voltages until it can successfully erase all the cells in the block. We find that an erase failure occurs quite frequently in modern SSDs with density-optimized NAND flash chips, which aggravates the wear-out and long tail latency problems. For example, our characterization study using 160 real 3D triple-level cell (TLC) NAND flash chips shows that every erase operation requires at least two erase loops (up to five loops) after the target block experiences 2K P/E cycles.

Even though a large body of prior work [12, 13, 16–31] has investigated various optimizations to mitigate the negative impact of erase operations, no work has yet investigated *how erase latency should be set* to fully exploit the potential of NAND flash memory. To be specific, most existing techniques use a *fixed* latency for *every* erase operation which is set by the manufacturers at design time based on the *worst-case* operating conditions. Like other memory technologies (e.g., DRAM), however, modern NAND flash memory also exhibits high process variation, which introduces significant differences in physical characteristics across flash cells [32–40]. For example, our real-device characterization study in §5 shows that it is possible to completely and reliably erase a majority of blocks (e.g., 79%-90%) with much lower latency (e.g., by 17%-29%) than the default erase latency under many operating conditions. This means that flash cells frequently suffer from more erase-induced damage than needed, which, in turn, degrades both SSD lifetime and I/O performance.

Our goal in this work is to improve the lifetime and performance of modern SSDs by mitigating the negative impact of erase operations. To this end, we propose AERO (*Adaptive ERase Operation*), a new block erasure mechanism for NAND flash memory which is redesigned based on thorough characterization of real 3D TLC NAND flash chips. **The key idea** of AERO is to dynamically adjust erase latency to be *just long enough* for reliably erasing the target cells, depending on the cells' current erase characteristics.

Our key idea is simple, but it is challenging to accurately predict the minimum latency for a block in modern NAND flash memory. Even though prior work [41, 42] has demonstrated a strong correlation between the erase latency and P/E-cycle count (PEC) of a block, PEC alone is insufficient for accurate prediction of the minimum erase latency due to high process variation across blocks. Our real-device characterization results from 160 real 3D TLC NAND flash chips (§5) show high erase-latency variations even across blocks with the same PEC, e.g., a standard deviation of 2.7 ms in the erase latency across blocks with 3.5K PEC.

To address the challenge, AERO introduces *Fail-bit-count-based Erase Latency Prediction (FELP)* that accurately predicts near-optimal latency for an erase loop based on the number of fail bits that occur in the previous loop. At the end of each erase loop, the ISPE scheme senses all the cells in the target block simultaneously and counts the number of *fail bits*, i.e., the number of bitlines that contain one or more insufficiently-erased cells, so as to perform another loop if the fail-bit count is larger than a threshold. We find that the fail-bit count can be an accurate proxy for the minimum latency of the *next* loop, as the more sufficiently the cells are erased, the lower the fail-bit count. We construct a model between the fail-bit count in an erase loop and the minimum erase latency required for the next loop, which enables AERO to safely reduce erase latency depending on the block's characteristics.

We further optimize AERO in two aspects. First, we enable AERO to also optimize single-loop erase operations by performing the first erase loop in two steps: (i) shallow erasure, which applies the erase voltage for a reduced amount of time (e.g., 1 ms), and (ii) remainder erasure, which completes erasing the block only with the necessary time determined based on the fail-bit count in the shallow erasure. Second, we leverage the high error-correction capability of modern SSDs to further reduce erase latency without compromising reliability. To cope with the low reliability of NAND flash memory, modern SSDs commonly adopt sophisticated error-correction codes (ECC), which leads to a large ECC-capability margin in many cases [14, 43]. Aggressive erase-latency reduction would inevitably cause insufficient erasure of some flash cells, potentially incurring more bit errors. To ensure data reliability, AERO carefully reduces erase latency for certain operating conditions we find via extensive real-device characterization.

AERO provides high lifetime and performance benefits with small overheads. AERO requires only small changes

to existing SSD firmware or controller but no modification to NAND flash chips, thereby achieving high applicability and practicality. Our real-device characterization and system-level evaluation with a state-of-the-art SSD simulator [44] show that AERO enhances SSD lifetime by 13% and reduces the 99.999th percentile read latency by 34% on average compared to state-of-the-art techniques [16, 29–31].

The key contributions of this work are as follows:

- To our knowledge, this work is the first to identify a new opportunity to safely reduce the erase latency without compromising reliability, which significantly mitigates the negative impact of erase operations.
- We introduce AERO, a new block erasure mechanism that dynamically adjusts the erase latency based on varying erase characteristics of the target flash blocks.
- We validate the feasibility and reliability of AERO via rigorous characterization of real 3D NAND flash chips.
- We evaluate the effectiveness of AERO using real-world workloads, showing large lifetime and performance benefits over state-of-the-art techniques [16, 29–31].

2 Background

We provide a brief background on NAND flash memory necessary to understand the rest of the paper.

2.1 NAND Flash Basics

NAND Flash Organization. Figure 1a depicts the hierarchical organization of 3D NAND flash memory. A set of flash cells form a *NAND string* (① in Figure 1a) that is connected to a bitline (BL), and NAND strings of different BLs compose a *block*. The control gate of each cell at the same vertical locations in a block is connected to a wordline (WL) in parallel (②), so all the cells at the same WL concurrently operate.

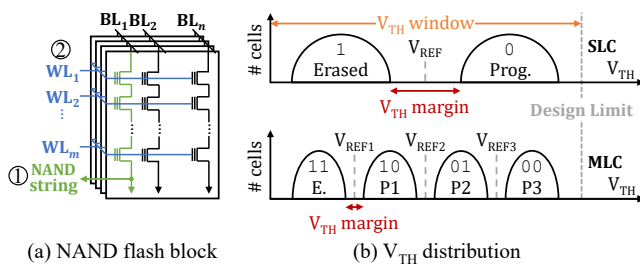


Figure 1. Overview of 3D NAND flash memory.

Data Storage Mechanism. A flash cell stores bit data as a function of its threshold voltage (V_{TH}) level that highly depends on the amount of charge in the cell’s charge trap; the more the electrons in the charge trap layer, the higher the cell’s V_{TH} level. To increase the storage density, a flash cell can store multiple bits by controlling its V_{TH} level more precisely, which is called *multi-level cell (MLC)* technology. Figure 1b compares the V_{TH} distribution in NAND flash memory when

it stores one-bit data per cell using two V_{TH} states (top) and when it stores two bits per cell using four V_{TH} states (bottom). **NAND Flash Operations.** There are three basic operations to enable access to NAND flash memory: (i) program, (ii) read, and (iii) erase operations. A program operation *increases* a target cell’s V_{TH} level by applying a high program voltage (e.g., > 20 V). A read operation determines a cell’s V_{TH} level (i.e., the stored data) by applying a read-reference voltage V_{REF} to the cell’s control gate; depending on its V_{TH} level, the cell operates as either an on-switch ($V_{REF} > V_{TH}$) or an off-switch ($V_{REF} < V_{TH}$). Since a number of flash cells (e.g., $> 2^{17}$) share a WL, NAND flash memory performs read and program operations at a *page* granularity (e.g., 16 KiB).

An erase operation *decreases* a target cell’s V_{TH} level by applying a high erase voltage V_{ERASE} (e.g., > 20 V) to the substrate. NAND flash memory performs an erase operation at *block* granularity, which causes erase latency τ_{BERS} to be significantly higher than program latency τ_{PROG} and read latency τ_R (e.g., $\tau_{BERS} = 3.5$ ms, $\tau_{PROG} = 400$ μ s, and $\tau_R = 40$ μ s [9]) but enables high erase bandwidth by concurrently erasing a large number of pages (e.g., more than 2K pages [9]) at once. As a program operation can *only* increase a cell’s V_{TH} level, a page needs to be erased first to program data, which is called the *erase-before-write* property.

2.2 NAND Flash Reliability

NAND flash memory is highly error-prone due to its imperfect physical characteristics. A flash cell leaks its charge (i.e., its V_{TH} level decreases) over time, which is called retention loss. Reading or programming cells slightly increases the V_{TH} levels of other cells in the same block (e.g., read/program disturbance [40, 45–50]). If a cell’s V_{TH} level shifts beyond the V_{REF} values (i.e., to adjacent V_{TH} ranges corresponding to different bit values), reading the cell causes a bit error.

There are two major factors that significantly increase the raw bit-error rate (RBER) of NAND flash memory. First, the high voltage used in program/erase operations physically damages flash cells, making the cells more error-prone. Second, the MLC technique increases RBER because packing more V_{TH} states within a limited V_{TH} window narrows the margin between adjacent V_{TH} states as shown in Figure 1b.

To ensure data reliability, it is common practice to employ strong error-correction codes (ECC). ECC stores redundant bits called ECC parity, which enables detecting and correcting raw bit errors in the codeword. To cope with the high RBER of modern NAND flash memory, modern SSDs use sophisticated ECC that can correct several tens of raw bit errors per 1-KiB data (e.g., low-density parity-check (LDPC) codes [51]).

3 Motivation

We discuss (i) the importance of optimizing erase operations and (ii) limitations of existing techniques. Table 5 in Appendix summarizes new terminologies defined in this work.

3.1 Negative Impact of Erase Operations

Erase operation significantly affects both SSD lifetime and I/O performance. First, an erase operation is the major source that limits SSD lifetime. The high voltage used in program and erase operations damages flash cells, which makes a block *unusable* after experiencing a certain number of program and erase (P/E) cycles (e.g., 5K P/E cycles [15]) because it can no longer meet the retention requirements for a non-volatile storage medium (e.g., 1-year retention at 30°C [52]). Program operation also applies a high voltage to flash cells, but prior work has experimentally demonstrated that erase operation accounts for 80% of cell stress due to the significantly longer erase latency compared to program latency [11].

Second, the long erase latency often increases the tail latency of user reads significantly, which is critical for data-center applications [12, 13]. In fact, the impact of erase operations on the *average* I/O performance is trivial in modern SSDs [13], since they occur much less frequently compared to read and program operations. For example, a block in modern 3D NAND flash memory consists of more than 2K pages [10, 53, 54], so one erase operation occurs after at least 2K page writes (and even more page reads potentially). However, an erase operation may block a page read for an order of magnitude longer time than read latency when it is no longer possible to delay the erase operation under heavy user writes.

3.2 Incremental Step Pulse Erasure (ISPE)

The lifetime and performance impact of erase operations increases even further in modern SSDs, as an erase operation often requires *multiple erase loops*. As a flash cell experiences more P/E cycles, the cell becomes more difficult to erase [11, 15, 55]. Consequently, an erase operation may fail to sufficiently erase all the cells in a target block, which we call an *erase failure*. To secure data reliability, it is common practice to employ the Incremental Step Pulse Erasure (ISPE) scheme [16, 56, 57] that retries to erase the block with an increased erase voltage until completely erasing the block.

Figure 2 shows how a NAND flash chip erases a block via multiple erase loops, each of which consists of two steps: (i) an erase-pulse (EP) step and (ii) a verify-read (VR) step. An EP step (e.g., ① in Figure 2) applies V_{ERASE} to the target block for a fixed amount of time τ_{EP} (e.g., 3.5 ms) that is predefined by NAND manufacturers at design time. After each EP step, a VR step (e.g., ②) checks if all the cells in the block are sufficiently erased. When EP(i) (the i -th EP step, $i \geq 1$) fails to do so, the ISPE scheme performs EP($i+1$) while progressively increasing V_{ERASE} by a fixed amount ΔV_{ISPE} . The ISPE scheme repeats this until completely erasing the block, leading to erasure latency τ_{BERS} as follows:

$$\tau_{\text{BERS}} = (\tau_{\text{EP}} + \tau_{\text{VR}}) \times N_{\text{ISPE}}, \quad (1)$$

where τ_{VR} is the VR latency ($\sim 100 \mu\text{s}$), and N_{ISPE} is the number of erase loops required to completely erase the block.

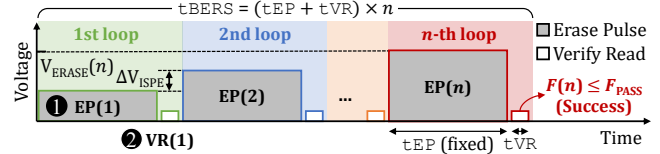


Figure 2. Incremental Step Pulse Erasure (ISPE) scheme.

Figures 3a and 3b describe how a NAND flash chip performs a VR step. It simultaneously senses (or activates) all the WLs in the block using a verify voltage V_{VERIFY} (① in Figure 3a) that is between the erase state and the first program state. If EP(i) fails, it means that the target block has some cells whose V_{TH} levels are still higher than V_{VERIFY} (② in Figure 3b). Such cells would operate as an off-switch during VR(i) (the i -th VR step) because $V_{\text{TH}} > V_{\text{VERIFY}}$, making the corresponding BLs read as ‘0’ bits, called *fail bits*. Then, VR(i) counts $F(i)$, the number of fail bits after EP(i), using *on-chip* counter logic [55, 58]. It judges that EP(i) succeeds only when $F(i)$ is lower than a predefined threshold F_{PASS} .

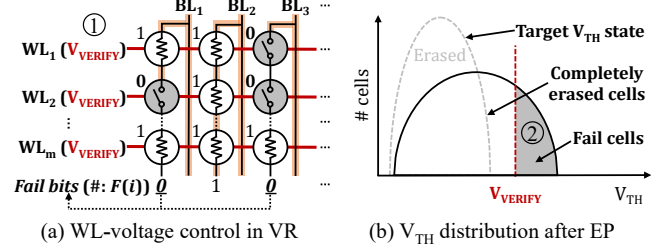


Figure 3. Details of verify-read (VR) step in ISPE scheme.

3.3 Limitations of Existing Techniques

A large body of prior work [12, 13, 16–31] has proposed various optimizations to mitigate the negative impact of erase operations, but *none* has yet investigated *how erase latency should be set* to fully exploit the potential of NAND flash memory. Like other memory technologies (e.g., DRAM), modern NAND flash memory also exhibits high process variation that leads to significantly different physical characteristics across flash cells. Prior works have demonstrated varying physical characteristics across WLs [11, 32, 34–36, 38, 45] and blocks [15, 37, 40, 45] in modern 3D NAND flash memory. Unfortunately, most existing techniques adopt the ISPE scheme that *always* uses the *same* erase-timing parameters (e.g., τ_{EP}) for *every* block. Doing so potentially causes unnecessary erase-induced cell stress, e.g., when a block can be erased more easily compared to the worst-case block.

Limitations of the ISPE Scheme. To understand the potential of optimizing erase latency, we characterize 160 real 3D 48-layer triple-level cell (TLC) NAND flash chips (see §5 for our characterization methodology). We measure $m_{\tau_{\text{BERS}}}$, the minimum τ_{BERS} to completely erase a block, for 19,200 blocks

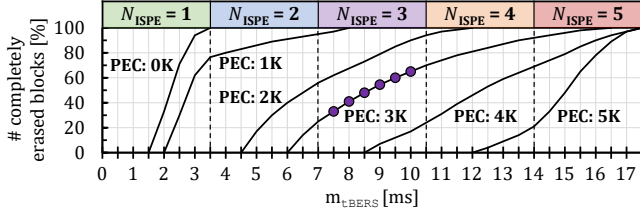


Figure 4. Erase latency variation under different P/E cycles.

randomly selected from the 160 chips. Figure 4 shows the cumulative distribution function (CDF) of $m_{t_{BERS}}(PEC)$ across the tested blocks under different P/E-cycle counts (PEC).

We make three key observations. First, an erase operation requires a number of erase loops in modern SSDs, significantly increasing not only erased-induced cell stress but also erase latency. While all the tested blocks can be erased via a single erase loop at zero PEC, every block requires multiple (2~4) loops after 2K PEC, causing 2~4× increases in t_{BERS} when using the ISPE scheme. Second, $m_{t_{BERS}}$ significantly varies even across blocks that require the same N_{ISPE} . This clearly shows that a significant number of blocks are *over erased* under the ISPE scheme, suffering from more erase-induced stress than necessary. If we used the ISPE scheme, 40% of the blocks at 3K PEC would require $N_{ISPE} = 3$ and thus experience the high erase voltage for 10.5 ms (purple dots in Figure 4), while their $m_{t_{BERS}}$ values significantly vary. Third, there is considerable erase latency variation when $N_{ISPE} = 1$. More than 70% (30%) of the blocks at zero PEC (1K PEC) require only 2.5 ms to be completely erased, which is 29% lower than t_{BERS} in the ISPE scheme (3.5 ms).

We draw two conclusions based on our observations. First, modern NAND flash memory suffers from unnecessarily longer erase latency (and thus more erase-induced cell stress) than actually needed. Second, if it is possible to accurately predict and use $m_{t_{BERS}}$ for a block, doing so would significantly mitigate the wear-out and long tail latency problems.

Limitations of the State-of-the-Art. To our knowledge, only a few prior works on 2D NAND flash memory [16, 29–31] propose to dynamically tune ISPE parameters. Figure 5 depicts the high-level key ideas of (a) DPES (*Dynamic Program and Erase Scaling*) [29–31] and (b) *i-ISPE* (*intelligent ISPE*) [16]. DPES reduces erase-induced cell stress by decreasing V_{ERASE} , which narrows the voltage window for the program states. However, it also requires longer program latency to provide the same level of reliability as the original ISPE scheme by forming much narrower program V_{TH} states. *i-ISPE* tracks each block’s N_{ISPE} to perform only the final erase loop $EP(N_{ISPE})$ while skipping the previous loops (e.g., $EP(1)$ and $EP(2)$ in Figure 5b), which potentially reduces not only the erase-induced stress but also t_{BERS} .

Unfortunately, it is challenging to adopt DPES and *i-ISPE* in modern 3D NAND flash memory due to two reasons. First, erasing 3D flash cells is more difficult compared to 2D cells

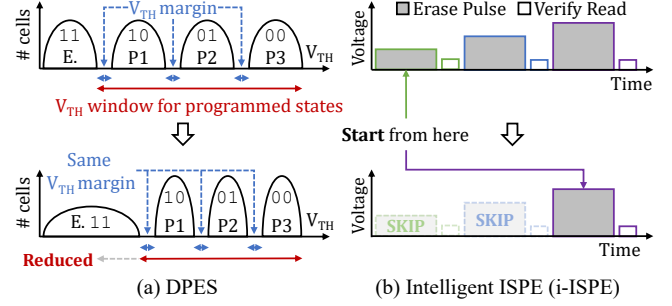


Figure 5. High-level overview of existing ISPE optimizations.

due to the differences in cell physics and erase mechanisms between them [11]. Second, 3D NAND flash memory exhibits higher process variation across cells compared to 2D NAND flash memory [34, 35, 46]. Such characteristics significantly limit the effectiveness of both DPES and *i-ISPE* in modern NAND flash memory; (i) for DPES, it becomes more challenging to secure the voltage window wide enough for the program states; (ii) for *i-ISPE*, skipping the first erase loops incurs an erase failure more likely, which, in turn, rather requires the next erase loop with a higher V_{ERASE} (i.e., more erase-induced stress) compared to the conventional ISPE scheme. We quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of DPES and *i-ISPE* in modern SSDs in §7.

4 AERO: Adaptive Erase Operation

In this work, we propose AERO (*Adaptive ERase Operation*) that enhances SSD lifetime and improves I/O performance by applying *near-optimal* erase latency for each target block. **The key idea** of AERO is simple. Unlike the ISPE scheme that performs all erase-pulse (EP) steps with fixed latency t_{EP} for every block, AERO dynamically adjusts t_{EP} to be just long enough for complete erasure of a target block. AERO uses the same $V_{ERASE}(i)$ for each $EP(i)$ as the ISPE scheme, so $EP(i)$ in AERO may also fail to completely erase the block even without t_{EP} reduction. In such a case, AERO also performs the next $EP(i+1)$ while trying to reduce t_{EP} if possible, i.e., when it expects $EP(i+1)$ to completely erase the block with reduced t_{EP} . This means that AERO reduces t_{EP} in the *final* erase loop (i.e., $EP(N_{ISPE})$) that completely erases the block, thereby reducing the total erase latency t_{BERS} as follows:

$$t_{BERS} = (t_{EP} + t_{VR}) \times N_{ISPE} - \Delta t_{EP}, \quad (2)$$

where Δt_{EP} is the amount of reduction in t_{EP} in $EP(N_{ISPE})$.

It would be ideal to dynamically optimize both V_{ERASE} and t_{EP} at the same time, but we decide to keep using the same V_{ERASE} values in the ISPE scheme. This is because it is quite challenging to accurately predict a near-optimal V_{ERASE} for a block due to the high process variation in 3D NAND flash memory. Inaccurate V_{ERASE} adjustment can cause insufficient or excessive erasure of flash cells as discussed in §3.3, which can rather degrade SSD lifetime and I/O performance. We

leave accurate predictions and simultaneous optimizations of both V_{ERASE} and τ_{EP} to future work.

Fail-bit-count-based Erase Latency Prediction (FELP).

A key challenge in AERO is to accurately identify $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i)$ for a block, i.e., the minimum value of τ_{EP} in each EP step (i.e., EP(i)) just long enough to fully erase all the cells in the block. Even though prior work [41, 42] has experimentally demonstrated a strong correlation between a block's PEC and erase latency, i.e., the higher the block's PEC, the longer the latency for erasing the block [31], PEC alone is insufficient for accurate prediction of near-optimal τ_{EP} due to high process variation in modern NAND flash memory. As shown in Figure 4, $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(N_{\text{ISPE}})$ significantly varies even across blocks at the same PEC. This suggests that AERO needs a way more effective metric than PEC to figure out more precise erase characteristics (i.e., $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i)$) for individual flash blocks.

AERO addresses the challenge via *Fail-bit-count-based Erase Latency Prediction (FELP)* that predicts $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i+1)$ based on $F(i)$, the number of fail bits incurred by the previous EP(i). Our key intuition is that $F(i)$ can likely be an *accurate proxy* of $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i+1)$ because the more sufficiently the cells are erased by an EP step, the lower the fail-bit count. Commodity NAND flash chips already calculate $F(i)$ for the ISPE scheme as explained in §3.2, so the implementation overhead of FELP is trivial (see §6 for more detailed overhead analysis).

Figure 6a depicts how AERO safely reduces τ_{EP} based on FELP. Like the ISPE scheme, AERO also performs a verify-read step VR(i) after each EP(i), which results in $F(i)$. If $F(i)$ is higher than a threshold F_{HIGH} ($\gg F_{\text{PASS}}$), AERO uses the default τ_{EP} for the next EP($i+1$) considering that there is no room for τ_{EP} reduction (e.g., ① until EP($N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1$) in Figure 6a). When $F_{\text{PASS}} < F(i) \leq F_{\text{HIGH}}$, AERO ② reduces τ_{EP} , i.e., it predicts and uses $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i+1)$ for EP($i+1$), such that the lower the value of $F(i)$, the lower the value of $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i+1)$. Note that AERO provides effectively the same reliability as the ISPE scheme as long as $F(N_{\text{ISPE}}) \leq F_{\text{PASS}}$ (③).

Shallow Erasure. As FELP needs $F(i)$ to predict $m_{\tau_{\text{EP}}}(i+1)$, it is difficult for AERO to reduce τ_{EP} for the *first* EP step, i.e., EP(1). Optimizing EP(1) is also important because a

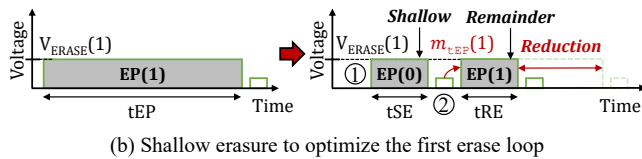
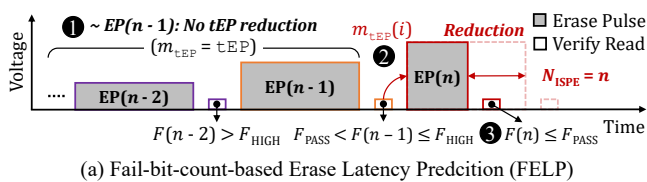


Figure 6. Erase latency reduction in AERO.

block can be completely erased via a single erase loop under many operating conditions. As shown in Figure 4, 76.5% of the tested blocks require only EP(1) for complete erasure at 1K PEC (i.e., 20% of the maximum PEC).

We enable AERO to optimize EP(1) by performing it in two steps. Figure 6b describes how AERO reduces the effective τ_{EP} for a single-loop erase operation. Instead of using the default τ_{EP} (e.g., 3.5 ms) for EP(1), AERO first performs a *short EP step* with the default $V_{\text{ERASE}}(1)$, which we call *shallow erasure*, for a reduced amount of time τ_{SE} (e.g., ① in Figure 6b). It then ② performs an additional VR step to obtain the number of fail bits after the shallow erasure (we denote shallow erasure as the 0 -th erase loop in the rest of this paper, i.e., EP(0), VR(0), and $F(0)$ refer to the erase-pulse step, verify-read step, and fail-bit count in shallow erasure, respectively). Finally, AERO performs *remainder erasure* that also applies the default $V_{\text{ERASE}}(1)$ but dynamically adjusts the latency τ_{RE} (e.g., $0 \leq \tau_{\text{RE}} \leq 2.5$ ms) based on $F(0)$.

Leveraging ECC-Capability Margin. Prior work [32, 43] has demonstrated that a large ECC-capability margin¹ exists in modern SSDs due to two reasons. First, modern SSDs commonly employ strong ECC to cope with the high RBER of NAND flash memory in the worst-case operating conditions (e.g., 1-year retention time at 5K PEC). Second, it is common practice to employ *read-retry* in modern SSDs [43] to ensure data reliability. When a read page's RBER exceeds the ECC capability, read-retry *repeats* reading of the page with adjusted V_{REF} until it sufficiently lowers RBER, thereby leading to a large ECC-capability margin.

AERO leverages the large ECC-capability margin to reduce τ_{EP} *more aggressively* by increasing the pass threshold F_{PASS} in the ISPE scheme. Doing so would likely cause incomplete erasure of a target block, which introduces additional bit errors. However, we hypothesize that AERO can still ensure data reliability in many cases due to three key reasons. First, a block's reliability degrades as it experiences P/E cycling, so an even larger ECC-capability margin to tolerate the additional errors exists at low PEC. Second, aggressive τ_{EP} reduction mitigates erase-induced cell stress, which can compensate for the additional errors as a long-term impact. Third, a majority of additional fail cells due to increased F_{PASS} would be programmed to higher V_{TH} states under the data randomization technique [59, 60], e.g., 87.5% in TLC NAND flash memory. It means that such fail cells are unlikely to cause bit error, significantly decreasing the reliability impact of aggressive τ_{EP} reduction. To maximize AERO's benefits without compromising data reliability, we enhance FELP to also consider the expected ECC-capability margin for a target block by keeping the number of additional errors caused by aggressive τ_{EP} reduction below the current ECC-capability.

¹The difference between the maximum number of bit errors per codeword that given ECC can correct and the number of bit errors in a codeword.

5 Device Characterization Study

To validate our key ideas and hypothesis in §4, we conduct an extensive real-device characterization study.

5.1 Characterization Methodology

Infrastructure. We use an FPGA-based testing platform with a custom flash controller and temperature controller. The flash controller can perform not only basic NAND-flash commands (i.e., for read, program, and erase operations) but also low-level test commands such as GET/SET FEATURE commands [61]. This feature allows us to modify τ_{EP} of each EP(i) at a granularity of 0.5 ms and obtain $F(i)$ from the chip after VR(i). The temperature controller can maintain the operating temperature of the tested chips within $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ of the target temperature, thus minimizing unintended RBER variations potentially caused due to unstable temperature.

Methodology. We characterize 160 real 48-layer 3D TLC NAND flash chips from Samsung [62] in which the default $\tau_{EP} = 3.5$ ms. To minimize the potential distortions in our results, for each test scenario, we evenly select 120 blocks from each chip at different physical locations and test all WLs in each selected block. We test a total of 3,686,400 WLs (11,059,200 pages) to obtain statistically significant results.

We test the chips while varying PEC and retention time. Unless specified otherwise, we increase a block's PEC by programming every page in the block using a random pattern and erasing the block with the default τ_{EP} in every erase loop. We follow the JEDEC industry standard [63] for an accelerated lifetime test to analyze the reliability under the worst-case operating conditions. For example, to emulate a 1-year retention time at 30°C , we bake the chips at 85°C for 13 hours following the Arrhenius' law [64].

To identify a block's $m_{t_{BERS}}$ (i.e., N_{ISPE} and $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$), we erase the block using a *modified* ISPE scheme (m-ISPE) that we design by modifying the original ISPE scheme in two aspects. First, we reduce the fixed latency τ_{EP} for each EP(i) from 3.5 ms to 0.5 ms, i.e., we split an erase loop in the ISPE scheme into seven shorter loops. Second, we increase V_{ERASE} for every *seven* erase loops (not for every loop) to effectively emulate the ISPE scheme. If a block requires n loops under m-ISPE, we estimate $N_{ISPE} = \lceil n/7 \rceil$ and $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE}) = 0.5 \times (1 + ((n-1) \bmod 7))$ of the block under the ISPE scheme. Even though the m-ISPE scheme requires six additional ramping-up/down steps to charge/discharge voltage and VR steps for each erase loop compared to the original ISPE scheme, its reliability impact is negligible; for our 160 tested chips, the m-ISPE scheme hardly increases the average RBER (by less than 1%) compared to the original ISPE scheme, under 1-year retention time at 5K PEC.

5.2 Fail-Bit Count vs Near-Optimal Erase Latency

To validate the feasibility of FELP, we analyze the relationship between the minimum erase latency and fail-bit count.

We measure each block's N_{ISPE} and $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ while tracking $F(i)$ in every EP(i) under the m-ISPE scheme. Figure 7 depicts the maximum value of $F(N_{ISPE})$ within the blocks that have the same $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$, when we progressively increase τ_{EP} by 0.5 ms in the final EP step (i.e., EP(N_{ISPE})).

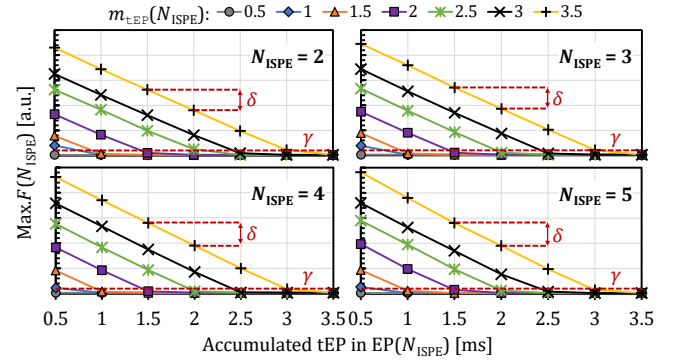


Figure 7. Impact of erase latency on the fail-bit count.

We make two key observations. First, the fail-bit count *almost linearly* decreases as τ_{EP} increases. While the negative correlation between $F(i)$ and τ_{EP} is expected in §4, the correlation is significantly high and consistent; increasing τ_{EP} by 0.5 ms decreases $F(N_{ISPE})$ by almost the same amount δ ($\approx 5,000$) in all tested blocks with different N_{ISPE} and $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ values. This suggests that (i) erase latency has a linear impact on the degree of erasure under the same erase voltage, and (ii) NAND manufacturers carefully set V_{ERASE} values (i.e., $V_{ERASE}(i)$ and ΔV_{ISPE}) in the ISPE scheme to avoid excessive increases in erase-induced cell stress and erase latency. Second, when $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE}) = 0.5$ ms, $F(N_{ISPE})$ is quite consistent at a certain value γ ($\ll \delta$) in all test scenarios. The result suggests that the lower the cell's V_{TH} level, the more difficult it becomes to further reduce the V_{TH} level.

Our observations highlight the high potential of FELP. To confirm this, we analyze how a block's $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ varies depending on its $F(N_{ISPE} - 1)$. Figure 8 depicts the probability of $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ at different N_{ISPE} across the fail-bit ranges that we set based on γ and δ from Figure 7. A box at (x, y) in Figure 8 represents the probability (in grayscale) that a block requires $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE}) = y$ ms for complete erasure when its $F(N_{ISPE} - 1)$ belongs to x -th fail-bit range. We also plot the fraction of blocks that belong to the x -th fail-bit range (top). Note that for the same N_{ISPE} , the sum of all fractions (top) is 100%, and the sum of all probabilities at the same x -th fail-bit range (bottom) is 100%.

We make two key observations. First, FELP is highly effective at predicting $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$. A majority of blocks (e.g., $\geq 66\%$ in $N_{ISPE} = 4$) in the same fail-bit range require the same $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ under all different N_{ISPE} cases. Even though every fail-bit range contains some blocks whose $m_{t_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ is lower compared to the majority of blocks, the

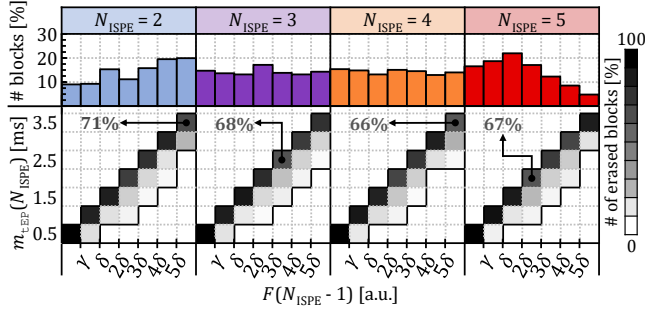


Figure 8. Erase-pulse latency depending on the fail-bit count.

fraction is quite low (e.g., $< 34\%$ in $N_{\text{ISPE}} = 4$) in all the fail-bit ranges and N_{ISPE} cases. Second, $F(N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1)$ is distributed across blocks quite evenly in all N_{ISPE} cases. This highlights again that $F(N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1)$ is an accurate proxy of $m_{\text{tEP}}(N_{\text{ISPE}})$, given that $m_{\text{tEP}}(N_{\text{ISPE}})$ also significantly varies across blocks in a wide range as shown in Figure 4.

Based on our observations, we draw two conclusions. First, AERO can accurately predict the minimum erase latency using FELP, even for blocks that have varying erase characteristics. Second, the implementation of FELP requires only identifying two values for fail-bit ranges, e.g., γ and δ in Figures 7 and 8, which can be done using our characterization methodology.

5.3 Shallow Erasure: Feasibility & Parameter Setting

We validate the feasibility of shallow erasure and explore a good latency value. Figure 9 shows the distribution of $F(0)$ across blocks under different $t_{\text{SE}} = \{0.5 \text{ ms}, 1 \text{ ms}, 1.5 \text{ ms}, 2 \text{ ms}\}$ and $\text{PEC} = \{0.1\text{K}, 0.5\text{K}\}$. We confirm that all the tested blocks in the n -th fail-bit range can be completely erased via subsequent remainder erasure with $t_{\text{RE}} = 0.5 \times n \text{ ms}$.

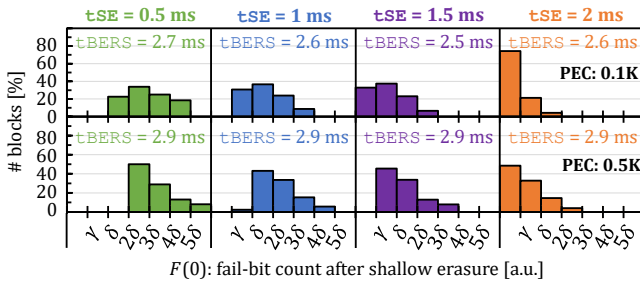


Figure 9. Fail-bit distribution under varying t_{SE} .

We make three key observations from Figure 9. First, shallow erasure enables AERO to reduce t_{EP} for EP(1). A large fraction of blocks can be completely erased with lower latency than the default t_{EP} ($\{80\%, 85\%, 86\%, 88\%$ for $t_{\text{SE}} = \{0.5 \text{ ms}, 1 \text{ ms}, 1.5 \text{ ms}, 2 \text{ ms}\}$). Second, t_{SE} does not significantly affect the average t_{BERS} . We annotate the average t_{BERS} for each t_{SE} case in Figure 9, which shows their small variation ($< 10\%$). Third, with a low probability, shallow erasure may cause a block to be over-erased. For

example, at 0.5K PEC, 2% blocks can be erased with $t_{\text{BERS}} = 2 \text{ ms}$ when $t_{\text{SE}} = 1 \text{ ms}$ (the second fail-bit range), while there exist no such blocks in the other t_{SE} cases.

Based on our observations, we conclude that AERO can significantly optimize not only multi-loop erase operations but also single-loop erase operations using shallow erasure. For our tested chips, we decide to set $t_{\text{SE}} = 1 \text{ ms}$ to minimize the probability of an over-erased block, which reduces both erased-induced stress for 85% of blocks and the average erase latency by 21% for single-loop erase operations.

5.4 Reliability Margin for Aggressive tEP Reduction

To identify the ECC-capability margin for more aggressive t_{EP} reduction, we analyze the reliability impact of insufficient erasure. We measure M_{RBBER} of each block, i.e., the maximum RBBER within the pages in the block under 1-year retention time at 30°C , when we erase the block in two different ways. First, we *completely* erase the block by performing N_{ISPE} erase loops with $m_{\text{tEP}}(N_{\text{ISPE}})$. Second, we *insufficiently* erase the block by performing only $(N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1)$ erase loops, which results in $F_{\text{PASS}} < F(N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1) \leq F_{\text{HIGH}}$. Figure 10 depicts the maximum value of M_{RBBER} within the tested blocks when we program the blocks (a) after complete erasure and (b) after insufficient erasure. For Figure 10b, we group the tested blocks depending on their N_{ISPE} and fail-bit range. We also plot (i) the *ECC capability* at 72 bits per 1 KiB and (ii) the *RBBER requirement* at 63 bits per 1 KiB to reflect sampling errors (i.e., a block is considered unusable if its $M_{\text{RBBER}} > 63$ to incorporate a safety margin into the ECC capability).

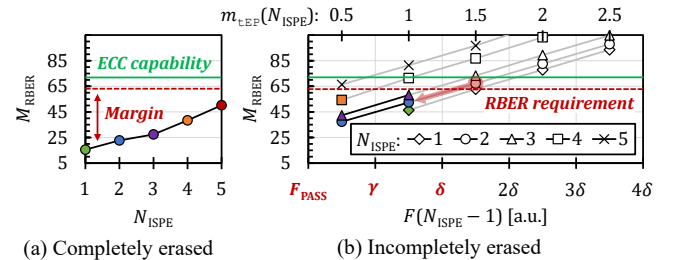


Figure 10. Reliability margin depending on erase status.

We make two key observations. First, we observe a large reliability margin (i.e., *RBBER requirement* - M_{RBBER}) that can potentially be used to further reduce t_{EP} especially in the early lifetime stage of blocks. As shown in Figure 10a, when a block is completely erased, there always exists a positive reliability margin for all N_{ISPE} values up to 47 bit errors ($N_{\text{ISPE}} = 1$). Second, it is possible to further reduce t_{EP} without compromising reliability in many operating conditions. As shown in Figure 10b, using an insufficiently-erased block still meets the RBBER requirement (i.e., $M_{\text{RBBER}} < 63$) if either of the following two conditions is met: [C1: $N_{\text{ISPE}} \leq 3$ and $F(N_{\text{ISPE}} - 1) < \delta$] and [C2: $N_{\text{ISPE}} = 4$ and $F(3) < \gamma$]. This means that we can skip the final erase loop in such cases,

thereby further increasing the amount of τ_{EP} reduction even higher than the default τ_{EP} in the ISPE scheme, i.e., $\Delta\tau_{EP}$ can be larger than τ_{EP} in (2). Note that AERO can further reduce $m_{\tau_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ even if neither of [C1] and [C2] is met because increasing τ_{EP} by 0.5 ms in EP(i) decreases $F(i)$ by δ as demonstrated in §5.2. For example, a block requires $m_{\tau_{EP}}(N_{ISPE}) = 1.5$ ms for complete erasure when $N_{ISPE} = 3$ and $\delta < F(2) \leq 2\delta$, but using $\tau_{EP} = 0.5$ ms in EP(3) can still meet the RBER requirement since doing so would decrease M_{RBER} below 63 (see the arrow in Figure 10 b).

We conclude that AERO can significantly mitigate the negative impact of erase operations by leveraging not only the high process variation but also the large ECC-capability margin present in modern SSDs. Table 1 shows the final $m_{\tau_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ model that we construct; each cell's value ' t_1 / t_2 ' indicates $m_{\tau_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ when AERO leverages only the process variation (t_1) and when also leveraging the ECC-capability margin (t_2).

Table 1. Final model of $m_{\tau_{EP}}(N_{ISPE})$ based on $F(N_{ISPE} - 1)$.

N_{ISPE}	$F(N_{ISPE} - 1)$							
	$\leq \gamma$	$\leq \delta$	$\leq 2\delta$	$\leq 3\delta$	$\leq 4\delta$	$\leq 5\delta$	$\leq 6\delta$	$\leq 7\delta$
1	0.5/0	1/0	1.5/0.5	2/1	2.5/1.5	2.5/2	2.5/2.5	2.5/2.5
2	0.5/0	1/0	1.5/0.5	2/1	2.5/1.5	3/2	3.5/2.5	3.5/3
3	0.5/0	1/0	1.5/0.5	2/1	2.5/1.5	3/2	3.5/2.5	3.5/3
4	0.5/0	1/0.5	1.5/1	2/1.5	2.5/2	3/2.5	3.5/3	3.5/3.5
5	0.5/0.5	1/1	1.5/1.5	2/2	2.5/2.5	3/3	3.5/3.5	3.5/3.5

5.5 Applicability of AERO for Other Types of Chips

We expect that the key ideas of AERO are generally applicable to a wide range of NAND flash chips other than the chips used for our characterization study due to three reasons. First, our chips well represent modern 3D NAND flash memory because most commercial chips including SMARt/TCAT/BiCS have similar structures and cell types, e.g., vertical channel structures, gate-all-around cell transistors, and charge-trap type flash cells [55, 57, 65], sharing key device characteristics like operation mechanisms and reliability characteristics. Second, the erase mechanism of NAND flash memory has not changed significantly for more than a decade. For example, the ISPE scheme has been used since 2D SLC NAND flash memory [55, 57]. Third, AERO does *not* rely on chip-specific behaviors but leverages inherent erase characteristics, e.g., the more completely the cells within a block are erased, the lower the fail-bit count of the block.

To support our hypothesis, we characterize two additional types of NAND flash chips, (i) 2x-nm 2D TLC NAND flash chips [66] and (ii) 48-layer 3D MLC NAND flash chips [67] from Samsung. We use the same methodology as other device characterizations. Figure 11 shows (a) the values of δ and γ for all τ_{EP} and N_{ISPE} cases (box plot) and (b) the maximum value of M_{RBER} within the tested block after insufficient erasure.

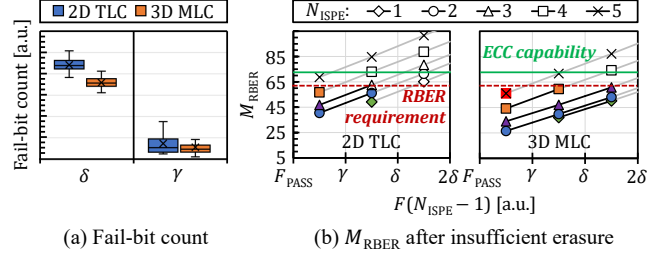


Figure 11. Erase characteristics of other chip types.

We make two key observations. First, although the exact values of δ and γ slightly vary depending on the chip type, they are quite consistent within the same type of chips across all tested cases as shown in Figure 11a. This clearly shows that the strong linear relationship between the fail-bit count and accumulate τ_{EP} also holds in the chips additionally tested. Second, as shown in Figure 11b, the reliability impacts of insufficient erasure in the 2D TLC and 3D MLC chips exhibit highly similar trends to those in the 3D TLC chips (cf. Figure 10b),² suggesting the high feasibility of aggressive τ_{EP} reduction also in the two types of chips. We conclude that AERO can be used for a wide range of chips with the same methodology we use to construct the τ_{EP} model for our tested chips (Table 1).

6 Design and Implementation

We design AEROFTL, an AERO-enabled flash translation layer (FTL), by extending the conventional page-level FTL [70] with two key data structures: (i) *Erase-timing Parameter Table (EPT)* and (ii) *Shallow Erasure Flags (SEF)*. The EPT is a simple table that stores $m_{\tau_{EP}}(i)$ for each EP(i) depending on $F(i - 1)$, which can be built via offline profiling of target chips as in §5 (Table 1). The SEF is a bitmap that keeps track of whether a block needs shallow erasure or not. Every bit in the SEF is initially set to '0', which is translated to TRUE. Doing so enables AEROFTL to always perform shallow erasure for a fresh block that has experienced no P/E cycle.

²The results shown in Figures 10b and 11b, which are remarkably similar, might seem counter-intuitive because it is well known that 3D NAND flash memory exhibits better reliability compared to 2D NAND flash memory [33]. Nevertheless, commodity 3D NAND flash chips provide a similar level of reliability to 2D chips because the better reliability characteristics of 3D NAND flash memory are used to avoid write-performance degradation over 2D NAND flash memory. Since its first development, a majority of 3D NAND flash memory has been designed to contain two planes [68], whereas state-of-the-art 2D chips consist of four planes [69]. The decrease in the number of planes per chip would inevitably limit the bandwidth of multi-plane writes in 3D NAND flash chips to be around twice lower compared to 2D chips if the same program-timing parameters were used (e.g., $\tau_{PROG} \approx 1.2$ ms in 2D NAND flash memory [69]). To avoid this, manufacturers have reduced the program latency of 3D NAND flash memory by trading its better reliability, which enables sustaining (or even improving) the write bandwidth of 3D chips without compromising reliability compared to 2D chips.

Figure 12 illustrates how AEROFTL dynamically adjusts erase latency. For erasing a block whose index (or ID) is k , it first looks up the corresponding (k -th) bit in the SEF (1 in Figure 12). If the flag bit is TRUE, AEROFTL (2) performs shallow erasure by changing the target chip's τ_{EP} to τ_{SE} with a SET FEATURE command. Then it (3) queries the EPT with $F(0)$ that can be obtained via a GET FEATURE command. Based on the query result, AEROFTL (4) sets the chip's τ_{EP} and performs remainder erasure. If the remainder erasure *cannot* reduce the effective latency of the first erase loop, AEROFTL (5) sets the corresponding bit in the SEF to '1' that is translated to 'FALSE'. Doing so allows AEROFTL to skip shallow erasure for the block in future, but directly performs EP(1) with the default τ_{EP} , thereby avoiding the unnecessary VR(0). The remaining process is straightforward. If an erase loop fails, AEROFTL performs the next loop while adjusting the chip's τ_{EP} based on the value obtained from the EPT.

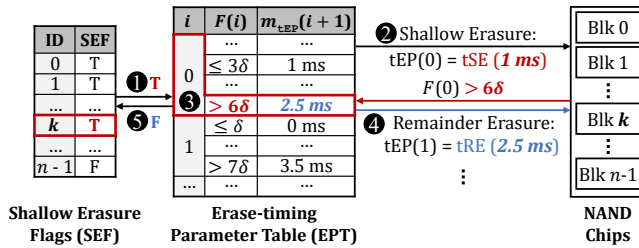


Figure 12. Operational overview of AEROFTL.

Misprediction Handling. While *not* observed in our real-device characterization, it is possible that AERO fails to completely erase outlier blocks (which could potentially be missed in the set of blocks we experimentally test) with reduced latency. AEROFTL can easily handle such a misprediction because it always checks $F(N_{ISPE})$ anyways to verify whether a block is completely erased. If AEROFTL detects a misprediction, it repeats an additional EP step with appropriate V_{ERASE} and τ_{EP} until completely erasing the block; it uses the same V_{ERASE} if the accumulated latency is lower than the default τ_{BERS} while increasing V_{ERASE} otherwise. Despite AERO's low misprediction rate, we evaluate its potential impact in §7. **Impact on ECC-Decoding Latency.** Aggressive τ_{EP} reduction in AERO can potentially increase ECC-decoding latency (e.g., in LDPC [51]), but its performance impact is limited due to two reasons. First, it is common practice to limit the number of iterations for hard-decision ECC decoding [71, 72] so that ECC-decoding latency (e.g., 8 μ s [73]) can be hidden by page sensing and data transfer. Second, the RBER requirement conservatively set in AERO (e.g., 63 bits per 1 KiB) ensures a low hard-decision failure rate (e.g., $< 10^{-5}$ [73]), hardly causing additional soft-decision LDPC decoding. **Multi-Plane Operations.** Multi-plane operation is a widely used feature in modern NAND flash-based SSDs to improve I/O performance [55, 74, 75]. A typical NAND flash chip

consists of multiple (e.g., 2 or 4) *planes*, each of which has its own flash cell array and page buffer. Planes in the same chips can operate concurrently if certain conditions are met, e.g., only the same type of NAND flash operations (i.e., read, program, or erase operations) can be performed in parallel across planes in a chip because they share part of peripheral circuitry. Multi-plane operation can increase chip throughput linearly with the number of planes per chip, thereby significantly improving SSD-internal parallelism and I/O performance.

AERO can work with multi-plane erase operations due to two reasons. First, a NAND flash chip can individually set τ_{EP} for each target block of a multi-plane erase operation. Second, as soon as a target block is completely erased, it is possible to *inhibit* the block from being further erased by the subsequent erase loops during a multi-plane erase operation. Although the worst block (which requires the longest erase latency) in target planes determines the latency of a multi-plane erase operation, AERO can still sustain lifetime benefit and reduce tail latency by erasing each block in target planes only with necessary loops and times.

Implementation Overhead. AEROFTL requires only two small changes to conventional SSDs. First, AEROFTL can use GET/SET FEATURE commands to obtain $F(i)$ and adjust τ_{EP} for each EP(i), respectively, thereby requiring no change to commodity NAND flash chips. Second, the storage overhead for the EPT and SEF is trivial. The EPT needs to keep $T \times L$ entries, where T and L indicate the number of possible τ_{EP} values and the maximum number of erase loops, respectively. In our current design, the EPT has 35 entries ($T = 7$ and $L = 5$), which requires only 140 bytes even when using a 32-bit value per entry. The SEF needs to keep 1-bit information for each block. In our tested chips, the block size is around 10 MB, so the SEF's storage overhead is $1.25 \times 10^{-6}\%$ ($= 1/(8 \times 10^7)$) of SSD capacity, e.g., 12.5 KB for a 1-TB SSD. Note that modern SSDs contain several GB of internal DRAM [76], so the storage overhead is negligible.

7 Evaluation

We evaluate the effectiveness of AERO at improving the lifetime and performance of modern NAND flash-based SSDs.

7.1 Evaluation Methodology

We evaluate AERO in two ways. First, we characterize 160 real 3D TLC NAND flash chips to assess the lifetime enhancement of AERO. Unless specified otherwise, we follow the real-device characterization methodology explained in §5.1. Second, we evaluate the impact of AERO on I/O performance using MQSim [44], a state-of-the-art SSD simulator.

We compare five different erase schemes: (i) Baseline, (ii) i-ISPE, (iii) DPES, (iv) AERO_{CONS}, and (v) AERO. Baseline is the conventional ISPE scheme explained in §3.2. i-ISPE is the intelligent ISPE scheme [16] explained in §3.3, which directly performs EP(n) while skipping the previous EP steps

if the block has been completely erased by $EP(n)$ in the most-recent erase operation. DPES (explained in §3.3) mitigates erase stress by reducing erase voltage V_{ERASE} by 8–10% at a cost of 10–30% increase in write latency τ_{PROG} [31]. Since DPES is only applicable until 3K PEC in our tested chips (i.e., no matter how much τ_{PROG} increases, reducing V_{ERASE} can no longer meet the reliability requirements), we use the same V_{ERASE} and τ_{PROG} values as in Baseline after 3K PEC. AERO_{CONS} and AERO dynamically adjust τ_{EP} for each $EP(i)$ at a granularity of 0.5 ms based on $F(i-1)$. AERO_{CONS} does not exploit the ECC-capability margin, i.e., it is more *conservative* in τ_{EP} reduction compared to AERO that adopts all optimizations in §4.

Simulation Methodology. We extend MQSim in two aspects to model the behavior of modern SSDs more faithfully. First, we modify the NAND flash model of MQSim to emulate the erase characteristics of our 160 tested chips. To this end, during our real-device characterization study in §5, we keep track of erase-related metadata such as the minimum erase latency, fail-bit count, and PEC for every tested block. For simulation, we then randomly select tested blocks and assign their metadata to each of the simulated blocks in MQSim. Because MQSim already tracks PEC, a simulated block can accurately emulate the erase characteristics of the corresponding real block at a given PEC by simply looking up the metadata. Second, we optimize the request scheduling algorithm of MQSim to service user I/O requests with a higher priority over SSD-internal read/write/erase operations, e.g., suspending an ongoing erase operation [13]. Table 2 summarizes the configurations of the simulated SSDs. We configure the architecture and timing parameters of simulated SSDs to be close to commodity high-end SSDs (e.g., [1]).

Table 2. Configurations of simulated SSDs.

SSD	Capacity: 1024 GB	Interface: PCIe 4.0 (4 lanes)
	GC policy: greedy [77]	Overprovisioning ratio: 20%
	# of channels: 8	# of chips per channel: 2
NAND Flash Chip	# of planes per chip: 4	# of blocks per plane: 497
	# of pages per block: 2,112	Page size: 16 KB
	MLC technology: TLC	τ_R : 40 μ s [9]
	τ_{EP} (AERO): 0.5 ms – 3.5 ms	τ_{EP} : 3.5 ms [9]
	τ_{SE} (AERO): 1 ms	τ_{PROG} : 350 μ s [9]
	τ_{PROG} : 385 μ s (DPES, 0.5K PEC), 455 μ s (DPES, 2.5K PEC)	

For our performance evaluation, we study eleven workloads selected from two benchmark suits, Alibaba Cloud Traces [78] and Microsoft Research Cambridge (MSRC) Traces [79], which are collected from real datacenter and enterprise servers. For MSRC traces, we reduce the inter-request arrival time by 10 \times , as similarly done in a large body of prior work to evaluate more realistic workloads [11, 29–31, 37, 44, 80–84]. Table 3 summarizes the I/O characteristics of the workloads used for our evaluation.

Table 3. I/O characteristics of evaluated workloads.

Benchmark	Trace	Abbr.	Read Ratio	Avg. Req. Size	Avg. Inter Req. Arrival Time
Alibaba Cloud [78]	ali_32	ali.A	7%	54 KB	16.3 ms
	ali_3	ali.B	52%	26 KB	111.8 ms
	ali_12	ali.C	69%	38 KB	57.9 ms
	ali_121	ali.D	78%	18 KB	13.8 ms
	ali_124	ali.E	95%	36 KB	5.1 ms
MSR Cambridge [79]	rsrch_0	rsrch	9%	9 KB	421.9 ms
	stg_0	stg	15%	12 KB	297.8 ms
	hm_0	hm	36%	8 KB	151.5 ms
	prxy_1	prxy	65%	13 KB	3.6 ms
	proj_2	proj	88%	42 KB	20.6 ms
	usr_1	usr	91%	49 KB	13.4 ms

7.2 Impact on SSD Lifetime

To evaluate the lifetime enhancement of AERO, we measure $M_{RBER}(PEC)$ for each real tested block, the maximum RBER within the pages in the block, while varying PEC under 1-year retention at 30°C. We construct five sets of 120 blocks randomly selected from 160 real 3D NAND flash chips and test each set while increasing PEC using one of the five erase schemes. Figure 13 depicts the average M_{RBER} across the tested blocks under different PEC.

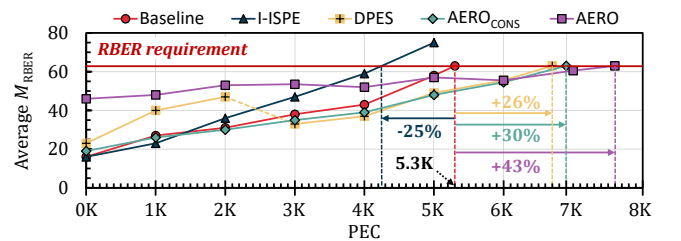


Figure 13. Comparison of SSD lifetime and reliability.

We make four key observations. First, both AERO and AERO_{CONS} significantly improve SSD lifetime over Baseline. The average M_{RBER} increases at a much slower rate with PEC in AERO_{CONS} and AERO compared to in Baseline, which clearly shows the high effectiveness of the erase latency reduction in AERO at lowering erase-induced cell stress. The slower increase in M_{RBER} , in turn, enables a block to meet the RBER requirement at higher PEC in AERO (7.6K) and AERO_{CONS} (6.9K) compared to Baseline (5.3K), significantly enhancing SSD lifetime by 43% and 30%, respectively.

Second, AERO further improves SSD lifetime considerably over AERO_{CONS} (by 10%) without compromising data reliability. This highlights the high effectiveness of leveraging the reliability margin to reduce erase latency more aggressively. The aggressive τ_{EP} reduction causes high M_{RBER} even for fresh blocks (i.e., $M_{RBER}(0) = 46$ in AERO) but greatly slows down M_{RBER} increase ($M_{RBER}(6K) - M_{RBER}(0) = 9.5$), showing its high long-term benefits.

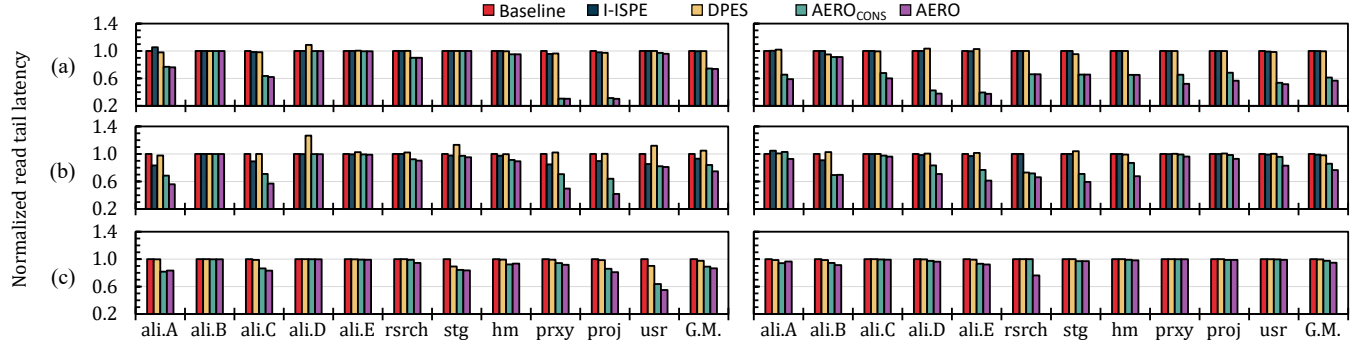


Figure 14. The 99.99th (left) and 99.9999th (right) percentile read latency at $PEC = \langle (a) 0.5K, (b) 2.5K, (c) 4.5K \rangle$.

Third, DPES also improves SSD lifetime considerably (by 26%) compared to Baseline, but its benefits are limited compared to both AERO_{CONS} and AERO. Like AERO, DPES exhibits rather high M_{RBBER} due to V_{ERASE} reduction until 3K PEC, which, in turn, enables its M_{RBBER} to increase more slowly later. However, DPES’s benefits are limited due to (i) its limited applicability (until 3K PEC) as well as (ii) its write-performance overheads.

Fourth, i-ISPE *accelerates* RBBER increase, which, in turn, rather *decreases* SSD lifetime. In fact, i-ISPE provides the lowest M_{RBBER} among the compared SSDs at $PEC = \langle 0K, 1K \rangle$ where it is relatively easy to completely erase a block compared to at high PEC. However, it frequently incurs an erase failure as PEC increases, causing more erase-induced cell stress as explained in §3.3. Consequently, i-ISPE leads to shorter SSD lifetime by 25% even compared to Baseline, which shows its limited applicability in modern SSDs.

7.3 Impact on I/O Performance

Average I/O Performance. To evaluate the performance impact of AERO, we first compare *average* I/O performance of the five SSDs in three aspects: (i) read latency, (ii) write latency, and (iii) I/O throughput (IOPS, input/output operations per second). Table 4 summarizes the three average performance values in i-ISPE, DPES, AERO_{CONS}, and AERO that are normalized to Baseline, on average across all the workloads. We observe that all the evaluated SSDs *except for* DPES show almost the same average performance for all the workloads and $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K, 4.5K \rangle$. This is because modern SSDs perform erase operations much less frequently compared to reads and writes as explained in §3.1. Unlike the other SSDs, DPES significantly increases average write latency and IOPS at $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K \rangle$, i.e., when the DPES scheme is applicable. Note that we do *not* evaluate i-ISPE at 4.5K PEC, as it *cannot* meet the RBBER requirement before PEC reaches 4.5K as shown in Figure 13.

Read Tail Latency. We evaluate the impact of AERO on SSD read tail latency that is critical in modern enterprise or datacenter server systems [85, 86]. Figure 14 represents the 99.99th and 99.9999th percentile read latencies ($\tau_{99,99P}$ and

Table 4. Comparison of average I/O performance.

Erase Scheme	Geomean of Norm. Avg. Perf. at $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K, 4.5K \rangle$		
	Norm. Avg. Read Latency [%]	Norm. Avg. Write Latency [%]	Norm. Avg. IOPS [%]
i-ISPE	$\langle 100.0, 99.8, N/A \rangle$	$\langle 100.0, 100.0, N/A \rangle$	$\langle 100.0, 100.1, N/A \rangle$
DPES	$\langle 100.4, 101.3, 99.9 \rangle$	$\langle 110.8, 135.6, 100.0 \rangle$	$\langle 95.7, 87.8, 100.0 \rangle$
AERO _{CONS}	$\langle 99.9, 99.7, 99.7 \rangle$	$\langle 99.8, 99.9, 99.8 \rangle$	$\langle 100.2, 100.3, 100.3 \rangle$
AERO	$\langle 99.9, 99.6, 99.7 \rangle$	$\langle 99.8, 99.8, 99.9 \rangle$	$\langle 100.2, 100.4, 100.3 \rangle$

$\tau_{99,9999P}$, respectively) in the five simulated SSDs at $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K, 4.5K \rangle$ (all values are normalized to Baseline).

We make six observations from Figure 14. First, AERO (AERO_{CONS}) significantly reduces $\tau_{99,99P}$ and $\tau_{99,9999P}$ compared to Baseline by 22% (18%) and 26% (20%), respectively, on average across all the evaluated workloads and PEC. Second, AERO achieves higher performance benefits at lower PEC while still providing considerable performance improvements at high PEC. AERO (AERO_{CONS}) outperforms Baseline by $\langle 35\%, 24\%, 9\% \rangle$ ($\langle 32\%, 15\%, 7\% \rangle$) when $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K, 4.5K \rangle$, reducing $\tau_{99,99P}$ and $\tau_{99,9999P}$ compared to Baseline by $\langle 26\%, 25\%, 13\% \rangle$ ($\langle 26\%, 16\%, 11\% \rangle$) and $\langle 43\%, 23\%, 5\% \rangle$ ($\langle 39\%, 14\%, 2\% \rangle$) when $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K, 4.5K \rangle$. This is because AERO only reduces τ_{EP} in $EP(N_{ISPE})$, which has a higher impact when N_{ISPE} is low. The high benefits at 0.5K PEC (Figure 14a) also clearly show the high effectiveness of shallow erasure, given that $N_{ISPE} = 1$ for most blocks. Third, AERO improves I/O performance also when the workload is read-dominant (e.g., ali.E and usr). This highlights the importance of optimizing the latency of erase operations that dictate read tail latency. Fourth, at 2.5K PEC, AERO considerably reduces $\tau_{99,99P}$ and $\tau_{99,9999P}$ over AERO_{CONS} by 11% on average (up to 34% and 22%, respectively), which shows the effectiveness of leveraging the ECC-capability margin for further τ_{EP} reduction. Fifth, AERO also reduces $\tau_{99,99P}$ and $\tau_{99,9999P}$ over i-ISPE by (26%, 20%) and (43%, 23%) at $PEC = \langle 0.5K, 2.5K \rangle$, respectively, on average across all the evaluated workloads. At 0.5K PEC, both AERO and i-ISPE can completely erase almost every block via a single loop for which only AERO can reduce τ_{BERS} using shallow erasure. Even though i-ISPE can also decrease N_{ISPE}

(and thus τ_{BERS}) to less than 2 (7 ms) at 2.5K PEC by skipping the first erase loops, AERO achieves higher benefits due to aggressive τ_{EP} reduction and slower N_{ISPE} increase (92% of the blocks can be erased within two erase loops at 2.5K PEC). Sixth, AERO reduces $\tau_{99,99\text{P}}$ and $\tau_{99,999\text{P}}$ over DPES by 22% and 25%, respectively, on average across all the evaluated workloads and PEC. In particular, at 2.5K PEC, $\tau_{99,99\text{P}}$ of DPES rather often *increases* by 5% compared to Baseline due to the increase in τ_{PROG} , whereas AERO causes no performance degradation but provides 25% benefits on average across all workloads.

Impact of Erase Suspension. To better understand AERO’s performance benefits, we evaluate the impact of erase suspension on read tail latency in AERO_{CONS} and AERO. Figure 15 shows $\tau_{99,9\text{P}}$, $\tau_{99,99\text{P}}$ and $\tau_{99,9999\text{P}}$ in AERO_{CONS} and AERO at $\text{PEC} = \langle 0.5\text{K}, 2.5\text{K}, 4.5\text{K} \rangle$, averaged across all workloads, when we disable the erase suspension scheme [13] (we also plot the results with erase suspension for comparison). All values are normalized to Baseline without erase suspension.

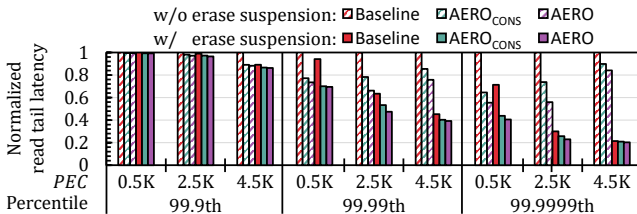


Figure 15. Impact of erase suspension on read tail latency.

We make two key observations. First, AERO significantly improves I/O performance also when erase suspension is disabled. AERO provides high benefits over Baseline, e.g., $\langle 45\%, 44\%, 16\% \rangle$ reductions in $\tau_{99,9999\text{P}}$ at $\text{PEC} = \langle 0.5\text{K}, 2.5\text{K}, 4.5\text{K} \rangle$. Second, the performance benefits of AERO become even higher when disabling erase suspension. For example, when erase suspension is enabled, AERO achieves $\langle 43\%, 23\%, 5\% \rangle$ reduction in $\tau_{99,9999\text{P}}$ over Baseline at $\text{PEC} = \langle 0.5\text{K}, 2.5\text{K}, 4.5\text{K} \rangle$, which is $\langle 2\%, 21\%, 11\% \rangle$ lower compared to when erase suspension is disabled. This is because, without erase suspension, a page read must wait for the completion of the *entire* ongoing erase loop, which significantly increases the impact of erase latency on read tail latency compared to when the ongoing erase loop can be suspended. Note that, even though the erase suspension scheme often shows a higher reduction in read tail latency to AERO when they are applied *exclusively*, it does *not* diminish the value of AERO. This is because AERO also improves SSD lifetime significantly and can be easily combined with erase suspension to further reduce read tail latency.

7.4 Sensitivity Analysis

Impact of Misprediction. Even though we have observed *no* misprediction in our real-device characterization, we analyze the performance and lifetime impact of misprediction in

AERO since it is improbable but not impossible to happen. To this end, we make two assumptions on AERO’s misprediction behavior based on our real-device characterization results. First, we consider each erase-latency prediction of AERO as an independent trial with a constant failure (i.e., misprediction) rate for all blocks and operating conditions. This is because, although reliability characteristics significantly vary across blocks and operating conditions, AERO can accurately predict the minimum erase latency for all tested chips, blocks, and operating conditions as demonstrated in §5 (i.e., we observe nothing suggesting that certain chips, blocks, or operating conditions are more prone to AERO’s misprediction). Second, we assume that AERO performs an additional 0.5-ms EP step for each misprediction. We believe that 0.5 ms is long enough for AERO to handle a misprediction because the target block must be largely (though not completely) erased even when a misprediction happens (otherwise, AERO would not have reduced erase latency). Figure 16 shows how AERO’s misprediction rate affects its benefits in SSD lifetime (left) and read tail latency (right).

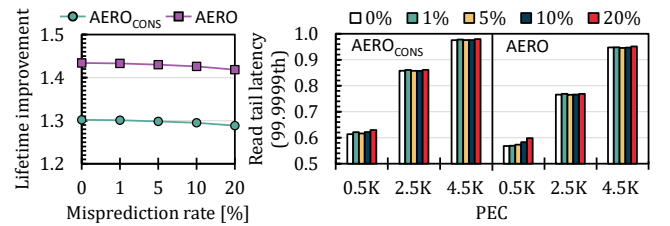


Figure 16. Impact of misprediction rate on AERO’s benefits.

We make two key observations. First, AERO is highly effective at improving both SSD lifetime and I/O performance even when mispredictions happen. Even under a high misprediction rate of 20%, AERO (AERO_{CONS}) provides 42% (29%) and 40% (37%) improvements over Baseline in SSD lifetime and read tail latency (at 0.5K PEC), respectively. This is because AERO_{CONS} and AERO are still able to reduce erase latency when a misprediction happens, i.e., the amount of erase-latency reductions (e.g., up to 3.5 ms) is higher than the misprediction penalty (e.g., 0.5 ms), in many cases. Second, the performance impact of misprediction becomes even smaller as PEC increases. Compared to when no misprediction occurs, 20% misprediction rate causes small increases (5.3% and 2.6% at 0.5K PEC in AERO and AERO_{CONS}, respectively) in $\tau_{99,9999\text{P}}$, which significantly decreases (to 0.4% for both) at 4.5K PEC. This is because the total erase latency severely increases with PEC, thereby making the performance impact of misprediction much smaller.

Impact of Reliability Margin. We evaluate how AERO’s benefits change depending on the reliability margin that directly affects the effectiveness of aggressive τ_{EP} reduction. To this end, we evaluate the performance and lifetime benefits of AERO while reducing the reliability requirement (i.e.,

the maximum raw bit errors per 1 KiB) to 40 and 50 (from 63), which can happen when using weaker ECC. Figure 17 shows SSD lifetime (left) and read tail latency (right) of AERO_{CONS} and AERO under different reliability requirements, normalized to Baseline. Note that the lifetime of Baseline and AERO_{CONS} also degrades as the reliability requirement decreases (because they can tolerate fewer errors).

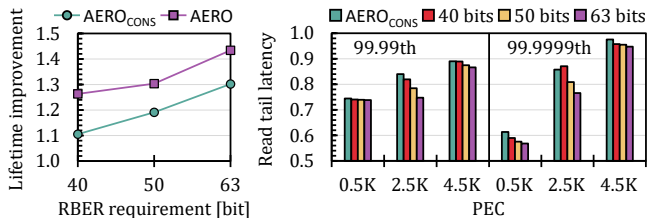


Figure 17. Impact of RBER requirement on AERO’s benefits.

We observe that AERO can still improve SSD lifetime when the RBER requirement decreases considerably. Although the chance for aggressive τ_{EP} reduction significantly decreases when the RBER requirement is 40 bits (only if $N_{ISPE} = 2$ and $F(1) < \gamma$ as shown in Figure 10b), it still allows 14% lifetime enhancement over AERO_{CONS}. In particular, AERO achieves the highest benefit at 2.5K PEC. This is because AERO can completely erase most blocks with $N_{ISPE} \leq 3$, which allows it to aggressively reduce τ_{EP} for many blocks ($N_{ISPE} \leq 3$ and $F(N_{ISPE} - 1) < \delta$ in Figure 10b).

Based on the key observations in our evaluation, we conclude that AERO is highly effective at improving both SSD lifetime and I/O performance for many real-world workloads under varying operating conditions. We believe that AERO is a promising solution, considering its high lifetime and performance benefits that come with almost negligible overheads.

8 Related Work

To our knowledge, this work is the first to dynamically adjust erase latency by leveraging varying erase characteristics across blocks, providing significant lifetime and performance benefits for modern SSDs. We already discussed and compared to the state-of-the-art techniques [16, 31] closely related to AERO (§3.3 and §7). We briefly describe other related work that aims to improve the lifetime and performance of SSDs.

Mitigating Negative Impact of Erase Operation. A large body of prior work has proposed various techniques to mitigate the negative impact of erase operations on SSD lifetime and I/O performance. Many studies have optimized the algorithms of internal SSD management tasks, e.g., garbage collection [17–25] and wear leveling [26–28], to reduce the number of erase operations invoked for servicing the same amount of user writes. To prevent an erase operation from delaying latency-sensitive reads for a long time, some studies propose to suspend an ongoing erase operation to service user reads (and resume the erase operation after completing the

reads) [12, 13]. Despite the significant lifetime and performance improvements made by the prior research, the existing techniques erase a block using the conventional ISPE scheme, thereby causing over-erasure of blocks frequently. AERO introduces only small implementation overheads and thus can be easily integrated into the existing techniques to further improve the lifetime and performance of modern SSDs.

Process Variation. Many prior studies [11, 15, 32, 34–37] leverage varying physical characteristics across flash cells to optimize modern SSDs. Hong et al. [11] propose a new erase scheme that applies a low voltage to error-prone WLs selectively (while keeping the same voltage for the other WLs), which makes only a small fraction of weak WLs (temporarily) unusable but eventually extends SSD lifetime. To fully utilize the potential lifetime of NAND flash blocks, Kim et al. [15] propose a new block wear index that can reflect significant endurance variation across blocks. Shim et al. [32] propose to skip some program-verify steps to improve I/O performance if the target WL has better reliability characteristics compared to other WLs. Out of many process-variation-aware optimizations, to our knowledge, our work is the first to identify a new optimization opportunity to improve both SSD lifetime and I/O performance by leveraging the significant variation in the minimum erase latency across blocks.

9 Conclusion

We propose AERO, a new block erasure scheme that significantly improves both the lifetime and performance of modern NAND flash-based SSDs by dynamically adjusting erase latency. We identify new opportunities to optimize erase latency by leveraging varying characteristics across flash blocks and the large reliability margin in modern SSDs. Throughout extensive characterization of 160 real 3D NAND flash chips, we demonstrate that it is possible to (i) accurately predict the minimum latency just long enough to completely erase a block based on in-execution information (i.e., fail-bit count) and (ii) aggressively yet safely reduce erase latency by exploiting the reliability margin. Our results show that AERO effectively improves SSD lifetime and read tail latency with low overheads for diverse real-world enterprise and data center workloads under varying operating conditions.

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A Appendix: Terminology Summary

Table 5 summarizes new terminologies defined in this work.

Table 5. Summary of newly defined terminologies.

Terminology	Definition
N_{ISPE}	Number of erase loops for complete erasure
$VR(i) / EP(i)$	i -th Verify-Read / Erase-Pulse step
$F(i)$	Number of fail bits after $EP(i)$
F_{PASS}	Predefined erase pass threshold
F_{HIGH}	Full erase pulse threshold
τ_{EP} / τ_{VR}	Erase-Pulse / Verify-Read latency
τ_{SE} / τ_{RE}	Shallow / Remainder erase latency
$m_{\tau_{BERS}} / m_{\tau_{EP}}(i)$	Minimum $\tau_{BERS} / \tau_{EP}(i)$
M_{RBER}	Maximum raw bit errors

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