

Semiconductor companies spar over patent

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Semiconductor technology firm Nanometrics Inc. this week sued competitor Nova Measuring Instruments Ltd. in a California court for patent infringement.

The patent, "Method for Determining Absolute Reflectance of a Material in the Ultraviolet Range," relates to Nanometrics' ultraviolet reflectometry and optical critical dimension tools, Nanometrics said in a company statement.

"Nanometrics pioneered the field of ultraviolet metrology for the semiconductor industry," company President and Chief Executive Officer John Heaton, said via the statement.

"We have invested extensively in this technology and have spent years developing these metrology tools for use by our customers. We intend to vigorously protect all of our intellectual property," he continued.

Nova said in a company statement that the company is confident its products do not infringe Nanometrics' patent.

"The Nanometrics lawsuit is a tactical maneuver in response to developments in Nova's continuing lawsuit against Nanometrics, which was launched in March 2005, to protect its own intellectual property. Nanometrics' patent was originally issued in 1991 and was 're-issued' in 1994 due to defects in the original patent," Nova's statement said.

"Given the age of this patent and the fact that it has been over a year

since Nanometrics first indicated that they planned to review their patent portfolio in response to our lawsuit, we see this merely as an attempt to deflect attention from our lawsuit," Nova Vice President of Technology and Chief Technology Officer Moshe Finarov said via the Nova statement.

"This move came immediately after the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California ruled in favor of Nova," Finarov continued.

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