Mechanical stability of roll-to-roll printed solar cells under cyclic bending and torsion - DTU Orbit (13/05/2019)

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The ability of printed organic solar cells (OSCs) to survive repeated mechanical deformation is critical to large-scale implementation. This paper reports an investigation into the mechanical stability of OSCs through bending and torsion testing of whole printed modules. Two types of modules are used that differ slightly in thickness as well as on the basis of the electrode materials: silver nanowires or carbon-based inks. Each type of module is subjected to two different mechanical modes of deformation, bending and torsion, of several thousand cycles per module using a purpose-built robotic device. Analysis of the distribution of stress in the devices performed by finite-element modeling predicts the locations of failure. Failure upon bending originates at the laser-cut edges of the modules from shear at the clamp/module interface leading to crazing of the plastic barrier encapsulant foils. This crazing leads to eventual delamination due first to decohesion of the active layer at the edge of the modules and later to deadhesion between the PEDOT:PSS (electrode) and P3HT:PCBM (semiconductor) layers. The torsion mode imposes greater stresses than the bending mode and thus leads to failure at fewer strain cycles. Failure during torsion occurs through crack propagation initiated at stress concentrations on the edges of the module that were imposed by their rectangular geometry and ultimately leads to bifurcation of the entire module. Rather than the differences in electrode materials, the differences in survivability between the two types of modules are attributed mostly to the thickness of the substrate materials used, with the thinner substrate used in the carbon-based modules (~160 µm) failing at fewer strain cycles than the substrate used in the silver-nanowire-based modules (~190 µm). Taken together, the results suggest ways in which the lifetimes of devices can be extended by the layouts of modules and choices of materials.

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