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Photochemical Reactions of Ge-Related Centers in Germanosilicate Glass Prepared by Sol-Gel Process

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Germanosilicate glasses are prepared by a sol-gel method and the UV-photosensitivity of glasses is investigated by optical absorption, ESR, and photoluminescence measurements. Large changes in optical absorption are observed for the sol-gel-derived glass by the ultraviolet laser irradiation; a decrease in 5-eV band and increases in absorption around 4.5 and > 5.7 eV. Photoluminescence intensity under 248-nm excitation decreases with an increase in laser fluence and also with decrease in the 5-eV band. This result strongly implies the novel photochemical reaction from Ge$^{2+}$ to Ge E’ induced by excimer laser irradiation.

Keywords: Germanosilicate glasses / Defect / Photosensitivity / Sol-gel method / Fiber grating

Photosensitivity of GeO$_2$-SiO$_2$ glasses has been caught much attention because the Bragg grating can be easily printed in the fiber core, which is usually made of germanosilicate glasses, by ultraviolet (UV) laser irradiation [1]. It has been considered that the index change by UV laser irradiation is closely related to the photochemical processes of Ge-related defects in the germanosilicate glasses [2]. Previous studies indicated that the Ge-related defects have higher photosensitivity and the formation of Ge E’ center is the key for the photorefractive effect in the glasses. In order to investigate the mechanism of UV-induced refractive index change, the compositional and/or structural effect on the photochemical processes should be systematically clarified. The aim of this study is to elucidate photochemical processes induced by UV-irradiation in the germanosilicate glass.

The defect states of glasses before and after the UV irradiation (KrF- and ArF-excimer lasers and Hg lamp) are analyzed by means of the optical absorption, photoluminescence (PL) and electron spin resonance (ESR) spectroscopy. Germanosilicate glass of 10GeO$_2$-90SiO$_2$ composition in molar ratio is prepared from tetraethoxysilane and tetraethoxygermanium through the sol-gel procedure.

Figure 1 shows the changes in optical absorption by the KrF irradiation. Change in optical absorption in the range of 3.8 to 6.4 eV is observed. The change in optical absorption of the glass seems to be almost comparable to that of the VAD fiber preform. ESR spectra after excimer laser irradiation indicate the existence of germanium electron-trapped centers (GEC) and Ge E’ center. Fig. 2 (e) shows the ESR spectrum of unirradiated VAD-glass, which is corresponding to Ge E’ center [3]. Spectral profile of low fluence (Fig. 2 (a)) indicates the formation of...
Figure 1. Absorption spectra before and after KrF laser irradiation (80mJ/cm² per pulse, 10⁴ shot).

Figure 2. ESR signals of the glasses after UV irradiation and unirradiated fiber preform.

Figure 3. Correlation between decrease in PL intensity, ΔI/I_{initial}, and bleaching of the 5-eV band, Δα/α_{initial}, by excimer laser irradiation.

GEC [4]. With increasing laser fluence, the profile approaches to that of Ge E’ center (Fig. 2 (a) to (c)). Irradiation of an Hg lamp induced only Ge E’ center (Fig. 2 (d)). Figure 3 shows a correlation between the bleaching of 5-eV band and the decrease in PL intensity by KrF laser irradiation. Linear correlation indicates that bleaching of the 5-eV band is due mainly to a decrease in Ge²⁺ (NODV). This relationship is also exhibited by ArF-laser excitation. Therefore, we propose that the bleaching of the 5-eV band by irradiating excimer laser is due to the decrease of Ge²⁺.

The decrease of Ge²⁺ by excimer laser irradiation would be explained by photoionization of Ge²⁺ by multiphoton absorption. The lone pair electron of Ge²⁺ can be excited to the conduction band by successive two-photon absorption through long-lived T₁ state as an intermediate level. Furthermore, the ionized Ge²⁺ may form Ge-O bonding with nonbridging oxygen nearby. The final product of this process would be Ge E’. Fig. 4 shows a correlation between the decrease in the 5-eV band and the increase in 6.3 eV band corresponding to Ge E’ center by irradiating KrF and ArF laser. The linear correlation indicates that Ge²⁺ is converted into Ge E’ by excimer laser irradiation. In addition, changes in defect concentration of Ge²⁺ and Ge E’ are almost equal. Therefore, we propose the following photochemical reaction by excimer laser excitation,

Ge²⁺ + NBO ----> Ge E’ + e⁻ . (1)

The conversion efficiency of Ge²⁺ to Ge E’ is much larger for KrF laser excitation than for ArF laser at the same fluence. The photon energy of KrF laser agrees with the excitation energy of S₀ to S₁ transition in Ge²⁺. The excited S₁ state relaxes to long-lived T₁ state through intercombinational conversion. These facts follow the above reaction (1) because the 5-eV photons from KrF laser excite Ge²⁺ to long-lived T₁ state with higher efficiency than 6.3-eV photons from ArF laser.

References