Noise reduction methods of single photon detector based on InGaAs/InP avalanche photodiodes

G K Krivyakin [1,2], A S Pleshkov[1,2], A V Zverev[1], I I Ryabtsev[1] V L Kurochkin[1]

1 Institute of Semiconductor Physics, Siberian Division, Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk, 630090 Russia
2 Novosibirsk State Technical University, Novosibirsk, 630090 Russia

E-mail: kurochkin@isp.nsc.ru

Abstract. This work is dedicated to the problem of noise reduction of single photon detector development based on InGaAs-InP avalanche photodiodes. Dark count probability and quantum efficiency of the detectors have been measured. We present the experimental fiber based quantum key distribution setup with phase coding of single photon states. The autocompensation two way optical scheme (plug&play) is used. The single photon source is the strongly attenuated laser pulse which goes through two paths of Mach-Zehnder interferometer where it undergoes the phase coding. Quantum channel is formed by 25 km single mode fiber. To generate the quantum key the four phases BB84 protocol is used.

1. Introduction

The telecommunication wavelength photodetectors are primarily made on the base of InGaAs photodiodes. Photon counting is the key part of quantum communication as the need arise to transmit single photons over long distances using optical fibers. InGaAs/InP single-photon avalanche diode detectors are favoured in a number of applications for single-photon detection at wavelengths around 1550 nm, e.g. quantum key distribution [1]. Gated quenching, in various realization, including the use of active quenching circuits [1,2], has been implemented in many of these applications to limit the charge flow per event to reduce the detrimental effects of the afterpulsing phenomenon. In this work the commercially available InGaAs avalanche diode ERM 547NT is used to designe as single-photon detector. We implement the noise reduction methods proposed and measure dark count probability and quantum efficiency of the detectors have been measured. Experimental results of quantum key distribution on the fiber setup obtained with these detectors are given.

2. Single photon detectors based on InGaAs avalanche diodes

To detect individual photons, avalanche photodiode (APD) operates in the Geiger mode [1,2]. For this purpose, the reverse supply voltage in them is raised above the threshold breakdown voltage of the diode. The higher the voltage above the threshold the higher the probability to detect a photon. However, voltage augmentation is usually accompanied by an increase in the noise clicks without any incoming signal (dark noise) and the probability of the noise due the so-called afterpulsing effect.