

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Motivation	2
1.2	Research Hypothesis	2
1.3	Objectives	2
1.3.1	General Objective	2
1.3.2	Specific Objectives	3
1.4	Scope of the Thesis	3
2	Theoretical Background	4
2.1	Materials Characterization of Solar Photovoltaic Modules	5
2.1.1	The Solar Cell	5
2.1.2	Solar Modules Components	7
2.2	Electrical Characterization of Solar Photovoltaic Modules	10
2.2.1	The Diode Model	10
2.3	Detection and Diagnosis of Failures/degradation Modes in Solar PV Modules	13
2.3.1	Failure/Degradation Modes in Solar PV Modules	13
2.3.2	Analysis of Field Testing Data	17
2.4	Review of Field Test Campaign in the Atacama Desert	22
2.4.1	Summary of Results from Previous Work	22
2.5	Methodology	24
2.6	Summary	26
3	Analysis of failure/degradation modes found in photovoltaic modules operating in the Atacama desert	28
3.1	Front Cover Glass	29
3.1.1	Soiling	29
3.1.2	Heavily Soiled Modules	32
3.1.3	Heavily Soiled Modules Before and After Cleaning	38
3.1.4	Lightly Soiled Modules	42
3.1.5	Milky Discoloration	46
3.1.6	Materials Analysis of Failures Related to Front Cover Glass	51
3.2	EVA Encapsulant	52
3.2.1	Delamination	52
3.2.2	Materials Analysis of Failures Related to EVA Encapsulant	56
3.3	Solar Cells	56
3.3.1	Partial Shading	56

3.3.2	Hotspots	62
3.3.3	Materials Analysis of Failures Related to Solar Cells	66
3.4	Other Failures	68
3.4.1	Faulty Soldering	68
3.4.2	Cell Fracture	68
3.5	Discussion and Recommendations for Future Work	69
4	Conclusions	74
	Bibliography	76