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Designing and Selecting an Optical Cleaning Process

Every optical application requires a "clean" optical surface. However, what defines "clean" is subjective and is based on the needs of the application. In addition, there is not a singular low-cost cleaning process that can meet all the demands of every application. Therefore, multiple cleaning operations need to be developed, where each process is tailored to meet specific requirements. For example, optics operating at UV wavelengths require a specific and comprehensive cleaning process in order to reduce absorption, lower fluorescence, and increase exposure lifetime. Similarly, a specific and comprehensive cleaning process is also required for high-power optics that operate in the near-infrared. However, in this circumstance the design of the cleaning process needs to take into consideration the different operational wavelengths, i.e. infrared versus ultraviolet. In addition to operational wavelength, the properties of the substrate also need to be factored in when choosing or developing a cleaning process. For example, certain glass types are more sensitive to water and non-neutral pH conditions, where other glasses have poor mechanical durability or thermal stability. In these situations the cleaning agent and process needs to be selected carefully in order to not damage the substrate. Sometimes practical and economic reasons dictate the use of a simpler, more traditional cleaning process, such as manual solvent cleaning or automated ultrasonic cleaning designed for high-volume jobs. These processes provide a sufficient clean and can be applied more broadly. Optimax has developed cleaning processes for these specific circumstances, along with many others, in order to meet a variety of requirements.

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