HAAS Laser Technologies Inc.
Your Single Source Solution for Laser Beam Delivery Systems

Optical Cleaning Guide

Overview

Maintaining clean laser optics is critical for optimal performance and longevity. Cleaning should be done carefully, as improper techniques can damage coatings or surfaces. This guide provides a detailed approach to safely and effectively clean your laser optics.

Step by Step Guide

1. Preparation & Safety Precautions

- **Controlled Environment:** Perform cleaning in a cleanroom or a low-dust area. Avoid open windows, fans, or any airflow that might introduce dust particles.
- **Wear Powder-Free Gloves:** Use only powder-free latex or nitrile gloves. Ordinary gloves may contain powders or oils that can transfer to the optics and cause contamination.
- **Gather the Right Supplies:** Use only high-quality, optical-grade cleaning materials:
    - **Solvents:** Optical-grade isopropyl alcohol (at least 90%) or acetone. Avoid diluted, general-purpose rubbing alcohol, as it often contains water and impurities that can leave residues.
    - **Tissues and Swabs:** Use lint-free lens tissues or optical-grade cotton swabs. Avoid cotton balls, facial tissues, or paper towels, which can leave fibers or scratch the surface.
    - **Compressed Air:** Use compressed air specifically designed for electronics or optics cleaning to prevent propellant from contaminating the optic. Avoid using compressed air cans meant for general cleaning, as they may contain harmful residues.

2. Initial Inspection

- **Examine for Contaminants:** Use a bright, diffuse light source to inspect the optic for dust, fingerprints, or smudges.
- **Evaluate Cleaning Need:** Minor dust particles may not require cleaning, as frequent cleaning can increase the risk of scratches. Clean only if contaminants are affecting the optic's performance.

3. Dry Cleaning

- **Start with Compressed Air:** Before physically touching the optic, use compressed air to blow away any loose dust particles. Hold the can upright and maintain a distance of 4-6 inches to prevent any liquid propellant from spraying onto the optic.
- **Alternative Dust Removal:** If compressed air is unavailable, a hand-powered air blower (such as a rubber bulb blower) can also effectively remove dust without the risk of propellant contamination.

4. Wet Cleaning for Smudges and Stains

- **Prepare a Fresh Tissue or Swab:**
  - Dampen a new lens tissue or cotton swab with optical-grade isopropyl alcohol or acetone. Avoid over-saturating, as excessive solvent can lead to streaks.
- **Gently Wipe the Surface:**
  - Begin at the edge of the optic and wipe in a single, continuous motion across the surface. Use light pressure to prevent scratching delicate coatings.
  - Avoid circular motions, as they may spread contaminants or create smears.
- **Use a New Tissue or Swab for Each Pass:** For high-precision optics, use a fresh tissue or swab each time to avoid redistributing particles.

5. Spot Cleaning for Persistent Marks

- **Targeted Spot Cleaning:**
  - If spots remain, lightly dampen a fresh cotton swab with solvent and gently press on the specific area, lifting the residue without smearing it.
  - Replace the swab after each spot clean to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Avoid Excess Pressure:** For coated optics, applying too much pressure can damage or scratch the coating. Use only as much pressure as necessary to remove the spot.

6. Post-Cleaning Inspection

- **Final Check for Residues:** After cleaning, inspect the optic under bright light again to ensure all contaminants are removed. Look carefully for streaks, smudges, or dust.
- **Repeat if Necessary:** If any residue or streaking remains, repeat the wet cleaning process with fresh tissues or swabs as needed.

7. Proper Storage and Handling

- **Store in Dust-Free Containers:** Once cleaned, place the optic in a dedicated, dust-free storage container or cover it with a protective film until ready for use. Avoid open storage, as this increases the risk of contamination.
- **Handle with Care:** When handling optics, always hold them by the edges to minimize the chance of fingerprints or oils contacting the optical surface.

Additional Tips & Best Practices

- **Clean Only When Absolutely Necessary:** Avoid cleaning optics more than necessary, as even with careful handling, frequent cleaning can wear down coatings over time.
- **Avoid Household Solvents:** General-purpose rubbing alcohol often contains water and impurities that can leave residues. Stick with high-purity isopropyl alcohol (at least 90%) or acetone specifically labeled for optical or laboratory use.
- **Avoid Non-Optical Cleaning Tools:** Do not use cotton balls, household tissues, or microfiber cloths, as they can leave fibers, lint, or micro-scratches on the surface. Only use approved, lint-free lens tissues or optical swabs.
- **Never Use Water-Based Cleaners:** Avoid water-based glass cleaners, which can leave streaks or react with coatings. Water may also contain minerals or impurities that can harm optics.
- **Slow, Gentle Movements:** Rushing the cleaning process increases the risk of mishaps. Take your time with each step to ensure proper handling.

Haas Laser Technologies, Inc | 37 Ironia Road, Flanders, New Jersey 07836 | USA
Ph: (973) 598-1150 | info@haaslti.com