

## **Handling, Mounting, Control, and Operation of Laser/PD Modules**

### **Overview**

This Application Note overviews requirements for the assembly and operation of Laser/PD Modules to ensure maximum device performance and reliable operation over life. Topics addressed in this application note include handling, mounting and safe operation of the laser/PD module. The actual operational configuration for laser/PD modules and their reliability requirements are highly dependent upon the customer's specific application. As a result of the variation in environmental and mechanical specifications at the system level, ExOptronics does not guarantee the reliability of the module attachment or control method within customer's specific applications and can only recommend good engineering practices. The end-user must confirm the final reliability and quality of any system utilizing a laser/PD attachment and control architecture based on the ExOptronics lasers/PDs meeting component level qualification and reliability criteria.

### **1.0 Introduction**

This Technical Note summarizes the recommended procedures for proper Laser mounting, control and operation as well as handling to avoid damage to the laser module or system, as well as to avoid jeopardizing the user with any safety hazards. While the scope of Application Note is to describe specific requirements for lasers, general requirements for safe laser operation should be followed additionally.

### **2.0 Safety Precaution**

Note that the ex-fiber coupled power offered by ExOptronics laser represents significant optical power in the infrared region. Be sure to follow standard safety protocol for eye and skin for Class I IR lasers.

### **3.0 Electrostatic Discharge (ESD) Precautions**

ESD damage to a laser/PD diode is induced from the rapid flow of electrical charge between two bodies at different potentials, either through direct contact or through an induced electric field. ESD can cause catastrophic or latent damage and is of particular concern for the laser module's laser diode and (M)PD.

Latent ESD damage, which occurs when the energy of an ESD event is below the critical level required to produce a catastrophic failure, can result in defects, which propagate during module deployment resulting in catastrophic failure over time.

A human body model (HBM) ESD test is used to determine the damage threshold of the laser module and laser modules are tested in accordance with GR-468-CORE section 5.22 (MIL-STD-883, method 3015.7). A number of industry specifications are available to make the work area ESD safe (e.g. EIA-625, JEDEC 108-A).

Below are common recommended guidelines for preventing ESD damage to the laser modules:

- Ground operators, equipment, WIP transport carts/trays, laser modules or systems, and work surface to eliminate static electricity.
- Only use confirmed ESD dissipative coatings/surface finishes on fixtures/tooling used to assemble the laser modules.
- When manipulating laser modules, use ESD protective smocks, gloves and shoes/covers, dissipative bench-top mats and ESD protective flooring or matting.

- Remove or control static generating sources to voltages below the specified maximum for safe ESD handling.
- Install air ionizers as necessary for additional environmental control.
- Use electrically grounded soldering irons for soldering the laser module to the mounting surface.
- Use electrostatic shielding containers and antistatic or dissipative carriers.

## **4.0 Laser/PD Module Power Supply and Control**

General laser diode (LD)/PD power supply design requirements are applicable to laser modules. Failure to follow these requirements may result in laser module degradation or failure. When designing or utilizing a LD power supply, designers should refer to the Absolute Maximum Ratings, specified for each series of high power lasers.

Electrical Overstress (EOS) damage occurs when a laser module is subjected to voltage or current levels beyond its surge-absorbing capacity. The location and degree of damage depends on the magnitude and duration of the voltage, current, total energy, polarity, and waveform of the electrical overstress. Power supplies, and test equipment can induce EOS. Some recommended guidelines for preventing EOS of laser module are:

- Transient electrical stress to the laser/PD module should be avoided or minimized through operational life. The maximum specified transient current time for a laser module should never be exceeded while operating a LD; refer to the Absolute Maximum Ratings specified within laser module specifications.
- Use transient suppression for power supplies.
- Use over voltage protection for power supplies and fuses at critical locations.
- Confirm modules are mounted with the correct electrical pin configuration as specified.
- Ensure that all operational and assembly equipment is properly grounded with no loose connections (which can lead to intermittent connections).
- Always ensure the TEC controller is enabled and that the laser module is being actively cooled prior to turning on the laser diode controller. Allow the internal temperature of the laser module to stabilize at  $25 \pm 2$  °C before turning on the LD.
- For PD module (and MPD), right turn on/off sequence is critical to prevent the chip damage from over photocurrent (voltage) built up under high illumination: Turn on DC bias before illumination, shut off illumination before turning off DC bias.

## **5.0 Laser TEC Control and Operation**

Large capacity Thermoelectric Coolers (TECs) are used to control cooled laser module temperature for high power operation. Proper operational procedures for the TEC are critical for reliable performance of the modules during their lifetime. Laser module TECs typically are operated with closed-loop temperature controllers/power supply circuits. Closed-loop circuits allow maintaining internal temperatures of the laser modules at 25°C (nominally) for varying ambient temperatures. The TEC can be switched from a cooling mode to a heating mode by reversing the direction of current flow.

## 5.1 TEC Power Supply

The laser module TEC operates from a DC power source. An important criterion for reliable high power laser module operation is to use a filtered DC current. DC ripple affects the TEC performance and, as the result, subsequent laser module performance and a lifetime.

The TEC power supply should be limited to the absolute maximum TEC current as specified for each model of laser module. The TEC can run at the absolute maximum TEC current for a very limited duration without impacting module reliability.

When the laser module is first turned on, there will be a transient current supplied to the TEC as it stabilizes via the feedback circuit. It is also important to note that the absolute maximum TEC current is different from the maximum operating current. The maximum operating current is the current at which a TEC can operate at for an unlimited time through the lifetime of the module. The EOL TEC Operating Current should not exceed 70% of absolute maximum current. The maximum operating current is specified for each series of laser modules.

In summary:

- Limit TEC power supply ripple factor to less than 10%.
- Limit the TEC controller power supply to the absolute maximum TEC current rating
- Do not operate the TEC at its rated maximum current except as transient applied current during module start-up
- Limit the TEC operating current to 70% of the specified TEC maximum current
- Operate the TEC in constant temperature mode rather than in constant current mode utilizing temperature feedback from the module thermistor.

## 5.2 Temperature Controller

Laser module TECs operate with closed-loop temperature controller/power supply circuits. A thermistor is used to control the LD temperature within the laser module to 25°C through the specified operational ambient temperature range.

It is important to note that if the 14-pin butterfly package thermistor leads do not have electrical contact when the package is mounted and operated, the temperature controller/power supply loop will be open. An open loop TEC will run at its maximum available power supply current and can result in permanent module damage. This situation can arise for example by placing a laser module into an active TEC powered circuit board with pins 1 & 14 on the BF package placed first.

- Make sure that the electrical circuit connected to the laser module has the correct orientation for mounting the 14-pin butterfly package - as the laser module is symmetrical, it is possible to connect it backwards by 180-degrees (see Figure 1 for an example mechanical and electrical schematic).
- Make sure that all 14-pin butterfly package leads have electrical contacts to avoid controller/power supply open circuits
- Ensure the TEC leads are connected to the proper electrical polarity, and ensure that the TEC power supply is turned off prior to mounting or un-mounting the laser module.
- Wait until the internal temperature has stabilized to  $25 \pm 2$  °C after turning the LD on before making

- Do not leave a module operating without making sure that the internal laser temperature is at  $25 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ .

When mounting the 14-pin butterfly package, ensure that the butterfly pins have the right orientation (do not turn module by 180 degrees), see Figure 1 for module mechanical and electrical schematic. Follow all integrated circuit standard practices including ESD prevention measures.



IF the external leads require bending into a preferred shape, the following simple and low-cost lead-forming tool is recommended. Model: HEPCO Model 3000-2 Basic Preform Machine  
www.hepcoblue.com

## 6.1 Heat Sinks for Laser Module Mounting

Heat sink performance is usually specified in terms of thermal resistance (Q):

Θs = Thermal Resistance in Degrees C per Watt

Ts = Heat Sink Temperature in Degrees C  
Ta = Ambient or Coolant Temperature in Degrees C  
Q = Heat Input to Heat Sink in Watts

Each thermoelectric cooling application will have a unique heat sink requirement and frequently there will be various mechanical constraints that may complicate the overall design. Because each case is different, there is no single heat sink configuration suitable for all situations.

A well-designed heat sink in combination with a high-performance thermal interface material and package mounting technique should guarantee that the laser module case temperature does not exceed the maximum temperature specified for each series (refer again to the absolute maximum characteristics). Failure to keep a package base below the specified maximum temperature will lead the laser module overheating and result in module damage.

The following general heat sink guidelines are recommended:

- Mount the butterfly laser module on a heat sink with flatness of 50 microns or less over the entire mating surface to the module.
- Mount the laser module on a heat sink with a surface finish of 0.8 micron or less.
- The heat sink should be design to handle at least maximum module heat dissipation through the life of the product. For total module power dissipation refer to the module specifications. Maximum module heat dissipation is approximately equal to total module power consumption (laser diode and TEC) minus the ex-fiber optical power.
- Design a heat sink that is capable of keeping the laser module case temperature below the maximum rated temperature for all operating conditions. For maximum package base temperature refer to the laser module specification.

## 6.2 Thermal Interface Materials

Ideally, thermally conductive materials are used as an interface between a laser module and the heat sink to account for any flatness/smoothness discrepancies between the two parts. Suitable thermally conductive materials include phase change materials, greases, thermal compounds, elastomers and adhesive films. All are designed to conform to surface irregularities, thereby eliminating air voids to improve heat flow between thermal interfaces.

The specific choice and implementation of a thermal interface material is highly dependent upon the customer's specific application and reliability considerations.

Failure to follow a proper laser module mounting procedures to a properly prepared heat sink can result in high thermal resistances and module warpage, both of which can impact performance and may lead to catastrophic failure.

- Use a thermal interface material with a thickness sufficient to compensate for a maximum non-planarity of 100 microns between the laser module base and the heat sink mounting surface.
- Use a thermal interface material with a thermal conductivity of 3 W/mK or better.
- Prevent contaminating the laser module's fiber strain relief (black boot) and fiber buffer with any thermal interface materials.

- Follow a X-style bolt pattern when mounting the laser module (refer to Figure 2 below).
- Bolt down the laser module to the heat sink in a X-style fashion with the initial torque set to 0.75 in·lb and a final X-style bolt-down at 1.5 in·lb.

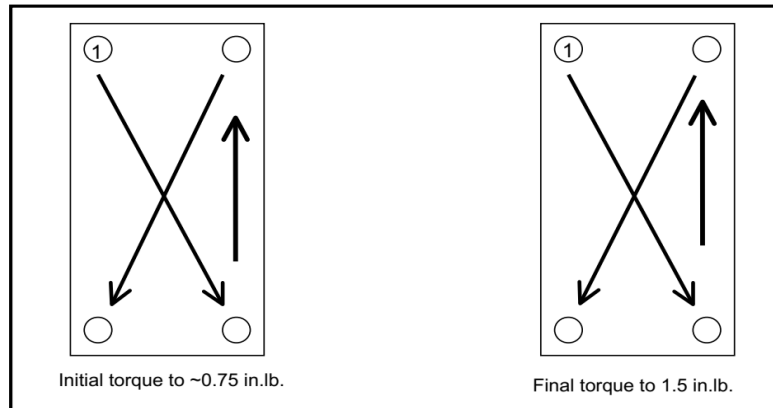


Figure 2: Bolting Pattern and Torque Specifications for Mounting a Butterfly Module

## 6.4 Soldering Laser Module Package Leads

The laser module leads can be soldered to mounting surface using localized solder reflow techniques. A hand held iron can be used that meets the requirements of the solder temperature dwell time, maximum temperature, and force applied at the joint area.

- Use hand held iron with tip small enough to achieve reflow in less than 3 s to prevent module components damage.
- Do not exceed a lead temperature of 260 °C during the soldering operation.
- Allow the module to cool down to ambient temperatures after the laser module leads are soldered to the mounting surface.
- Ensure that during any soldering operation, that the fiber temperature does not exceed 85°C (either through exposure to the soldering iron or other hot surfaces). A fiber-coupled laser module is easily damaged if a hot solder. iron touches the fiber. While this may not immediately break the fiber, it will increase loss due to local stresses, and it will compromise the physical strength of the fiber and integrity of the recoat buffer. A fiber damaged by a hot soldering iron is no longer a reliable device and should be replaced.
- Prevent fiber heating above 85°C when performing any lead soldering operation.

## 7.0 Fiber Fusion Splice

Splice losses have a profound impact on the quality of system performance and long-term reliability. Laser modules spliced with a high loss dissipate more heat to the local surrounding which may cause fiber buffer temperature increase or damage to the secondary surroundings. Fiber temperature increases can lead to catastrophic damage of the fiber or to long-term reliability considerations. Splice loss greater than 0.25dB should be avoided.

## 8.0 Fiber Handling

M0: contamination of the surface of the fiber (for example by debris or epoxy) – this contamination should not be removed by solvents or mechanical force; it can be removed by gentle swabbing with a foam-tipped probe.

M1: Delamination of the buffer from the glass fiber, but no compromise in the buffer integrity and the buffer diameter remains fixed. Delamination is typical caused by compression of the optical fiber, and although small sections of delamination (ie mm long) do not introduce reliability risks, they do imply over-handling or processing where potential damage can be incurred to the buffer.

M2: Compression of the buffer occurs when the physical diameter of the buffer has been reduced due to a force on the fiber. This will typically appear as an indentation or 'dent' in the buffer and may be accompanied by Delamination. A compression defect again has no breach of integrity of the buffer and presents no immediate reliability risk, but does again imply a concern with regards to processing and handling the laser module.

M3: Cracked Acrylate sections of the buffer occur when damage to the buffer causes it to crack. While there may not be any evidence of directly exposed glass fiber, the buffer integrity is compromised and presents a reliability hazard. ExOptronics screens for this type of defect prior to module shipment due to the reliability risk it poses.

M4: Exposed Glass sections of the fiber are the highest reliability risk and pose severe reductions to the inherent proof-test strength of the optical fiber. ExOptronics also screens for this type of damage due to its reliability hazard.

M5: ExOptronics recommends that customers spool the module pigtail to a radius above the specified minimum and minimizing axial fiber rotation during the process. Following these guidelines will minimize birefringence and optimize the laser module's spectral performance. If poor spectral performance occurs after the original spooling or unspooling, repeat the spooling process

Follow the proper procedure of fiber handling to avoid catastrophic damage in fiber in high power laser lasers:

- Always wear finger cots or gloves when handling fiber to avoid fiber contamination.
- Whenever is possible handle fiber in loops to prevent fiber damage, especially during stripping fiber
- Strip or splice fiber fusion at least 0.5 m away from the laser/PD module strain relief boot
- Do not drag fiber over equipment to avoid fiber damage
- Avoid a fiber contact with any sharp object
- Never use the fiber to pick up or support the weight of the laser. Always handle modules with two hands, one holding a package and other handling fiber coil to avoid fiber damage or break.
- Do not allow kinks or knots to develop in the fiber. Carefully work out any tangles; pulling on the fiber will cause any kinks or curls to tighten and exceed the minimum bend radius.
- Do not bend a fiber with a radius smaller than specified as minimum bending radius for each specific laser module series (refer to the module specification for a value).

Bending the fiber to a smaller than specified minimum radius can result in an increase fiber temperature due to a bend loss and subsequent optical absorption by the fiber and its buffer. Catastrophic damage of



the fiber can occur due to a crack growth induced by temperature increase. In less severe bend situations, a temperature increase can lead to degradation of the coating and as the result to long-term reliability issues.

## 9.0 Fiber Contamination

Fiber contamination is a key consideration for laser modules. The optical power from laser modules that is not coupled into fiber core is propagated by the fiber cladding layer a short distance from the module.

Fiber contamination, especially contamination with dark color, will cause a local temperature increase as it absorbs the dissipated cladding modes. Wear gloves when handling fiber

- Avoid any contamination of fiber.
- Clean a fiber if contamination occurred, being especially considerate of the first ~2' of buffer.
- No dark color contamination with area larger than  $100\mu\text{m} \times 100\mu\text{m}$  is allowed within the first ~2' of buffer and should be avoided along the entire length of fiber.

Fiber cleaning materials and procedures shown below are for informational purposes only and are not meant to recommend, endorse or discredit any existing procedures. It is recommended that users evaluate any procedure or product before using it in applications where damage or failure could result. As always, safety precautions must be exercised at all times when using glass, chemicals, and lasers.

There are many materials commercially available for fiber optic cleaning. Some are marketed specifically for the fiber optic industry, while others are considered "raw materials" or generic in nature but can be used for the same purpose.

### SWABS

There are applications for each type of swab. Choose the proper type of swab after experimenting with its results. Manufacturers sometimes recommend multiple uses of swabs. In some applications this may be suitable, but in others, only a single use prior to disposal is suggested.

**Cotton tipped**-Various sizes are available, with different materials and lengths of sticks. Used dry or wetted with your choice of cleaning fluid, these are not the best in tight or unseen areas as cotton fibers may come off of the swab and adhere to connectors or become lodged in small openings.

**Foam tipped**-These are designed to be used with different cleaning fluids. They come in various size tips with different materials and lengths of sticks. Care should be taken to wet it properly and to dry the freshly cleaned surface.

**Felt style tipped**-Similar to the foam tipped, except the tip is stiffer. A hard felt-type tip softens and swells with wetting. Care should be taken to wet it properly and to dry the freshly cleaned surface.

**Film**-This is probably the newest style of cleaning material or fabric. This swab uses a woven film similar to the tape and reel cleaners (see Wipes). The woven material is wrapped to the end of a stick and can be used both wet and dry. The film does well in removing both particles and oils.

**ALCOHOL**-Isopropyl alcohol is the most commonly used of the alcohols in fiber optic cleaning, due to its low cost and safety qualities (toxicity, flammability, environmental/disposal). Alcohol will loosen particular contaminants and aid in removing oils. It is used on swabs and wipes, by directly spraying, in soaking tubs, and in ultrasonic cleaners. The better alcohol is the higher concentration (lower water content) and 99% is readily available in bulk, small bottles, and pressurized spray cans with nozzle extensions. As a general consideration, always replace the cap on bottles or the concentration will degrade because of humidity absorption and do not 're-dip' a wipe into the same volume of alcohol for multiple cleanings.



Degradation also results when storing a bottle with little fluid and more air space for the same consideration of water absorption. If a previously opened bottle is not used in a generally short amount of storage time, it should be disposed. Spotting on a cleaned surface will indicate degradation due to moisture absorption.

## **WIPES**

**Natural fiber**-Cotton wipes in various weaves are available, as well as different absorbency, thickness, and pad size.

**Synthetic**-Similar to the cotton wipes, but stiffer and sometimes less absorbent.

**Moist**-Pre-moistened wipes are available in tubs (tear off) and individually pre-packaged. The tubs should be closed after each use to keep the wipes from drying out. The individual packaged wipes are single use only. These tend to come with a lower concentration of alcohol (40%-60%).

**Dry film**-Woven film similar to the tape and reel cleaners (see Wipes) is used in a card style, designed for single wipe and clean of connector tips or faces. This allows for removal of both particle and oil contamination.

## **ADHESIVE**

Adhesive type cleaners are used to remove particle contamination. It is important to select an adhesive inline with the particular application so that the adhesive itself does not create a new source of contamination or damage (whether it is the adhesive itself that adheres to a surface, or contaminant that was on the adhesive prior to cleaning causing cross-contamination or scratching and dig type damage).

**Tape**-A high quality common adhesive tape can be used. Use of tapes should be with reference to common MIL standards.

**Pads and Sheet**-Available in a pocket-sized sheet, this product has individual pads for single-use tip or end face cleaning. Keep the adhesive pads covered or contamination will result.

## **AIR**

Air is used for drying and clearing surfaces and areas of contaminants separately or after cleaning with a fluid or wipe. Open air-drying is sometimes done but can be problematic as it allows water spotting on surfaces.

All air used in fiber optics must be free of particulates, oil contaminants and should not generate increased susceptibility to ESD. Testing should be done when selecting a canned air to ensure the cleanliness, especially any residual film problems. Proper filters must be used when using house air. Canned air is most commonly used because of its portability and reliability of cleanliness.

**System or house air**-Pressurized air that is piped through the lab or building supplied through a compressor. Proper filters must be used and testing done to certify that the air is free of particle and oil contaminants.

**Canned air**-Choose a high quality canned pressurized air that, when tested on a dark glass or shiny plastic surface, leaves no residual film or oil. Do not spray from a can that has been shaken or inverted within the last half hour as some propellant may be sprayed out and possibly contaminate the surface being cleaned