

Co²⁺:Spinel - Passive Q-Switch

Passive Q-switches or saturable absorbers generate high power laser pulses without the use of electro-optic Q-switches, thereby reducing the package size and eliminating a high voltage power supply. Co²⁺:Spinel (MgAl₂O₄) is the material of choice for the important eye-safe wavelengths near 1.5 microns. It has useful absorption that covers 1.2 to 1.6 micron laser transitions. Spinel is a hard, stable crystal that polishes well.

Cobalt substitutes readily for magnesium in the Spinel host without the need for additional charge compensation ions. A convenient measure of the Co²⁺ concentration is the low power absorption coefficient α at, for example, 1533nm, a typical wavelength for Erbium doped phosphate glass. SYNOPTICS grows crystals for passive Q-switches with α values from about 0.5 to 3 cm⁻¹. The actual Co²⁺ ion density N in the crystal can be calculated from $N = \alpha / \sigma_{GSA}$ where σ_{GSA} is the ground-state absorption cross-section with a value¹ of 3.5 x 10⁻¹⁹ cm². This absorption is high enough to permit Q-switching of Erbium glass without intracavity focusing.

Passive Q-switches are typically specified by the low power Optical Density (or %T) at the laser wavelength. SYNOPTICS measures the α value in the crystal and adjusts the part thickness to the optical density specified. Thickness is therefore a free parameter, but typically 1 - 5 mm.

Specifications		
SYNOPTICS Standard	Orientation	<111>
	Surfaces	flat / flat
	Coatings:	AR < 0.25% @ 1533 nm
	Damage Threshold:	>500 MW / cm ²
Customer Values	Diameter:	typical: 5 – 10 mm
	Transmission:	typical: 0.70, 0.80, 0.90 @ 1533 nm

References

1. K.V. Yumashev, Applied Optics **38**, No. 30 (1999) 6343-6346.

Specifications and information are subject to change without prior notice.
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