

Extracting optical cable



Overview

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Key Takeaways

The optical cable extraction process involves carefully removing the outer sheath, exposing the fiber core, and stripping protective coatings to prepare fibers for splicing or termination. Step 1: Safety and Preparation

Before starting, wear safety glasses and gloves to protect against sharp fibers and cutting tools (). Gather approved tools such as sheath knives, fiber strippers, pliers, and tape markers. Record cable identification markings, including sheath number, footage, and cable description codes ().

Step 2: Sheath Removal

- Mark the removal length on the cable according to local practices or termination requirements, typically 2 meters for end access ().
- Ring-cut the sheath using a sheath knife, taking care not to cut ripcords or strength members ().
- Flex the cable gently at the ring cut to separate the sheath and remove it, exposing the cable core ().

- For mid-span access, locate a buffer tube reversal point to safely unwind the tubes ().

Step 3: Fiber Coating Stripping

Optical fibers are coated with polymers like acrylate, silicone, or polyimide. To expose the bare glass:

- Use mechanical strippers with precise blades for standard fibers.
- Thermo-mechanical strippers soften the coating with heat before removal.
- Non-contact methods like hot air or laser ablation, or chemical stripping with solvents, can also be used ().
- Typical stripping length is 30–40 mm, ensuring the glass is not scratched or nicked ().

Step 4: Core and Fiber Handling

Once the sheath and coatings are removed:

- The cable core consists of color-coded buffer tubes around a central strength member ().
- Handle fibers carefully to avoid bending beyond the minimum radius, crushing, or kinking, which can degrade transmission ().
- For high-fiber-count cables, remove outer buffer layers first, then inner layers, maintaining proper slack loops for routing ().

Step 5: Connectorization or Splicing

After extraction:

- Fibers are ready for splicing, termination, or connectorization.
- Cover exposed fiber ends with protective caps if not immediately processed ().
- Ensure proper alignment and minimal stress during installation to maintain optical performance.

Key Considerations

- Always follow manufacturer specifications for pulling force, bend radius, and stripping lengths ().
- Dispose of cut fibers and blades safely to prevent injury ().
- Use tape markers to measure and maintain consistent access lengths (). This process ensures that optical fibers are safely and accurately prepared for high-performance network installations while minimizing the risk of damage.

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