

Electromagnetic Shielding Effectiveness of Low-E Coatings

Background

The electromagnetic spectrum is the entire distribution of electromagnetic radiation according to frequency or wavelength. The electromagnetic spectrum, from the lowest to the highest frequency, or longest to shortest wavelength, includes all radio waves (radio, television, microwaves, and radar), infrared radiation, visible light, ultraviolet, X-rays, and gamma rays.

Low-E Coatings

Low emissivity (Low-E) window coatings are designed to control the transmission of ultraviolet, visible light, and infrared radiation.

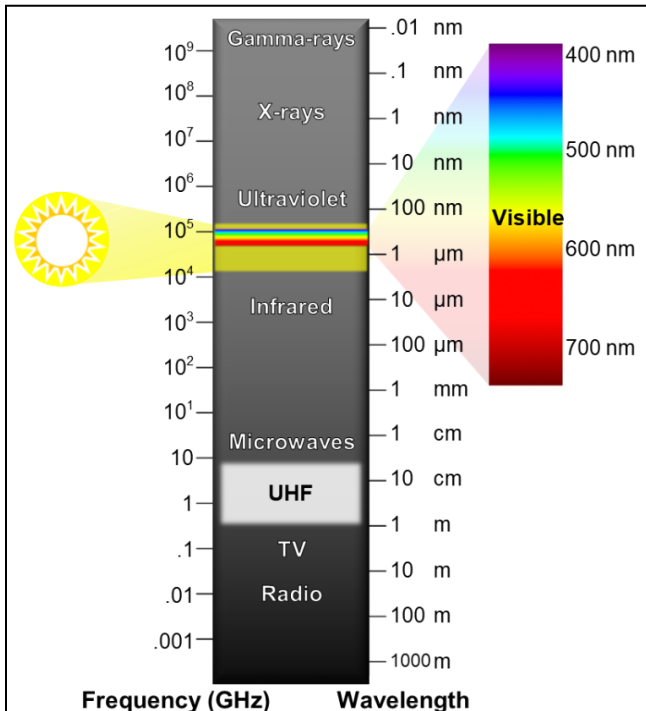


Fig. 01: Breakdown of electromagnetic spectrum

These coatings also interact with the ultra-high frequency band (UHF), which carries signals from cell phones, cordless phones, some broadcast
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television, GPS, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, satellite radio, and public 2-way radio (police, fire, and ambulance).

Low-E coatings can attenuate or shield the transmission of wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum by reducing the signal intensity. This is usually expressed in units called decibels (dB). The higher the dB, the greater the signal attenuation of the electromagnetic energy.

Cardinal LoE™ coatings are not intentionally designed to attenuate or transmit in the ultra-high frequency band (UHF).

Silver, found in Cardinal LoE coatings, is the material attenuating the electromagnetic energy. Typically, the more silver, or number of silver layers in a Low-E coating, the more UHF is shielded. The numbers of silver layers in our coatings is designated by the first number in the LoE product. Ex. LoE²-272®, two layers of silver.

IGU Makeup	Signal Attenuation (dB)
LoE ¹⁸⁰ ® / Clear	31.4
LoE ³⁻³⁶⁶ ® / Clear	41.9
LoE ³⁻³⁴⁰ ® / Clear	42.5
LoE ³⁻³⁶⁶ ® / LoE ⁱ⁸⁹ ®	55.0
LoE ³⁻³⁶⁶ ® / Clear / LoE ¹⁸⁰ ®	55.8

Tested at 1.1-1.6 GHz

Building Design

It is difficult to estimate what the overall attenuation of a building will be when using Low-E coatings in windows. The design of the building, materials used, and strength of the electromagnetic signals themselves (how close the building is to the transmitter), will all effect the attenuation.

Sometimes the attenuation of Low-E coatings in windows is unnoticed due to signals entering the building through walls, the roof, window frames, doors, etc. Most building materials such as brick, wood, concrete, non-foil insulation, etc. will all allow passage of electromagnetic waves with minimal attenuation. Aluminum, steel, or any building material with a metallic film will have higher attenuation.

Summary

Low-E coatings have been around for decades and are used throughout the United States by millions of homeowners as a way to save money on heating and cooling costs.

Using multiple Low-E coatings or coatings designed for maximum solar control in an insulating glass unit will attenuate the most, but will still transmit some signal.

If there is a desire to maximize attenuation or transmission of UHF for your building please speak with a qualified engineer.

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