

ADVANCED INSULATION MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES FOR HIGH-VOLTAGE DC POWER CABLES: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Long-distance transmission of electrical energy is important for the integration of international and national power grids. The use of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) cables enables the transmission of large electric power quantities with limited energy losses and improves the stability of the power grids. The insulation of HVDC cables is made of materials with a high breakdown voltage. While some insulation materials are made of XLPE and mass-impregnated paper, the continuous increase in the demand for the transmission of electrical energy and the operating conditions require the development of new and improved insulation materials. In this work, recent improvements in high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) power cable insulation materials are presented. Additionally, the improvements in the performance of HVDC power cables with advanced manufacturing, space-charge reduction, and condition monitoring are discussed. Other issues, such as materials reliability, insulation aging, electrical breakdown, and thermal stress are addressed. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in diagnostics and condition monitoring is discussed. The review focuses on the development of HVDC cables for the future power systems and presents methods and materials that improve the insulation of HVDC power cables.

INTRODUCTION

High demand for energy and the introduction of new renewable energy sources have resulted in the use of more efficient energy transmission systems and methods. High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) methods are preferred for longer distance transmissions due to lower transmission losses and better control when compared to Alternating Current (AC) transmissions. Modern power networks, including UHV AC systems, also rely on HVDC for interconnections. Compared to conventional insulation systems, the insulation of HVDC systems is subjected to higher electric fields and therefore more demanding. The

insulation system of an HVDC cable determines the dielectric strength, operating life and the transmission reliability. Insulation systems of HVDC cables are made from different materials. For cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) and mass-impregnated paper systems, the requirements for operational life and dielectric strength are met. However, with increasing system voltages and operating temperatures, the insulation systems are put to extreme conditions. Additionally, the systems become more unstable due to space-charge accumulation and electrical breakdown. As stated by Du et al. (2018), it is imperative that new insulation systems be developed using

advanced polymers to enhance the dielectric strength, stability and service life for future HVDC systems.

Polymer nanocomposites are a type of advanced material that can be used to create better cable insulation than what is currently possible. Among polymer nanocomposites, materials based on polypropylene (PP) are particularly interesting due to their high degree of stability with regard to electro-magnetic fields (like other polymers they can be charged), good electrical properties and their recyclability. It was shown that enhancement of the dielectric strength of polypropylene nanocomposites can be achieved by proper selection of the type of nanoparticle used as a filler. Thus, controlling charge transport and thereby improvement of insulation of polymeric systems can be achieved through the introduction of properly selected nanoparticles.

Given the above, it is understandable that intensive research aimed at development of polypropylene-based materials for HVDC cables has been undertaken during the last few years. Thermal-stability and electrical properties of polypropylene-based insulation materials can be improved compared to XLPE (cross-linked poly ethylene) insulation. For instance, polypropylene-based materials have an operating temperature that is 30 °C higher than XLPE. Furthermore, polypropylene-based materials have better recyclability. It was anticipated that further improvements of the polypropylene-based materials for HVDC applications is feasible, thus ensuring higher voltage ratings.

Other developments in the field of insulation have focused on improving the performance of materials through the control of space charge, modification of interfaces, and the application of nanotechnology. The behavior of polymeric insulation materials, in particular, is affected by the transport of charge, dielectric losses, and the material's microstructure. The authors stressed the need to analyze the mechanisms of charge transport and the effects of nanoparticles and material architecture to construct innovative insulation materials. They have also pointed out the necessity of integrated approaches, encompassing experimental and theoretical methods, for the

development of innovative materials for HVDC cables.

Still, there are a number of limitations that affect the use of advanced materials for insulation in HVDC systems. Among these limitations are electrical aging and thermal aged-related defects at the interfaces, as well as mechanical stresses that develop during cable manufacturing. Improving the electrical and mechanical properties of insulation materials remains an important goal in this area of research. Intelligent monitoring systems are also being integrated with data-related frameworks to strengthen the reliability of HVDC cables. For insulation systems, advancements in condition monitoring are enabling the detection of insulation system defects at lower levels. Wang et al. (2023) have stated that by integrating modern diagnostics and engineering material science, it will be possible to develop next generation power systems with higher safety and reliability. Similar ideas exist for HVDC cables, focused on high performance and safe insulation systems. Furthermore, it is likely that the development of next generation HVDC systems will be focused on reducing the environmental impact of the systems. Consequently, in this paper, the recent developments in novel insulation systems for HVDC cables have been reviewed and evaluated, and suggestions for the main challenges in the field have been provided. Finally, potential possibilities for the further development of systems and technologies for the environmentally friendly and sustainable HVDC transmissions have been identified.

Background of High-Voltage DC Power Cables

The growing demand for electricity and integration of renewable energy sources has led to the development of international power networks. High-loss power transmission increases the need to find more efficient power transmission techniques. Compared to AC transmission, HVDC transmission reduces losses and is more suitable for power transmission over long distances, including underwater and through other barriers. In addition, HVDC technology is ideal for power

systems with unaligned frequencies (or asynchronous power systems).

HVDC cables are made up of several components. Reliability of the cable is determined by the insulation system. In this system, breakdown of insulation must not occur. Under certain conditions, a cable may be subjected to high electrical stress. The insulation system must be designed to withstand such conditions. In recent years, insulation systems have used XLPE insulation. XLPE is a good candidate for transmission cable insulation because of its mechanical strength and long term chemical stability.

Rising demands for greater HVDC transmission voltages and more efficient energy systems have created critical limitations for existing HVDC cable insulation systems. Many insulation systems deteriorate over time due to space-charge accumulation, treeing, thermal and electrical aging, and numerous other mechanisms that decrease the operational life and reliability of HVDC cable systems. Du et al. (2018) noted the interest for, and the need of, next-generation polymer systems for the HVDC cable insulation of future, high-reliability and high-efficiency, electricity transmission systems.

With the rapid development of material science, it is expected that next-generation HVDC cable systems will be manufactured using ultrahigh-temperature, nanocomposite polymers and other advanced materials that provide enhanced thermal and electrical performance as well as improve the sustainability of the systems.

Importance of Insulation Systems in HVDC Cables

Insulation systems of HVDC cables must manage electric fields that can cause charge buildup. Insulation of AC cables is not exposed to electric fields, and thus not subject to charge buildup. Buildup of space charge can distort the field and increase the risk of insulation breakdown.

Insulation systems must balance a number of tradeoffs to achieve the required performance over the service life. The insulation system must be stable during service and must not lose its properties. The system must maintain a high

electric field without breaking down. The system must also have sufficiently low electrical conductance. Because of the advantages of Cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) in HVDC applications, it has largely replaced other insulation materials in HVDC cables. The primary reasons for continued research on alternate materials is the buildup of space charge in XLPE and the inability to recycle XLPE. Improvements in the breakdown strength and charge trapping of HVDC cable insulation through the use of nanoparticles and nanocomposites have been reported. Polymer nanocomposites can be used to control space charge and charge buildup in HVDC cable insulation. The combination of nanoparticles and polymers can provide HVDC cable systems with breakdown strengths and loss factors that approach air.

Research Motivation and Problem Statement

As the use of HVDC transmission systems grows, so does the need for electrical insulation materials to withstand higher electric fields and environmental conditions. Even XLPE insulation has its limitations and is subject to Space Charge accumulation and aging, mechanical and thermal degradation, and other defects. XLPE is not easily recycled. Constant exposure to high electric fields gradually deteriorates insulation materials and diminishes the reliability of HVDC systems. Lastly, from an environmental standpoint, there is a growing requirement to substitute petroleum-based, cross-linked insulation materials.

Several new ideas in insulation materials and related areas have been published in the last few years. Yet, many of these materials and methods are not sufficiently advanced to meet the stringent requirements of HVDC insulation materials.

The goal of this study is to examine the recently published articles on improvement of HVDC cable insulation systems and determine what barriers exist. It will also examine what opportunities are available to improve HVDC cable systems. According to the authors, some of the barriers relate to understanding the physical and chemical structures of insulating materials and how charges are transported

within the materials. Long-term operation of HVDC cables catalyzes these changes and accelerates the aging of insulating materials. There are significant barriers to designing safe, reliable HVDC systems, and improvements in insulating materials are needed.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are

1. To review the development and current status of insulation materials used in high-voltage DC power cables.
2. To analyze the limitations of conventional insulation materials, including XLPE and mass-impregnated paper insulation.
3. To investigate recent advancements in advanced insulation materials, including polymer nanocomposites and recyclable polymer systems.
4. To examine advanced insulation techniques used for improving dielectric performance, thermal stability, and reliability of HVDC cables.
5. To discuss major challenges associated with insulation aging, space charge accumulation, and long-term operational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

High-voltage direct current (HVDC) power cable technology has become a fundamental component of modern electricity transmission systems due to its ability to transfer large amounts of electrical power efficiently over long distances. Unlike conventional alternating current (AC) transmission, HVDC systems provide advantages such as reduced power

losses, improved voltage control, and better suitability for submarine and underground transmission applications. The continuous development of HVDC technology has been driven by increasing electricity demand, renewable energy integration, and the need for reliable interconnection between distant power networks.

HVDC cable systems combine advanced conductor technologies, insulation materials, shielding structures, and protective layers to ensure stable operation under high electrical and environmental stresses. The performance of these systems mainly depends on the quality of cable design and the capability of insulation materials to withstand continuous electric fields, thermal stress, and aging effects. Recent research has focused on improving HVDC cable efficiency through advanced materials, improved manufacturing processes, and intelligent monitoring techniques.

Development of HVDC Transmission Systems

The development of HVDC transmission technology began with the need to overcome the limitations of long-distance AC transmission systems. Early HVDC systems were based on mercury arc converters, which were later replaced by thyristor-based converter technologies due to their improved efficiency, reliability, and controllability. The introduction of voltage source converter (VSC)-based HVDC systems further expanded the application of HVDC technology by enabling flexible integration with renewable energy sources and modern smart grids.

Table 1: Comparison of AC and HVDC Transmission Systems

Parameter	AC Transmission	HVDC Transmission
Transmission Distance	Suitable for short and medium distances	Suitable for long-distance transmission
Power Loss	Higher losses over long distances	Lower transmission losses
Voltage Control	Limited control capability	Flexible power flow control
Submarine Cable Application	Limited due to charging current	Highly suitable
Grid Connection	Requires synchronized grids	Can connect asynchronous grids
Converter Requirement	No converter required	Requires converter stations

During recent decades, HVDC transmission has experienced significant growth due to the

increasing deployment of offshore wind farms, solar power plants, and cross-border power

exchange networks. HVDC systems are particularly beneficial for submarine connections because AC transmission suffers from high charging currents and increased losses over long distances. According to CIGRE

(2018), advancements in converter technology, cable manufacturing, and insulation materials have contributed to the expansion of HVDC applications worldwide.

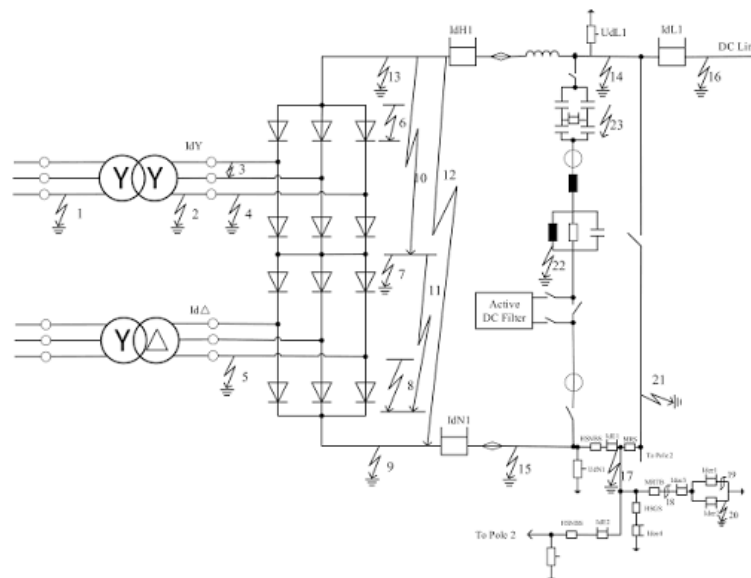


Fig 2.1 Development of HVDC Transmission Systems

Modern HVDC systems operate at increasingly higher voltage levels, including ± 320 kV, ± 500 kV, and above ± 800 kV, requiring cable insulation materials with superior electrical and thermal performance. Recent developments have focused on improving cable reliability, reducing environmental impact, and increasing transmission capacity through advanced material engineering.

Structure and Components of HVDC Cables

HVDC power cables consist of multiple layers designed to provide electrical insulation, mechanical protection, and operational stability. Each component performs a specific function to ensure reliable energy transmission under high-voltage conditions.

The main components of an HVDC cable include

Conductor

- The conductor is the central component responsible for carrying electrical current. Copper and aluminum are commonly used because of their high electrical conductivity and mechanical strength. The conductor design influences current capacity,

thermal performance, and overall cable efficiency.

Conductor Screen

- The conductor screen provides a smooth electric field distribution around the conductor and prevents localized electrical stress concentrations. It is usually made from semiconductive polymer materials.

Insulation Layer

- The insulation layer separates the conductor from the external shielding system and prevents current leakage. Materials such as cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE), mass-impregnated paper, and advanced polymer composites are commonly used. The insulation system is considered the most critical part of HVDC cables because its degradation can lead to electrical failure.

Insulation Screen

- The insulation screen controls the electric field at the outer surface of the insulation and provides uniform stress distribution.

Metallic Screen or Sheath

- The metallic sheath provides electromagnetic shielding and protects the cable from moisture penetration. It also provides a return path for leakage currents.

Outer Protective Layers

The outer layers protect the cable against mechanical damage, environmental conditions,

corrosion, and external forces during installation and operation.

The interaction between these components determines the overall performance, reliability, and service lifetime of HVDC cables. Advanced cable designs increasingly focus on optimizing material properties and improving the compatibility between different layers.

Table 2: Major Components of HVDC Cable and Their Functions

Cable Component	Main Function
Conductor	Carries electrical current
Conductor Screen	Provides uniform electric field distribution
Insulation Layer	Prevents electrical breakdown
Insulation Screen	Controls electric field stress
Metallic Sheath	Provides shielding and protection
Outer Jacket	Protects against mechanical damage

Insulation Requirements for HVDC Applications

The insulation system of HVDC cables must satisfy strict electrical, thermal, mechanical, and environmental requirements to ensure safe and

reliable operation. Unlike AC cables, HVDC insulation experiences a constant electric field, which creates unique challenges related to charge accumulation and electrical stress distribution.

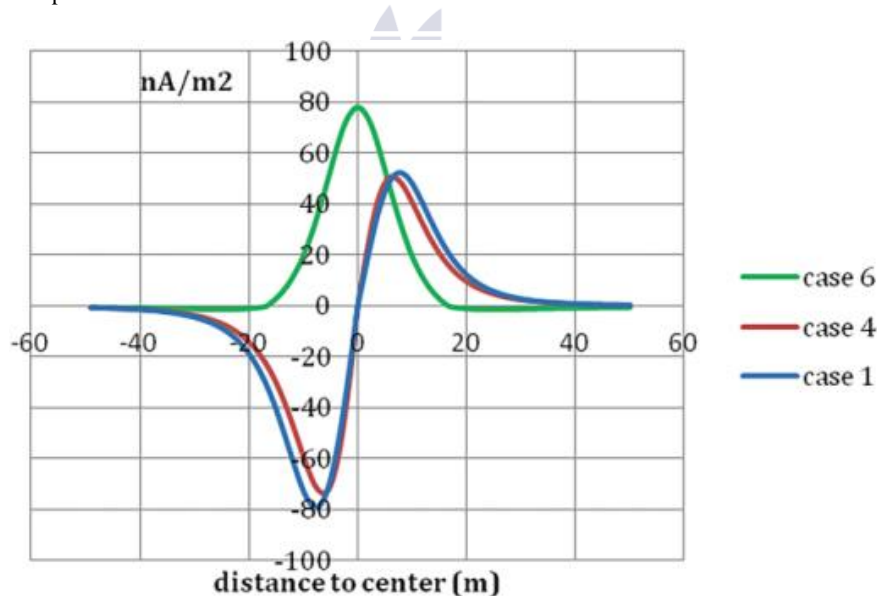


Fig 2.2 Insulation Requirements for HVDC Applications

Important insulation requirements for HVDC applications include

High Dielectric Strength

The insulation material must withstand high electric fields without electrical breakdown. A high breakdown strength ensures reliable operation at increased voltage levels.

Low Electrical Conductivity

Low conductivity is necessary to minimize leakage current and reduce energy losses during continuous operation.

Resistance to Space Charge Accumulation

HVDC insulation materials must control charge injection and migration because

accumulated space charges can distort electric fields and accelerate insulation failure.

Thermal Stability

HVDC cables operate under continuous electrical loading, producing heat within the conductor and insulation system. The insulation material must maintain its properties under elevated temperatures.

Resistance to Aging

Long-term exposure to electrical stress, heat, and environmental conditions can degrade insulation materials. Therefore, materials must provide long service life and stable performance.

Environmental Sustainability

Modern HVDC systems require insulation materials that are recyclable, environmentally

friendly, and compatible with future sustainable energy goals.

According to Zhou et al. (2024), advanced insulation materials must achieve a balance between electrical performance, mechanical strength, thermal stability, and environmental sustainability to meet the requirements of future HVDC transmission networks.

Challenges in Conventional HVDC Cable Systems

Although conventional HVDC cable technologies have achieved significant improvements, several challenges continue to affect their performance and reliability. Traditional insulation materials, particularly cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE), provide excellent electrical properties but still face limitations under high-voltage operating conditions.

Table 3: Comparison of Conventional HVDC Insulation Materials

Insulation Material	Advantages	Limitations
XLPE	High dielectric strength, excellent mechanical properties	Space charge accumulation, difficult recycling
Mass Impregnated Paper	High reliability, long service history	Heavy structure, manufacturing complexity
LDPE	Good electrical performance	Lower thermal stability

One major challenge is space charge accumulation, where electric charges become trapped inside insulation materials and create electric field distortion. This phenomenon can increase local electrical stress and accelerate insulation degradation.

Another challenge is electrical aging and breakdown. Continuous exposure to high electric fields can create defects within insulation materials, leading to partial discharge, electrical tree formation, and eventual cable failure.

Thermal stress is also a significant concern because high current transmission generates heat, which can affect the mechanical and electrical properties of insulation materials. Poor thermal management may reduce cable lifetime and operational reliability.

According to Li et al. (2022), improving HVDC cable reliability requires advanced material modification techniques, better understanding

of aging mechanisms, and development of insulation systems capable of maintaining stable performance throughout long service periods.

ADVANCED INSULATION MATERIALS FOR HVDC CABLES

As the need for greater voltage levels and more efficient methods of transmitting electricity grow, together with the development of advanced and more complex electrical systems, systems engineers also confront the challenges of designing and manufacturing high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) cables. Some of the insulation materials currently used in the manufacture of electric power transmission cables do not meet the requirements of HVDC cables.

Trends in research and development of materials used to enhance insulation of HVDC cables are directed toward the use of various

polymers and nanocomposites. New materials aimed at addressing HVDC cable insulation are intended to provide longer service life, lower electrical losses and offer better thermal stability and dielectric strength. Some of these materials are designed using a variety of functional additives.

Even with the focus on enhancement of electrical and mechanical properties of these materials, the rationale for the choice of

particular materials is largely based on the perception of their feasibility for use in functional HVDC insulation systems.

Nanocomposite Polymer Insulation Materials

Nanocomposite polymer materials show great potential for enhancing HVDC cable insulation systems. Electrical, thermal and mechanical characteristics of polymers can be fine-tuned by adding appropriate nanofillers.

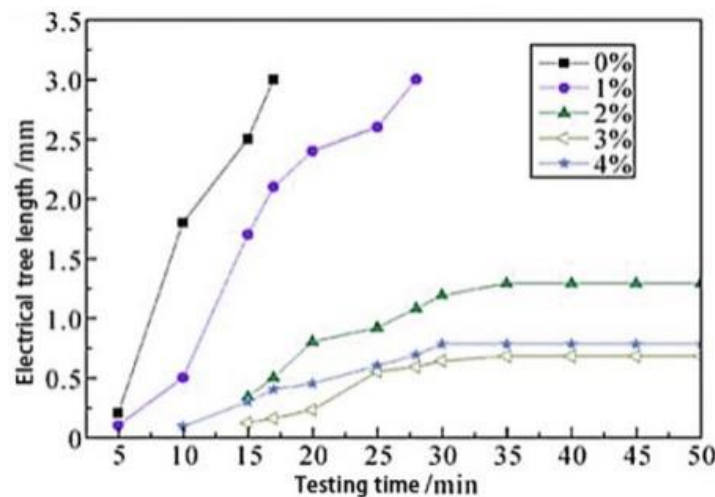


Fig 3.1 Nanocomposite Polymer Insulation Materials

Examples of nanofillers for HVDC applications are silica, magnesium oxide, alumina, titanium dioxide and carbon nanoparticles. Among them, carbon nanoparticles are considered the most promising because they improve the breakdown strength and reduce the charge mobility and aging of the insulation.

An important aspect of nanocomposite HVDC insulation is the control of the space-charge build-up. Space-charge is built up across an insulation during the operation of an HVDC cable and if not controlled, it may lead to insulation failure.

Improving the dielectric properties of the polymer matrix through addition of nanoparticles has been reported to improve the performance of HVDC cable systems. It has been shown that the use of polymer

nanocomposites can help mitigate the challenges associated with HVDC cable systems.

High-Performance Polyethylene-Based Insulation

Polyethylene materials are used to make HVDC cable insulation, and HVDC cable manufacturers prefer polyethylene materials for insulation because of the mechanical, chemical, and electrical characteristics of polyethylene materials. Of all polyethylene materials, cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) is predominantly used in HVDC cables, and the reason for this is that XLPE has better mechanical strength and higher dielectric strength than other polyethylene materials.

Table 4: Properties Comparison of Advanced HVDC Insulation Materials

Material	Dielectric Strength	Thermal Stability	Recyclability	HVDC Potential
XLPE	High	High	Low	High
Polypropylene (PP)	High	Very High	Excellent	Very High
Polymer Nanocomposite	Very High	High	Medium	Very High

Functionalized Polymer

High

High

Medium

High

XLPE insulation has a space charge, and from an environmental perspective, XLPE is difficult to recycle. Hence, it is imperative that other polyethylene materials with better electrical properties be found and investigated.

As with other polyethylene materials, the major research focus in XLPE has been on reducing the degree of impurities and enhancing charge transport.

Stabilizing the molecular structure of polyethylene and controlling its morphology are critical in improving HVDC insulation, reducing space charge, and enhancing the reliability of HVDC insulation.

Using additives and polymer blending further reduced the long-term deterioration of high-voltage insulation. Polymer blending increased the dielectric strength of polyethylene while additives increased charge transport and reduced conductivity of polyethylene.

Thermoplastic and Recyclable Insulation Materials

Environmental sustainability has become an important consideration in the development of future HVDC cable technologies. Traditional XLPE insulation cannot be easily recycled because its cross-linked structure prevents melting and reshaping after use. As a result, researchers have focused on thermoplastic insulation materials that offer improved recyclability and environmental benefits.

Polypropylene (PP)-based insulation materials have received significant attention as alternatives to XLPE because of their high melting temperature, excellent electrical properties, and recyclability. Thermoplastic materials can be processed, recycled, and reused, making them attractive for sustainable power transmission systems.

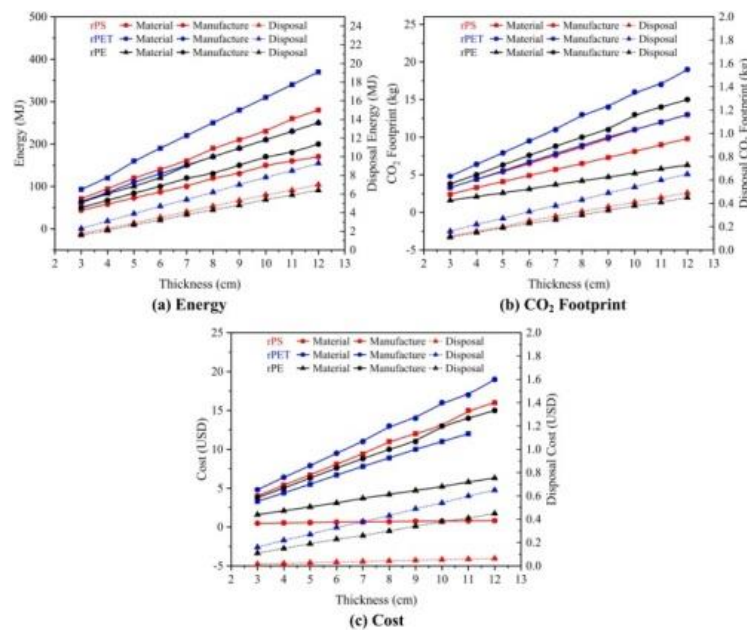


Fig 3.2 Thermoplastic and Recyclable Insulation Materials

Modified polypropylene insulation systems have been developed to overcome limitations such as poor flexibility and mechanical strength. Polymer blending, elastomer modification, and nanofiller addition are commonly used approaches to improve the performance of polypropylene-based insulation. Zhou et al. (2024) reported that recyclable polypropylene insulation materials have

significant potential for future HVDC cable applications due to their improved thermal stability and environmental advantages. However, further research is required to ensure long-term reliability under high electric fields and operating conditions.

Functionalized Polymer Insulation Materials

Functionalized polymer insulation materials involve modifying polymer structures through chemical treatment or the addition of functional groups to improve electrical and mechanical performance. These modifications allow researchers to control charge transport, reduce electrical degradation, and enhance insulation stability.

Functional additives such as antioxidants, voltage stabilizers, and charge-trapping agents are commonly introduced into polymer insulation systems. These additives can reduce conductivity, improve breakdown strength, and minimize the effects of electrical aging. For HVDC cable applications, controlling space charge behavior is one of the main objectives of functionalized insulation development. Functional groups within polymer chains can create controlled trapping sites that prevent excessive charge accumulation and maintain stable electric field distribution.

According to Bjurström et al. (2024), functionalized polyolefin materials provide new opportunities for improving HVDC insulation performance by controlling molecular interactions and electrical characteristics. These materials represent an important direction for developing reliable and efficient insulation systems for future high-voltage applications.

Material Modification Techniques for Improved Performance

Material modification techniques play an essential role in enhancing the performance of HVDC cable insulation materials. These techniques involve physical, chemical, and structural modifications to improve dielectric properties, thermal stability, and mechanical strength.

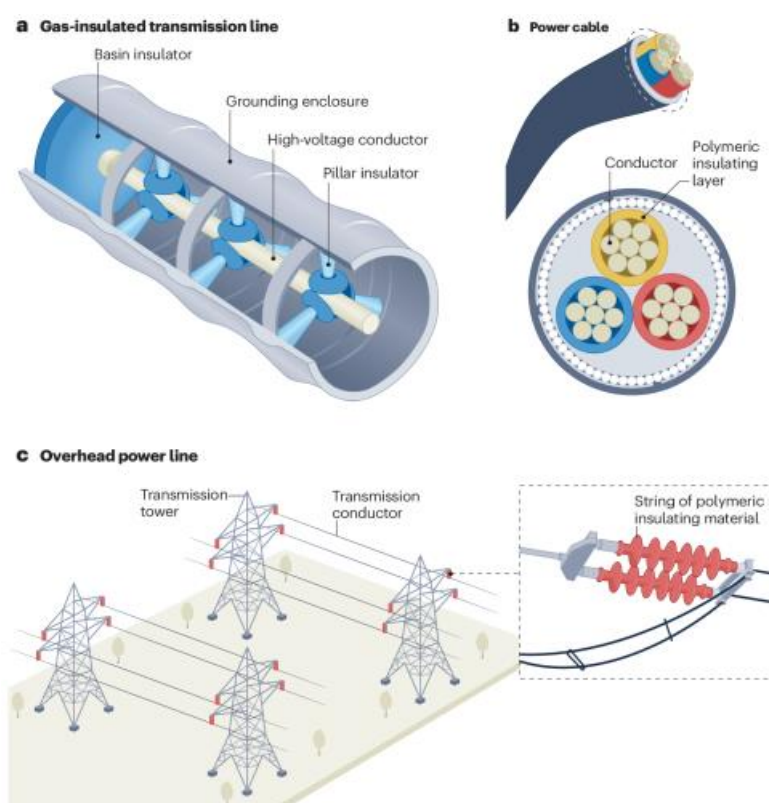


Fig 3.3 Material Modification Techniques for Improved Performance

One important technique is nanofiller modification, where nanoparticles are added to polymer materials to improve breakdown strength and reduce space charge accumulation.

Proper nanoparticle selection and dispersion are essential for achieving improved insulation performance.

Another technique is polymer blending, which combines different polymers to achieve balanced electrical and mechanical properties. For example, polypropylene can be blended with elastomer materials to improve flexibility while maintaining excellent dielectric performance.

Chemical modification is also widely used to introduce functional groups or additives that improve charge transport characteristics and resistance against aging. Additionally, advanced processing methods such as extrusion optimization and interface engineering help reduce material defects and improve cable manufacturing quality.

According to Li et al. (2022), successful modification strategies require a detailed understanding of polymer structure, charge behavior, and aging mechanisms. Combining multiple modification approaches provides a pathway toward developing advanced insulation materials with higher reliability and longer operational lifetimes.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

The continuous development of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission systems requires advanced insulation techniques capable of improving electrical reliability,

reducing aging effects, and extending cable service life. Although the development of advanced insulation materials has significantly improved HVDC cable performance, additional techniques are required to optimize material properties and ensure stable operation under high electrical and thermal stresses.

Advanced insulation technologies focus on controlling charge transport, improving material interfaces, reducing defects during manufacturing, and monitoring insulation conditions throughout the cable lifetime. Techniques such as nanotechnology-based modification, space charge control, interface engineering, advanced processing methods, and intelligent diagnostic systems have become important research areas for next-generation HVDC cable development.

Nanotechnology-Based Enhancement

Insulation

Nanotechnology-based insulation enhancement is one of the most promising approaches for improving the electrical performance of HVDC cable insulation systems. This technique involves incorporating nanoscale materials into polymer insulation matrices to modify their physical and electrical properties.

Table 5: Nanofillers Used in Polymer Nanocomposite Insulation

Nanofiller	Improvement Area
SiO ₂	Space charge suppression
MgO	Breakdown strength improvement
Al ₂ O ₃	Thermal stability enhancement
TiO ₂	Dielectric property improvement
BN	Thermal conductivity improvement

Nanoparticles such as silica (SiO₂), magnesium oxide (MgO), alumina (Al₂O₃), and titanium dioxide (TiO₂) have been widely investigated because of their ability to improve dielectric strength, thermal stability, and resistance

against electrical aging. The interaction between nanoparticles and polymer chains creates additional interfaces that influence charge movement and energy distribution within the insulation material.

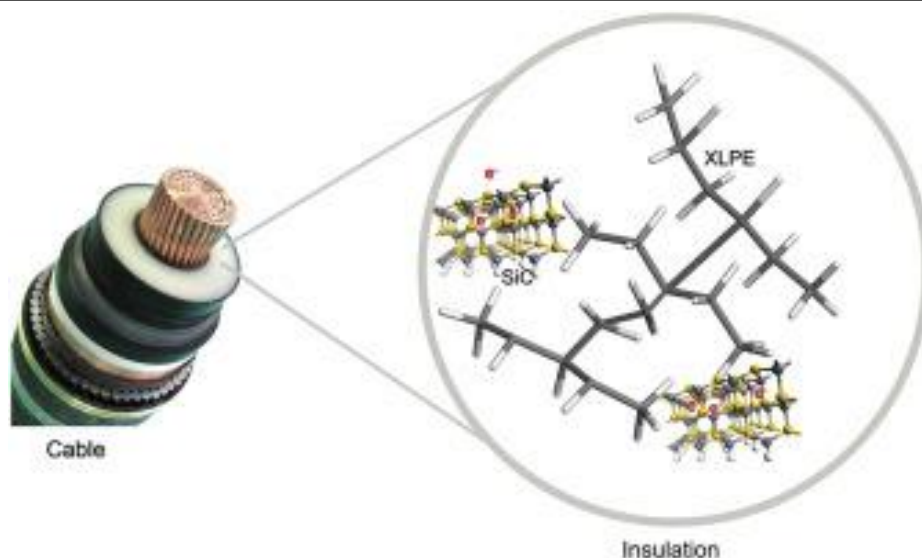


Fig 4.1 Nanotechnology-Based Insulation Enhancement

One of the main benefits of nanotechnology modification is the reduction of space charge accumulation. Nanoparticles can introduce controlled charge-trapping sites that limit charge migration and prevent electric field distortion. This improves the reliability of insulation under continuous direct current voltage stress.

According to Du et al. (2018), polymer nanocomposites provide significant improvements in HVDC insulation performance by controlling charge transport mechanisms and enhancing breakdown resistance. However, challenges such as nanoparticle dispersion, interface compatibility, and large-scale manufacturing remain

important issues that require further investigation.

Space Charge Suppression Techniques

Space charge accumulation is one of the major challenges affecting HVDC cable insulation performance. Unlike alternating current systems, HVDC cables experience a constant electric field, which can cause charges to become trapped inside insulation materials. These accumulated charges distort the electric field distribution and increase local electrical stress, accelerating insulation degradation.

Table 6: Comparison of XLPE and Recyclable Polypropylene Insulation

Property	XLPE	Polypropylene (PP)
Electrical Performance	Excellent	Excellent
Thermal Resistance	High	Very High
Recycling Ability	Poor	Excellent
Environmental Impact	Higher	Lower
Commercial Application	Widely used	Emerging technology

Several techniques have been developed to suppress space charge formation and improve insulation reliability. One approach involves modifying polymer structures through chemical additives that create controlled charge-trapping regions. These additives reduce charge mobility and prevent excessive accumulation within the insulation layer.

Another technique is the use of nanocomposite materials, where nanoparticles modify charge transport behavior and reduce charge injection from electrodes. Proper control of filler concentration and dispersion can significantly improve space charge performance.

Material purification is also an effective method because impurities and structural defects can act as charge trapping centers. Improving

polymer processing conditions helps reduce defects and enhances electrical stability.

According to Li et al. (2022), controlling space charge behavior is essential for developing reliable HVDC insulation systems, and combined approaches involving material modification and advanced processing techniques provide better performance compared with traditional insulation methods.

Interface Engineering in HVDC Cable Insulation

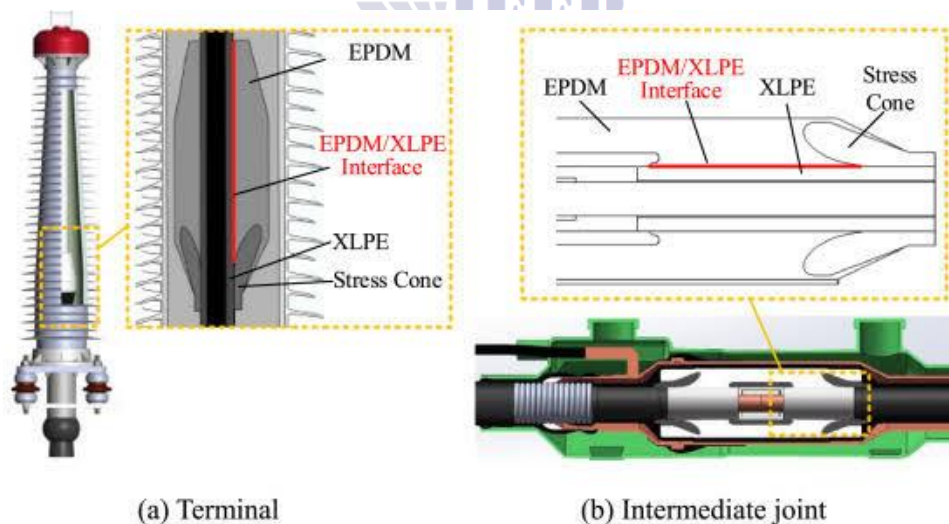
Interface engineering focuses on improving the interaction between different materials and layers within HVDC cable insulation systems. Interfaces exist between the conductor screen, insulation layer, insulation screen, and protective layers. These regions strongly influence electric field distribution and insulation reliability.

Table 7: Space Charge Suppression Techniques

Technique	Effect on Space Charge
Nanoparticle Addition	Reduces charge mobility
Chemical Modification	Controls charge trapping
Polymer Blending	Improves charge distribution
Material Purification	Reduces charge accumulation

Poor interface quality can create defects, increase electrical stress concentration, and accelerate insulation aging. Therefore, controlling interface characteristics is essential for achieving long-term HVDC cable performance.

Advanced interface engineering techniques include surface modification, chemical treatment, and the introduction of compatible materials between different layers. These methods improve adhesion, reduce defect formation, and create more uniform electric field distribution.



(a) Terminal
(b) Intermediate joint
Fig 4.2 Interface Engineering in HVDC Cable Insulation

Nanoparticle surface functionalization is another important interface engineering approach. By modifying nanoparticle surfaces, researchers can improve compatibility between fillers and polymer matrices, leading to better dielectric performance.

Bjurström et al. (2024) emphasized that understanding interface behavior is critical for improving polymer-based HVDC insulation

systems because charge accumulation and electrical degradation often begin at material interfaces.

Advanced Manufacturing Techniques

Advanced manufacturing techniques play an important role in producing reliable and high-performance HVDC cables. Even high-quality insulation materials can experience reduced

performance if manufacturing processes introduce defects or inconsistencies.

Table 8: Advanced Manufacturing Techniques for HVDC Cables

Manufacturing Technique	Purpose
Clean Extrusion Process	Reduces impurities
Optimized Cross-linking	Improves insulation uniformity
Interface Control	Reduces defects
Advanced Polymer Processing	Enhances material performance

Modern HVDC cable production focuses on improving material purity, controlling extrusion processes, and reducing structural defects. Extrusion technology is widely used for producing polymer-insulated cables, and improvements in temperature control, material mixing, and processing conditions help achieve uniform insulation layers.

Advanced manufacturing approaches include clean-room production, optimized cross-linking processes, and precision control of polymer structures. These methods reduce impurities, voids, and microscopic defects that may lead to insulation failure.

Additive manufacturing concepts and advanced polymer processing techniques are also being investigated for future cable technologies. These approaches may allow better control of

insulation structures and enable the development of customized high-performance materials.

According to Zhou et al. (2024), improvements in manufacturing processes are essential for achieving reliable recyclable insulation systems and ensuring consistent performance during long-term HVDC operation.

Condition Monitoring and Diagnostic Techniques

Condition monitoring and diagnostic techniques are essential for maintaining the reliability and safety of HVDC cable systems. Since insulation degradation occurs gradually over time, early detection of defects can prevent unexpected failures and reduce maintenance costs.

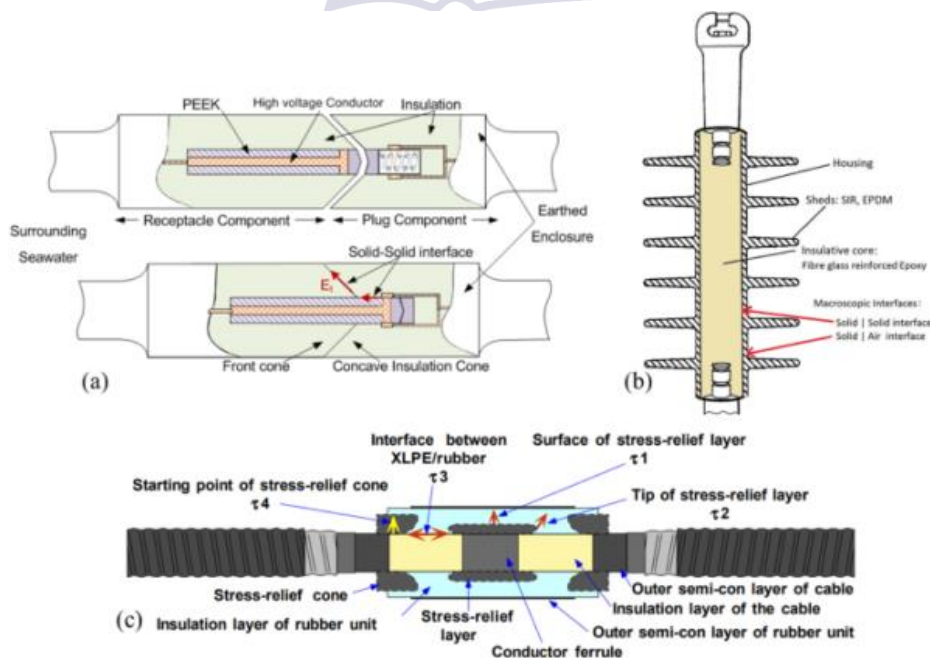


Fig 4.3 Condition Monitoring and Diagnostic Techniques

Traditional diagnostic methods include partial discharge measurement, dielectric loss analysis, insulation resistance testing, and thermal

monitoring. These techniques provide information about insulation health and help identify potential failure conditions.

Recent developments have introduced advanced monitoring approaches based on sensors, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data analysis technologies. Smart monitoring systems can continuously collect operational data and predict insulation degradation before serious damage occurs. Artificial intelligence-based diagnostic models can analyze patterns related to temperature changes, electrical stress, and aging behavior to improve fault prediction accuracy. These technologies support predictive maintenance strategies and increase the operational lifetime of HVDC cables.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HVDC CABLE INSULATION

The rapid advancement of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission systems has created a strong demand for improved insulation technologies with higher reliability, efficiency, and environmental sustainability. Recent developments in HVDC cable insulation have focused on designing advanced polymer materials, improving dielectric performance, reducing environmental impact, and increasing the operational lifetime of cable systems.

Table 9: HVDC Cable Insulation Challenges and Possible Solutions

Challenge	Impact	Possible Solution
Space Charge Accumulation	Electric field distortion	Nanocomposites
Thermal Aging	Insulation degradation	High-temperature polymers
Electrical Breakdown	Cable failure	Improved dielectric materials
Recycling Issues	Environmental concerns	Thermoplastic insulation

Traditional insulation materials such as cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) continue to dominate HVDC cable applications due to their excellent electrical properties and mechanical stability. However, challenges including space charge accumulation, thermal aging, and limited recyclability have encouraged researchers to explore alternative insulation solutions. Recent progress in polymer nanocomposites, recyclable thermoplastic materials, functional additives, and advanced processing methods has provided new opportunities for improving HVDC cable performance.

Modern research is not only focused on developing new insulation materials but also on understanding their long-term behavior under practical operating conditions. The combination of experimental studies, material simulations, and field testing has accelerated the development of next-generation HVDC insulation systems.

Recent Advances in Polymer Nanocomposites

Polymer nanocomposites have become one of the most actively researched areas in HVDC cable insulation technology due to their ability to improve electrical, thermal, and mechanical properties. These materials are produced by

incorporating nanoscale fillers into polymer matrices, creating unique interactions between nanoparticles and polymer chains.

Recent studies have investigated different nanofillers, including silica (SiO_2), magnesium oxide (MgO), alumina (Al_2O_3), boron nitride (BN), and titanium dioxide (TiO_2). These nanoparticles can improve dielectric strength, reduce electrical conductivity, and control charge transport behavior within insulation materials.

One of the most significant developments in polymer nanocomposites is their ability to suppress space charge accumulation. Nanoparticles introduce controlled trapping sites that restrict charge movement and reduce electric field distortion. This property is especially important for HVDC applications because continuous direct voltage creates a higher risk of charge accumulation compared with AC systems.

According to Du et al. (2018), nanocomposite insulation materials provide improved dielectric performance by controlling charge mobility and enhancing breakdown strength. Further research by Adnan et al. (2021) showed that optimized nanoparticle concentration and surface modification techniques are essential

for achieving stable and reliable nanocomposite insulation performance.

Despite these advantages, challenges remain regarding nanoparticle dispersion, manufacturing scalability, and long-term stability. Future research is focused on developing advanced nanocomposites with improved compatibility between nanoparticles and polymer materials.

Development of Environmentally Friendly Insulation Materials

Environmental sustainability has become an important factor in the development of future HVDC cable insulation systems. Traditional XLPE insulation provides excellent performance but creates recycling challenges because of its irreversible cross-linked structure. As global energy systems move toward sustainable solutions, researchers are focusing on recyclable and environmentally friendly insulation materials.

Thermoplastic polymers, especially polypropylene (PP)-based materials, have gained significant attention as alternatives to XLPE. Polypropylene offers several advantages, including high thermal resistance, good electrical performance, and recyclability. Unlike XLPE, thermoplastic materials can be melted and reshaped, allowing easier recycling after the end of cable service life.

Recent research has focused on improving the mechanical flexibility and electrical stability of polypropylene insulation through polymer blending, nanofiller addition, and functional modification. These approaches aim to achieve performance comparable to XLPE while providing environmental benefits.

Improvements in Thermal and Electrical Performance

Enhancing thermal and electrical performance is a major objective in the development of advanced HVDC cable insulation materials. As transmission voltage and power capacity increase, insulation systems must withstand higher electrical stresses and elevated operating temperatures without significant degradation.

Recent material developments have focused on improving dielectric strength, reducing conductivity, and increasing thermal stability.

Polymer modification techniques, including nanoparticle reinforcement, molecular structure control, and additive incorporation, have contributed to improved insulation performance.

Thermal performance is particularly important because heat generated by current flow can accelerate insulation aging. Advanced materials with higher thermal resistance help maintain mechanical strength and electrical stability during long-term operation.

Electrical performance improvements mainly involve reducing space charge accumulation, increasing breakdown strength, and minimizing dielectric losses. Functional additives and nanocomposite structures have shown potential for controlling charge transport and maintaining stable electric field distribution.

Recent Experimental and Industrial Applications

Recent advancements in HVDC insulation materials have progressed from laboratory research toward practical industrial applications. Several HVDC projects worldwide have adopted improved cable designs using advanced XLPE insulation systems due to their high reliability and long operational lifetime.

Modern HVDC cable systems operating at voltage levels of several hundred kilovolts have demonstrated the effectiveness of improved insulation manufacturing processes and material optimization techniques. These systems are widely used for offshore wind farm connections, underground power transmission, and cross-border electricity exchange.

Experimental research has focused on evaluating insulation performance under realistic operating conditions, including high electric fields, temperature variations, and long-term aging tests. Laboratory studies commonly use techniques such as breakdown testing, space charge measurement, thermal aging analysis, and dielectric spectroscopy to evaluate new materials.

Industrial development has also encouraged the adoption of recyclable insulation materials and smart monitoring systems. The combination of advanced insulation materials with real-time diagnostic technologies provides improved

reliability and reduces maintenance requirements.

According to Wang et al. (2023), the integration of advanced materials, intelligent monitoring, and improved manufacturing techniques represents an important step toward future HVDC cable systems with higher efficiency and operational safety.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The future development of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) cable systems depends on continuous innovation in insulation materials, manufacturing techniques, and monitoring technologies. Although significant progress has been achieved in improving HVDC cable reliability and performance, emerging challenges such as increasing transmission voltage levels, environmental concerns, and the need for intelligent energy networks require further research.

Future HVDC insulation systems are expected to move beyond conventional polymer materials toward multifunctional, sustainable, and intelligent insulation technologies. Research efforts are increasingly focused on developing materials that can automatically respond to electrical stress, provide improved resistance against aging, reduce environmental impact, and support real-time condition assessment. The combination of advanced materials, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital monitoring technologies is expected to transform future HVDC cable systems.

Smart Insulation Materials for Future HVDC Systems

Smart insulation materials represent an emerging research direction for improving the reliability and adaptability of future HVDC cable systems. Unlike conventional insulation materials that only provide electrical isolation, smart insulation materials are designed to respond to changes in operating conditions and provide improved control over electrical behavior.

These materials may include self-healing polymers, functional nanocomposites, and responsive insulation systems capable of detecting and reducing the effects of electrical

stress. Self-healing insulation materials are particularly promising because they can repair microscopic defects caused by electrical aging, extending cable service life and reducing maintenance requirements.

Advanced smart materials can also incorporate sensing capabilities to monitor temperature, electric field distribution, and degradation processes. By integrating sensing functions directly into insulation structures, future HVDC cables may achieve continuous health monitoring without requiring external diagnostic equipment.

According to Bjurström et al. (2024), understanding polymer structure, charge transport mechanisms, and interface behavior is essential for developing intelligent insulation materials with improved reliability. Future research will focus on combining material science with sensor technology to create adaptive insulation systems for advanced power networks.

Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Insulation Solutions

Environmental sustainability has become a major factor influencing the future development of HVDC cable insulation technologies. The increasing global focus on reducing waste and improving resource efficiency has encouraged researchers to develop recyclable and environmentally friendly insulation materials.

Thermoplastic materials, particularly polypropylene-based insulation systems, are considered promising alternatives to traditional XLPE because they offer better recyclability and reduced environmental impact. Future research will focus on improving the electrical, mechanical, and thermal performance of recyclable polymers to make them suitable for large-scale HVDC applications.

Application of Artificial Intelligence in Cable Monitoring

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies are expected to play an important role in the future monitoring and maintenance of HVDC cable systems. Traditional diagnostic methods often require periodic testing, which may not detect early-

stage insulation degradation. AI-based systems provide opportunities for continuous monitoring and predictive analysis.

AI algorithms can analyze large amounts of operational data collected from sensors installed in HVDC cable systems. Parameters such as temperature, electrical stress, partial discharge signals, and insulation resistance can be evaluated to identify abnormal conditions and predict possible failures.

Machine learning models can recognize complex patterns associated with insulation aging and degradation processes. This enables predictive maintenance strategies, reducing unexpected failures and improving system reliability.

According to Wang et al. (2023), the integration of artificial intelligence with advanced monitoring technologies can significantly improve fault detection accuracy and support the development of intelligent power transmission systems. Future research is expected to focus on developing more accurate AI models, real-time monitoring platforms, and autonomous diagnostic systems.

Next-Generation HVDC Cable Technologies

Next-generation HVDC cable technologies are expected to focus on higher voltage capacity, improved efficiency, sustainability, and intelligent operation. Future cable systems will require advanced insulation materials capable of operating under extreme electrical and thermal conditions while maintaining long service life.

Research is moving toward the development of high-temperature superconducting cables, advanced polymer composites, recyclable insulation systems, and multifunctional cable designs. These technologies aim to increase transmission capacity while reducing energy losses and environmental impact.

The integration of renewable energy sources, such as offshore wind and large-scale solar power, will further increase the demand for advanced HVDC systems. Future HVDC cables will need to support flexible grid operation, long-distance energy transfer, and reliable connection between different power networks. Advanced simulation techniques, artificial intelligence, and experimental validation will

play important roles in optimizing future cable designs. The combination of innovative materials and intelligent technologies will enable the development of more efficient and sustainable HVDC transmission systems.

CONCLUSION

High-voltage direct current (HVDC) power cables are essential technologies for modern electricity transmission systems due to their ability to efficiently transfer large amounts of power over long distances. The reliability and performance of HVDC cables are strongly influenced by the properties of their insulation systems. Although conventional insulation materials such as cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) have demonstrated excellent performance, increasing operational demands and environmental concerns have created the need for advanced insulation solutions.

Recent developments in insulation technology have introduced promising materials and techniques, including polymer nanocomposites, recyclable thermoplastic insulation, functionalized polymers, and advanced material modification methods. These innovations have improved dielectric strength, reduced space charge accumulation, enhanced thermal stability, and increased the service lifetime of HVDC cables.

Despite significant progress, challenges such as electrical aging, interface defects, manufacturing complexity, and long-term reliability remain important research issues. Future advancements will require a combination of sustainable materials, smart insulation systems, artificial intelligence-based monitoring, and advanced manufacturing technologies.

The development of next-generation HVDC cable insulation will depend on interdisciplinary research involving polymer science, nanotechnology, electrical engineering, and intelligent monitoring systems. By addressing current limitations and exploring innovative solutions, future HVDC technologies can achieve higher efficiency, improved reliability, and greater environmental sustainability for global power transmission networks.

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