

ranges - less than 2%.

It is possible to fabricate cables having a characteristic impedance that varies through the length of the cable for matching purposes. Thus a coaxial cable can be used as a broadband impedance transformer to match differing source and load impedances. The transforming action is related to cable length and the minimum operating frequency, and the cable must be designed for the specific application.

### C. ATTENUATION

Attenuation is the loss of signal along the length of a cable. As the RF signal passes through the cable, a portion of the signal is converted to heat and a portion of the signal leaks out of the cable through the outer conductor. This loss of signal is usually expressed in decibels per unit of length at a specific frequency, since attenuation increases with frequency.

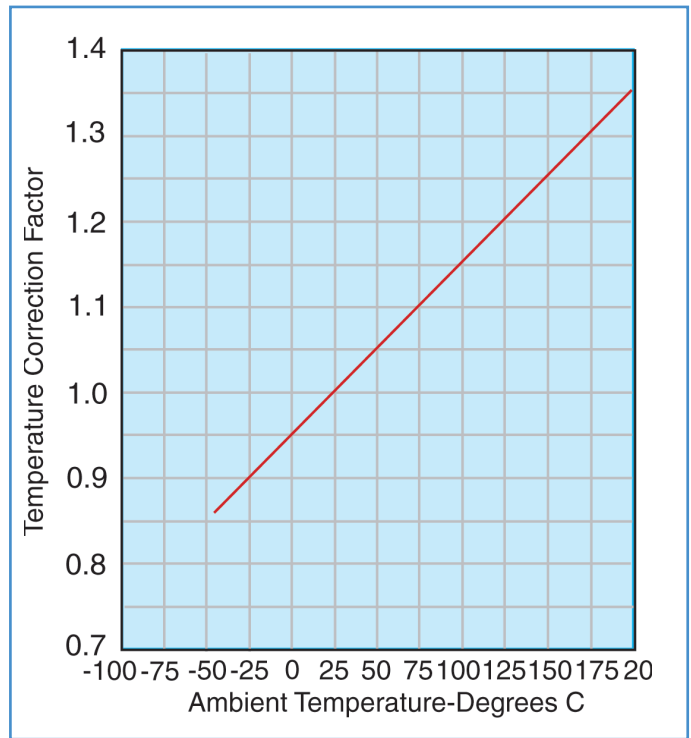
For most applications, the objective is to minimize the losses in the cable runs or to stay within a loss budget. Minimum loss corresponds to an attenuation of 0 dB or a ratio of 1 to 1 between input and output power. Because cable losses decrease with increasing cable diameter for the same type of construction, minimizing cable loss means maximizing cable size.

Attenuation is determined by the conductive and dielectric losses of the cable. Larger cables have lower conductor losses, reducing attenuation. Dielectric loss is independent of size. Dielectric losses increase linearly with frequency, while conductor losses increase with the square root of frequency. Therefore, dielectric losses become a larger proportion of the total cable loss as frequency increases.

Attenuation must be modified by a correction factor for the ambient temperature (see Figure 2). Elevated temperature increases cable attenuation by increasing the resistance of the conductors and by increasing the power factor of the dielectric (see Figure 6 for correction factors).

To select a cable construction for a particular application, determine the desired attenuation at the highest frequency from system requirements. Determine the corrected attenuation by dividing the desired attenuation by the temperature correction factor. Choose the smallest cable meeting the cor-

**Fig. 2**  
**Attenuation Temperature Correction Factor**



rected attenuation value from the tables.

For cables with low attenuation for their size, see the LMR, StripFlex, SFT, and CLL families of cables.

### Attenuation Uniformity

The attenuation of any cable may not change uniformly as the frequency changes. Random and periodic impedance variations give rise to random and periodic attenuation responses. Narrow-band attenuation “spikes” such as that shown in Figure 3 can occur. If required, cables can be procured in various lengths where a maximum attenuation variation from nominal is specified over a customer defined frequency range.

### Attenuation Stability

The attenuation of braided cables can increase with time and flexure. The change with time can be caused by corrosion of the braided shield, by contamination of the primary insulation due to jacket plasticizers, and by moisture penetration through the jacket. These effects can be essentially eliminated by encapsulating the braid with an appropriate flooding compound, as is done in the DB versions of the LMR cables.