Astrophysical neutrino detection Part I: detection principles

Kate Scholberg, Duke University NBIA & DARK Summer School: Multi-Messengers from Compact Sources Copenhagen, July 2018

Goal of these lectures



Describe detection techniques, capabilities and issues for astrophysical neutrino detectors over a range of energies (emphasis on core-collapse supernovae)

NEUTRINOS

$$\begin{pmatrix} e \\ \nu_e \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \mu \\ \nu_\mu \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \tau \\ \nu_\tau \end{pmatrix} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{$$

- Three flavors (families), neutrinos and antineutrinos
- Tiny masses (< 1 eV) and oscillations (flavor change)
- Interact only via weak interaction (& gravity)



Exchange of W and Z bosons in *weak* interactions

Sources of 'wild' neutrinos





Sources of 'tame' neutrinos



Proton accelerators





keV





GeV





eV





Artificial radioactive sources



... common strategies, but we'll focus on the "wild" ones...

Lecture Overview

- Neutrino interactions with matter
- General principles of particle detection
- Survey of neutrino detection techniques
- Specific astrophysical detectors, organized by energy range
 - few to few tens of MeV: core-collapse supernova, solar
 - few hundred MeV to TeV atmospheric v's
 - TeV to EeV + AGNs, GRBs, mergers, ...



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What do we want from a neutrino detector? depends on the source and the physics:



Geordi La Forge's special visor that can see neutrinos

What do we want from a neutrino detector? depends on the source and the physics:



Geordi La Forge's special visor would tell us:

- flavor/CP state
- energy
- direction
- time of interaction
- position of interaction

plus pretty much always want:

- high statistics (mass, efficiency)
- low background

Neutrino interactions with matter

Charged Current (CC)



$$v_{I} + N \rightarrow I^{\pm} + N'$$

Produces lepton with **flavor corresponding to neutrino flavor**

(must have enough energy to make lepton)

Neutral Current (NC



Flavor-blind

It's called the weak interaction for a reason



In astrophysics, the weakness of the interaction is both a blessing and a curse...





- neutrinos bring information from deep inside objects, from regions where photons are trapped
- but they require heroic efforts to detect!



Jargon alert!

In particle physics, an "event" is *not* this...

It's an individual recorded neutrino interaction:



e.g., "the IMB neutrino detector saw 8 events from 1987A"

~10⁵²⁻⁵³ ergs

Interaction rates in a detector material



\propto detector mass, $1/D^2$

(Note: fluxes, cross-sections are E_v dependent)

In fact this may be the neutrino experimentalist's most useful back-of-the-envelope expression...



How many solar neutrinos will interact in your body during your lifetime?

 $\sigma\sim5\times10^{-44}~{\rm cm^2}$ (electron scattering cross-section above a few MeV) $\phi\sim2\times10^6~{\rm cm^{-2}s^{-1}}$ (flux above a few MeV, mostly from ⁸B neutrinos)

What you actually detect is the secondary(ies)... (and tertiaries...) scattered particle, newly created particles, ejected nuclei, showers...

Common nomenclature for neutrino interactions



"Elastic" same particles in as out





"Quasi-elastic"

different final-state particles but same number of particles "Inelastic" energy converted to new particles

Event spectrum as a function of observed energy E', for a realistic detector

 ${\rm flux} \otimes {\rm xscn} \otimes {\rm interaction} \ {\rm products} \otimes {\rm detector} \ {\rm response}$



E': observed energy

k: observed energy for given neutrino energy

T: detector efficiency

V: detector resolution

Tool for predicting neutrino event rates $flux \otimes xscn \otimes detector response$



http://phy.duke.edu/~schol/snowglobes

First: physics of electromagneticor strongly-interacting particle detection. with emphasis on cases common in v experiments



- charged particles
 - "heavy" (μ, π, p, ...)
 - e⁺, e⁻
- photons
- neutrons

References:



Essential for experimentalists!

2 32. Passage of particles through matter

32. PASSAGE OF PARTICLES THROUGH MATTER

Revised September 2013 by H. Bichsel (University of Washington), D.E. Groom (LBNL), and S.R. Klein (LBNL).

This review covers the interactions of photons and electrically charged particles in matter, concentrating on energies of interest for high-energy physics and astrophysics and processes of interest for particle detectors (ionization, Cherenkov radiation, transition radiation). Much of the focus is on particles heavier than electrons (π^{\pm} , p, etc.). Although the charge number z of the projectile is included in the equations, only z = 1 is discussed in detail. Muon radiative losses are discussed, as are photon/electron interactions at high to ultrahigh energies. Neutrons are not discussed. The notation and important numerical values are shown in Table 32.1.

PDG review (points to online databases)

Energy loss of particles in matter

Particles lose energy by interactions with atoms as they move through matter (and may also decay into other particles, or create new particles)

particles deposit energy and change direction



Common energy-loss processes	Inelastic collisions w/ atomic electrons	
	Soft (excitations)	Hard (ionization, secondaries)
	Elastic scattering from nuclei	
	Cherenkov radiation	
Rare energy loss processes (but still potentially important)	Nuclear reactions	
	Bremsstrahlung	

First: "Heavy" (heavier than e[±]) charged particles μ^{\pm} , π^{\pm} , K^{\pm} , p, α , ...

In "normal" cases,

most energy loss is from inelastic collisions,

e.g., ionization of atoms



"stopping power"

 $\frac{dE}{dx}$

as a function of projectile, material, energy, ... in basic approximation can be calculated w/ classical E&M (Jackson)

behaves statistically, but there are many collisions, so fluctuations are typically small

The QM calc for relativistic particles: "Bethe" or "Bethe-Bloch" equation

Mean rate of energy loss

$$\left\langle -\frac{dE}{dx}\right\rangle = Kz^2 \frac{Z}{A} \frac{1}{\beta^2} \left[\frac{1}{2}\ln\frac{2m_e c^2 \beta^2 \gamma^2 W_{\text{max}}}{I^2} - \beta^2 - \frac{\delta(\beta\gamma)}{2}\right] \rho$$

Symbol	Definition	Value or (usual) units	
α	fine structure constant		
	$e^2/4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar c$	1/137.035999074(44)	
M	incident particle mass	MeV/c^2	
E	incident part. energy γMc^2	MeV	
T	kinetic energy, $(\gamma - 1)Mc^2$	MeV	
W	energy transfer to an electron	MeV	
	in a single collision		
k	bremsstrahlung photon energy	MeV	
$m_e c^2$	electron mass $\times c^2$	0.510 998 928(11) MeV	
r_e	classical electron radius		
	$e^2/4\pi\epsilon_0 m_e c^2$	2.817 940 3267(27) fm	
N_A	Avogadro's number	$6.02214129(27) \times 10^{23} \text{ mol}^{-1}$	
\boldsymbol{z}	charge number of incident particle		
Z	atomic number of absorber		
A	atomic mass of absorber	g mol ⁻¹	
K	$4\pi N_A r_e^2 m_e c^2$	$0.307075~{ m MeV}~{ m mol}^{-1}~{ m cm}^2$	
Ι	mean excitation energy	eV (Nota bene!)	
$\delta(\beta\gamma)$	density effect correction to ionization energy loss		
$\hbar \omega_p$	plasma energy	$\sqrt{\rho \langle Z/A \rangle} \times 28.816 \text{ eV}$	
	$\sqrt{4\pi N_e r_e^3} \ m_e c^2/lpha$	$\rightarrow \rho \text{ in g cm}^{-3}$	
N_e	electron density	(units of r_e) ⁻³	
w_j	weight fraction of the j th element in a compound or mixture		
n_j	\propto number of jth kind of atoms in a compound or mixture		
X_0	radiation length	$\rm g~cm^{-2}$	
E_c	critical energy for electrons	MeV	
$E_{\mu c}$	critical energy for muons	GeV	
E_s	scale energy $\sqrt{4\pi/\alpha} m_e c^2$	21.2052 MeV	
R_M	Molière radius	$\rm g~cm^{-2}$	

good to ~% in MeV-GeV range and intermediate Z materials

 $0.1 \lesssim \beta \gamma \lesssim 1000$

What this function looks like:

usually drawn log-log



Be aware: Bethe-Bloch primarily valid for "intermediate" energies



This was for "heavy" particles (i.e., heavier than atomic electrons)

Electrons (and positrons) act differently...



In addition to collisional energy loss, they are easily deflected (accelerated) and they radiate photons (bremsstrahlung) prob $\propto \frac{1}{m^2}$ so brems from μ 's down by $m_e^2/m_\mu^2 = 0.511^2/106^2$ $\sim 4.5 \times 10^{-5}$



At a few tens of MeV (depends on medium) brem energy loss > ionization energy loss: crossover is called the **CRITICAL ENERGY** E_c



Bethe-Heitler approximation

 $E_c \approx \frac{1600m_ec^2}{Z}$

Material	Critical energy	
	[MeV]	
Pb	9.51	
Al	51.0	
Fe	27.4	
Cu	24.8	
Air (STP)	102	
Lucite	100	
Polystyrene	109	
NaI	17.4	
Anthracene	105	
H ₂ O	92	

Another commonly used quantity to characterize radiation of electrons/positrons: **RADIATION LENGTH**, L_{rad}

In the high-energy limit where radiation loss dominates

$$E = E_0 \exp\left(\frac{-x}{L_{\rm rad}}\right)$$

Material	[gm/cm ²]	[cm]
Air	36.20	30050
H ₂ O	36.08	36.1
NaI	9.49	2.59
Polystyrene	43.80	42.9
Pb	6.37	0.56
Cu	12.86	1.43
Al	24.01	8.9
Fe	13.84	1.76
BGO	7.98	1.12
BaF	9.91	2.04
Scint.	43.8	42.4

Shorthand thinking: L_{rad} is thickness for which you can expect to get an **electromagnetic shower** (more on this coming shortly)

Energy loss of photons in matter

In our context, this mostly means **x-rays and gamma rays**

photons have no electric charge...
→no Coulomb-induced collisions

4 electromagnetic energy loss mechanisms:

- photoelectric effect
- Compton scattering
- pair production
- (photonuclear effect)

(Rayleigh scattering: scattering off whole atoms; small at energies of interest here) most of these destroy the photons rather than change the energy (attenuation)



Photoelectric Effect





Cross section calculated with Klein-Nishina formula (QED)

Compton recoil energy distribution





Electromagnetic showers



An avalanche! Can start with either a photon or e[±]

electron brems $\rightarrow \gamma$ pair-produces $\rightarrow e^{\pm}$ brem ... until energies drop below pair-production threshold and/or E_c for electrons

Neutron energy loss

Neutrons interact via the strong force short range force, so rare interactions ... neutrons are penetrating, and will tend to ping around



Mechanism	Reaction	Notes
Elastic scattering from nuclei	A(n,n)A	Main mechanism of energy loss
Inelastic scattering	A(n,n')A [*] , A(n,2n')B,	Deexcitation products or other secondaries
Radiative neutron capture	n+(Z,A) → γ + (Z,A+1)	~ 1/v, so requires low energy
Other nuclear reactions	(n,p), (n, d), (n, α), etc.	Low energies required
Fission		Low energies required
Hadronic showers		High energy (>100 MeV)

There are specialized codes for simulating neutrons (e.g., MCNPX, FLUKA... G4 has a bad rep, but is fine for many applications)

Neutron moderation and capture

Common for low-energy neutrino experiments, e.g. neutron from inverse beta decay

$$\bar{\nu}_e + p \to e^+ + n$$



 $n + p \rightarrow d + \gamma (2.2 \text{ MeV})$

The neutron must thermalize (E~kT~1/40 eV) before capture ... "moderation" by multiple elastic scattering

Elastic kinematics:

$$\left(\frac{A-1}{A+1}\right)^2 E_0 < E < E_0$$

For small A, nucleus takes more energy away per scatter → moderators made out of light materials (hydrogen, carbon...)



Summary of energy loss topics

- charged particles
 - "heavy" (μ , π , p, ...): Bethe-Bloch (ionization)
 - e⁺, e⁻: collisions + radiation (know critical energy/radiation length)
- photons: **PE + Compton + pair production**
- neutrons: elastic scattering (+ radiative capture)

Take-away points so far

- How to calculate neutrino event rates

$$R = \Phi \ \sigma \ N_t$$

- How to estimate energy loss

<u>Most important effects</u>: (for v experiments)

- charged particles
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(know critical energy/radiation length)

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Detecting particles

... energy loss is coupled in some way into an electrical signal, which is digitized, and from which one reconstructs original neutrino information (energy, direction, flavor, position)



Common ways of gathering deposited energy for neutrino experiments

Scintillation light + photosensors

Cherenkov light + photosensors

Direct collection of ionization with electric field

- Specific techniques vary by energy range and physics requirements
- Often more than one technique employed in a given detector







Scintillation for charged particle detection

Particle energy loss excites energy levels in a material; photons (optical/UV) subsequently emitted at deexcitation

- No. of photons ∝ energy loss
- Isotropic emission

...somewhat different mechanisms for different types of scintillator



In most cases, single photons are amplified into observable pulses by **photomultiplier tubes** (PMTs)



photocathode

Common design for neutrino experiments maximizes photocoverage



Note: photodetector improvement is an area of active R&D

Neutrino experiments need to be large, and hence, made of relatively inexpensive material



- most common is liquid hydrocarbon, ~C_nH_{2n}
- often in form of homogeneous volume viewed by PMTs, but can also be segmented
- large light yield

[Also: noble liquid scintillates]

Cherenkov Radiation

Charged particles emit Cherenkov radiation in a medium if β >1/n



- Low light yield, but directional signal is helpful for reconstruction
- Loss of heavy/low energy particles due to Cherenkov threshold

Photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) detect single photons





Fig. 7. Schematic view of a 50 cm PMT.

 Photons → photoelectrons
 → amplified PMT pulses
 → digitize charge, time
 → reconstruct vertex, energy, direction

Ionization charge collection

Basic concept: apply an electric field and gather charge^{*} to form an observable pulse



*generally electron charge, since electrons are more mobile than ions

Technique used for wire chambers which can be arranged as fine-grained trackers

Variation of ion pair charge with applied voltage



...used in a great variety of configurations, but not so much for very large detectors...

Time projection chambers



Get 3D charged-particle track reconstruction

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Zoom in to the ~ MeV to few tens of **MeV** energy range MeV GeV eV keV TeV Water target Pions Protons Copper beam stop

Large (multi-kton) detector technologies for low energies

Water Cherenkov





Cheap material, proven at very large scale Liquid scintillator





Low threshold, good energy resolution

Liquid Argon





Good particle reconstruction

+ some other detector types for specific uses

The weather is always fine underground

Overburden enables collection of neutrinos with no beam trigger: proton decay, atmospheric v's, astrophysical v's,...

(and make beam neutrino samples cleaner too!)

Muons are the penetrating particles



mwe = "meters-water-equivalent" (scale by density)

Physics/astrophysics of interest in this energy range (few to few tens of MeV)



Supernova neutrinos: burst

and "relic"

Solar neutrinos



today



Geoneutrinos

Reactor neutrinos

Radioactive sources

Stopped-pion neutrinos

Major emphasis on supernova neutrinos

Neutrinos from core collapse

Just as gravitational potential energy turns into kinetic (and thermal) energy when an object falls,





.... as the star falls inward, the gravitational energy *must go somewhere*...

The energy *can* escape via neutrinos, thanks to the weakness of the neutrino interactions

~99% of the vast binding energy of the proto-neutron star is shed within ~10 seconds in the form of *neutrinos and antineutrinos of all flavors*



The core-collapse supernova explosion is still not well understood... numerical study ongoing



Blondin, Mezzacappa, DeMarino





Marek & Janka

Neutrinos are intimately involved

Expected neutrino luminosity and average energy vs time

Vast information in the *flavor-energy-time profile*



Nominal expected flavor-energy hierarchy



May or may not be robust...

Neutrino flavor oscillations (governed by fundamental neutrino parameters) will modify the spectra

Neutrino spectrum from core collapse



Describe the flux by parameters vs time



Fluxes as a function of time and energy



Supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud (55 kpc away)



~two dozen neutrino interactions observed!

SN1987A in LMC

v's seen ~2.5 hours before first light



Confirmed baseline model... but still many questions

My colleagues singing Happy Birthday to a supernova



What can we learn from the next neutrino burst?

CORE COLLAPSE PHYSICS



explosion mechanism proto nstar cooling, quark matter black hole formation accretion, SASI nucleosynthesis

....

from flavor, energy, time structure of burst

input from photon (GW) observations input from neutrino experiments

$v_e \implies v_\mu$

NEUTRINO and OTHER PARTICLE PHYSICS

 v absolute mass (not competitive)
 v mixing from spectra: flavor conversion in SN/Earth (mass hierarchy)
 other v properties: sterile v's, magnetic moment,...
 axions, extra dimensions, FCNC, ...

+ EARLY ALERT