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# Very high energy electromagnetic cascades in the LPM regime with IceCube

J. BOLMONT[1], B. VOIGT[1] AND R. NAHNHAUER[1], FOR THE ICECUBE COLLABORATION[2].
[1] *DESY, D-15738 Zeuthen, Germany*
[2] *see special section of these proceedings*
*julien.bolmont@desy.de*

**Abstract:** With a volume of $\sim$1 km$^3$, IceCube will be able to detect very high energy neutrinos above $\sim$100 PeV. At these energies, bremsstrahlung and pair production are suppressed by the Landau-Pomeranchuk-Migdal (LPM) effect. Therefore, $\nu_e$ and $\nu_\tau$ interactions in the ice can produce several hundred meter long cascades. We present an analysis of IceCube sensitivity to $\nu_e$ events. It includes cascade simulation in the LPM regime and makes use of preliminary algorithms for energy and incident angle reconstruction. We then give the obtained effective area for different detector configurations and discuss IceCube detection performance.

## Introduction

Different models predict a significant flux of high energy neutrinos above $\sim$100 PeV. Topological defects, superheavy relics of the Big-Bang, the GZK mechanism or gamma ray bursts could produce such high energy neutrinos (see [1] for a review).

The IceCube neutrino detector is under construction at the South Pole [2]. Currently, it is made of 22 strings each holding 60 optical detectors, instrumenting a volume of $\sim$0.3 km$^3$. Strings are separated by 125 m and modules on a string are separated by 17 m. By its completion in 2011, there will be up to 80 strings and the corresponding volume will be $\sim$1 km$^3$.

At low energies, $e^\pm$ produced by charged current interactions produce small cascades compared to the spacing between two optical modules. The produced light is emitted in the direction of the Cherenkov cone but it is scattered in the ice so that when observed from a distance, it can be considered to be emitted almost isotropically from the centre of the cascade. Therefore, the angular resolution for cascades is bad.

However, for a 100 PeV neutrino, the secondary particle energy is high enough for bremsstrahlung and pair-production to be supressed by the Landau-Pomeranchuck-Migdal (LPM) [3, 4] effect. This leads to an elongation of the cascades, which in turn could result in better angular resolution for cascade events in IceCube.

Here, we focus on electromagnetic cascade analysis for $\nu_e$ events at energies above $\sim$100 PeV where the LPM effect has to be taken into acount. The LPM effect also affects hadronic cascades but as the input energy is distributed over a large number of secondary particles, their length does not increase as dramatically. Hadronic cascades will not be discussed in this paper.

In the next section, we describe two simulation tools for high energy cascades in the LPM regime. The longitudinal profiles obtained are used to estimate the Cherenkov light output in the ice. Following that, effective areas are computed for both a 22 string and an 80 string detector.

The results shown are preliminary.

## Simulation of high-energy cascades

To study high-energy cascades in ice, two simulation packages have been developed. One allows the rapid simulation of cascade profiles and uses a parameterisation of bremsstrahlung and pair-production cross sections in the LPM regime, and a parameterisation of energy deposit for the low energy products of the cascade. The other package is

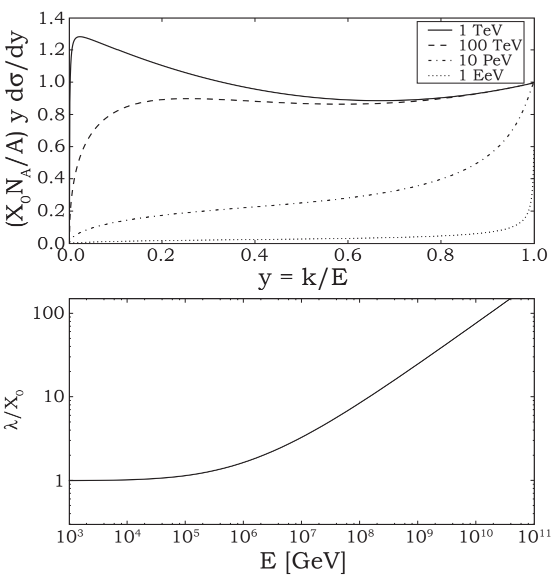


Figure 1: Top panel: differential energy cross section for bremsstrahlung as a function of $y = k/E$ where $k$ is the energy of the photon and $E$ the energy of the electron. Bottom panel: mean free path for bremsstrahlung as a function of energy.

a full Monte Carlo simulation of cascades based on `CORSIKA`.

## Fast simulation: hybrid approach

Following Niess and Bertin [5], a simulation of the cascade development has been implemented. This simulation takes into account bremsstrahlung and pair production interactions and works only in one dimension. The suppression of both processes by the LPM effect is included. Parameterisations of bremsstrahlung and pair production cross sections are taken from [6]. Fig. 1 shows the differential cross section and radiation length parameterisation for bremsstrahlung. The increase of the mean free path above 1 PeV is due to the LPM effect.

In the simulation, high energy particles are propagated until their energy falls below a cut-off energy on the order of 1 TeV and the energy loss profile of these particles is computed using a parameterisation. The individual energy loss profiles of these

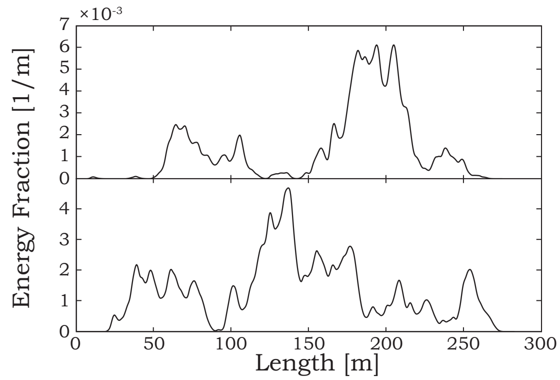


Figure 2: Longitudinal energy profiles of two 10 EeV electromagnetic cascades.

low energy particles are summed to obtain the total energy deposit profile of the full shower.

The fractional energy of the secondary particles is generated randomly from the differential cross section using a Metropolis-Hastings Algorithm [7]. This allows the quick generation of random samples. For instance, when the cut-off energy is on the order of 1 TeV, a single cascade with energies in the PeV range can be simulated in a few milliseconds. A 10 EeV cascade is simulated within less than 3 minutes when the cut-off is set to 50 TeV.

Fig. 2 shows longitudinal energy profiles of two 10 EeV cascades. Their length is about 200 m. Many different sub-cascades contribute to this profile. The figure also shows that the shape and length of the longitudinal profile can vary significantly from one cascade to another.

## Full simulation: Monte Carlo approach

In addition to the simple hybrid approach presented in the previous section, we have also developed a more realistic simulation tool, able to provide more precise information on cascade development. This tool is based on the well-known atmospheric cascade simulation tool `CORSIKA` [8].

As `CORSIKA` is devoted to cascade simulations in the atmosphere, several modifications had to be made in order to adapt the code to a uniform density medium. This work was initially done

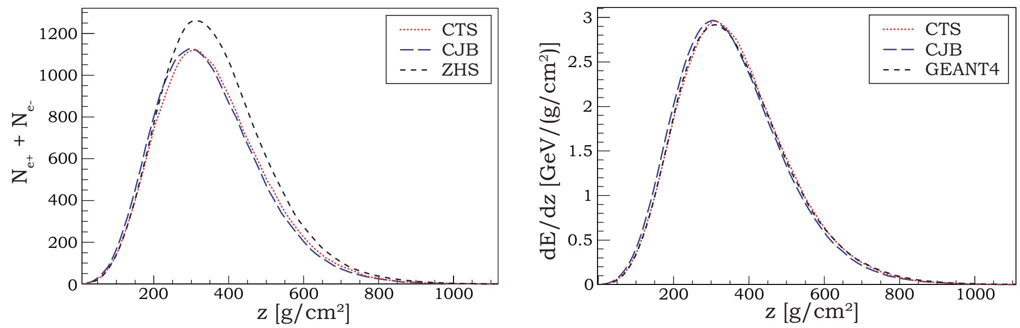


Figure 3: Average longitudinal profiles of one hundred 1 TeV cascades. Left: profile for number of $e^+$ and $e^-$; comparison between `CTS`, `CJB` and `ZHS`. Right: energy deposit; comparison between `CTS`, `CJB` and `GEANT4`.

by T. Sloan for the ACoRNE collaboration with `CORSIKA 6204` [9]. Hereafter, this version will be denoted `CTS`.

We have used these modifications and taken them a step further to get more functionality and more flexibility. The new modifications allow us to:

- switch the medium from air to water or ice during the configuration step,
- choose between pure water, salt water and ice,
- use the different simulation packages (`VENUS`, `QGSJET` and others) available with `CORSIKA`,
- use all the other options available in `CORSIKA`, whenever they are relevant to a simulation in water/ice.

The changes were made starting from the most recent version of `CORSIKA` (`CORSIKA 6502`).

To check the validity of this software (denoted `CJB`), we simulated 1 TeV electrons using both versions `CJB` and `CTS` with the same input parameters and the same random generator seeds. The results were also compared with `GEANT4` [10] and `ZHS` [11] outputs.

Fig. 3 (left) shows the comparison between longitudinal profiles in terms of number of $e^+$ and $e^-$. The small difference between `CJB` and `CTS` comes mainly from minor revisions in the `EGS4` code [13] between `CORSIKA` releases `6204` and `6502`. The difference between the distribution heights is on the order of 10% between `CORSIKA` and `ZHS`. This discrepancy is also pointed out in [9] and comes probably from the fact that the energy below which the particles are counted is not the same in the two packages.

The figure on the right shows the energy deposition profiles for the two versions of `CORSIKA` and `GEANT4`. `ZHS` is not able to give the energy deposition profile; `GEANT4` has been used instead. The profiles are very similar.

## Reconstruction and effective areas

Electron neutrinos with energies between 10 TeV and 10 EeV were generated, propagated through the Earth and forced to interact in the vicinity of the instrumented detector volume using a software package based on the `ANIS` [12] neutrino generator. The development of the cascades in the ice has been done with the fast simulation tool described in the previous section. The detector response includes the simulation of light propagation through the ice, optical module responses and a trigger simulation requiring 8 modules hit within a time window of 4 $\mu$s.

A basic analysis method typically used to reject muon background was applied to the pure $\nu_e$ sample in order to calculate the effective area, taking into account the reconstruction efficiency. The selection is done by computing the ratio between the longitudinal and lateral size of the light distribu-

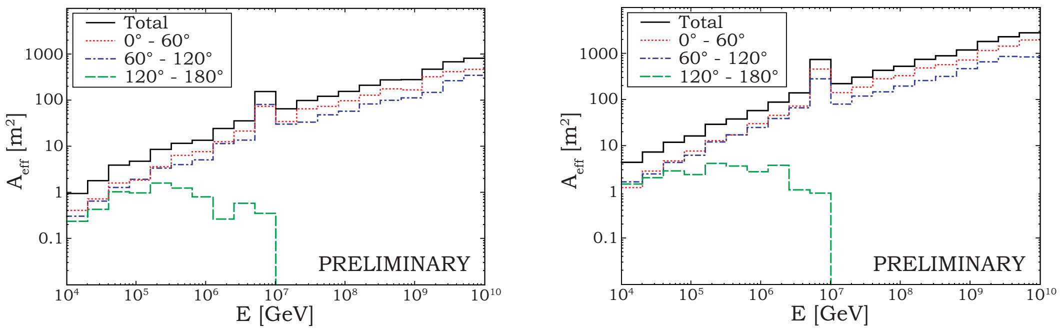


Figure 4: Effective area for different incident angles and for two different detector configurations: 22 strings (left) and 80 strings (right).

tion, using the fact that cascades are more spherical than muon tracks.

The number of passing events has been used to calculate the neutrino effective area for two different geometries of the IceCube detector: 22 strings (present configuration) and 80 strings (final configuration).

The effective area for three different zenith angle ($\theta$) bands and for the two detector configurations is shown in Fig. 4. The effective area generally increases with energy due to the rising cross section of neutrino interactions. However, for neutrinos with energies above $\sim$1 PeV the earth becomes opaque and the effective area for neutrinos coming from below the horizon ($120^o < \theta < 180^o$) falls off. The peak between 5 PeV and 10 PeV is caused by resonant $\overline{\nu_e} + e^-$ scattering at energies around 6.3 PeV (Glashow resonance).

## Conclusions

At very high energies, the LPM effect can increase the length of cascades to several hundred meters. This could lead to a better angular resolution for high energy cascades. We have developed two new tools in order to study these events. Algorithms to exploit the cascade lengthening for improved angular resolution are under development.

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