

Electromagnetic Waves in Plasmas

PYL101: Electromagnetics and Quantum Mechanics
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References

Fundamentals of Plasma Physics by J.A. Bittencourt

Ch.1 Introduction

Ch.10 Plasma Conductivity and Diffusion

sec.2 Langevin equation

sec.3 Linearization of the Langevin equation

sec.5 AC conductivity and electron mobility

sec.7 Plasma as a dielectric medium

Ch. 16 Waves in Cold Plasmas

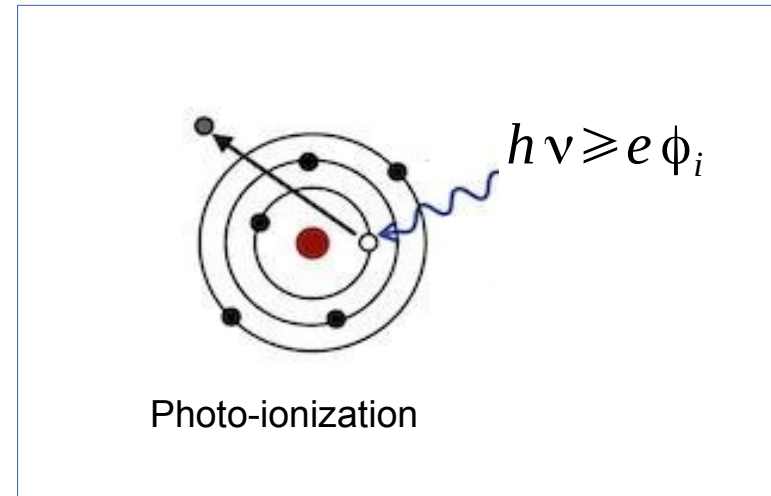
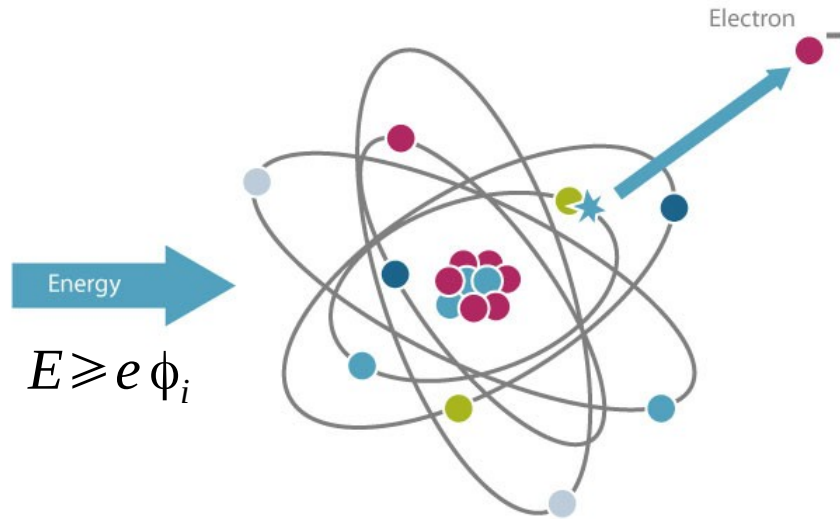
sec.1 Introduction

sec.2. Basic Equations

sec.3. Plane Wave Solutions and Linearization

sec.4. Wave Propagation in Isotropic Electron Plasmas

Ionization



Ionization

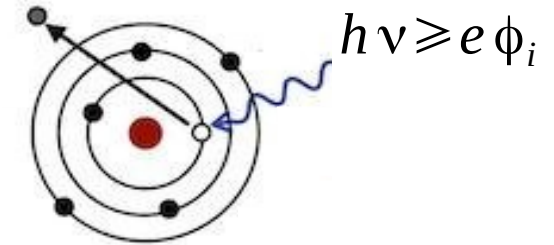
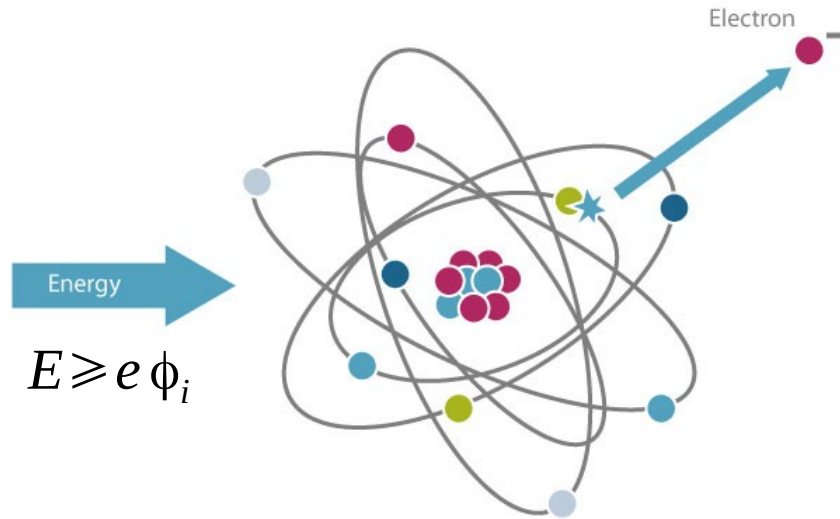
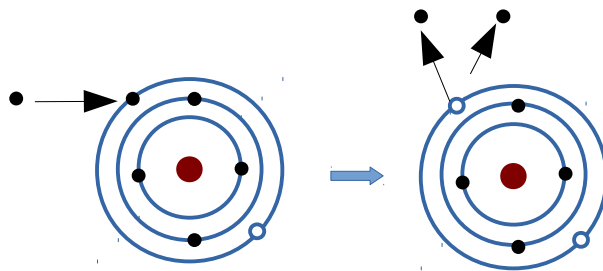


Photo-ionization



Electron impact ionization

For H: $e\phi_i = 13.6 \text{ eV}$

$$E = \frac{3}{2} k_B T$$

$$k_B = 1.38 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J/K}$$

→ $1 \text{ eV} = 11600 \text{ K}$

Saha Ionization Formula

There is also a possibility of an electron to recombine with an ion thus becoming a neutral atom.

In thermal equilibrium, the degree of ionization is given by:

$$\frac{n_i}{n_n} = 2.4 \times 10^{21} \frac{T^{3/2}}{n_i} e^{-e\phi_i/k_B T}$$

where

n_i – density of ionized atoms (m^{-3})

n_n – density of neutral atoms (m^{-3})

T – gas temperature (K)

e – electronic charge (1.6×10^{-19} Coulomb)

ϕ_i – ionization potential (eV)

k_B – Boltzmann constant

Saha Ionization Formula

For air

$$\begin{aligned}n_n &= 3 \times 10^{25} \text{ m}^{-3} \\k_B &= 1.38 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J/K} ; T = 300 \text{ K} \\\phi_i &= 14.5 \text{ eV (Nitrogen)}\end{aligned}$$

Saha Ionization Formula

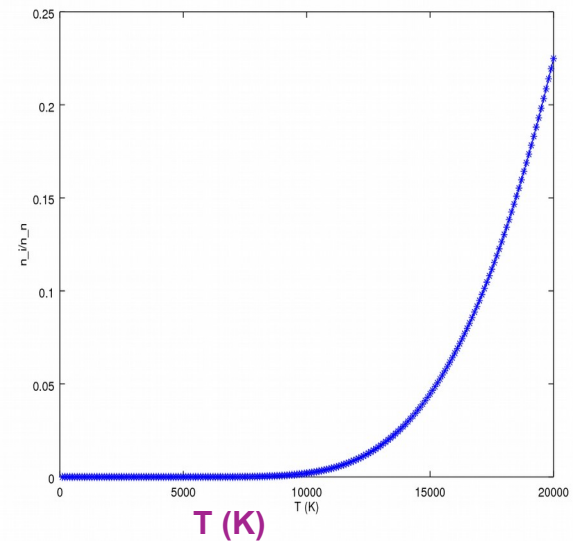
For air

$$n_n = 3 \times 10^{25} \text{ m}^{-3}$$
$$k_B = 1.38 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J/K} ; T = 300 \text{ K}$$
$$\phi_i = 14.5 \text{ eV (Nitrogen)}$$

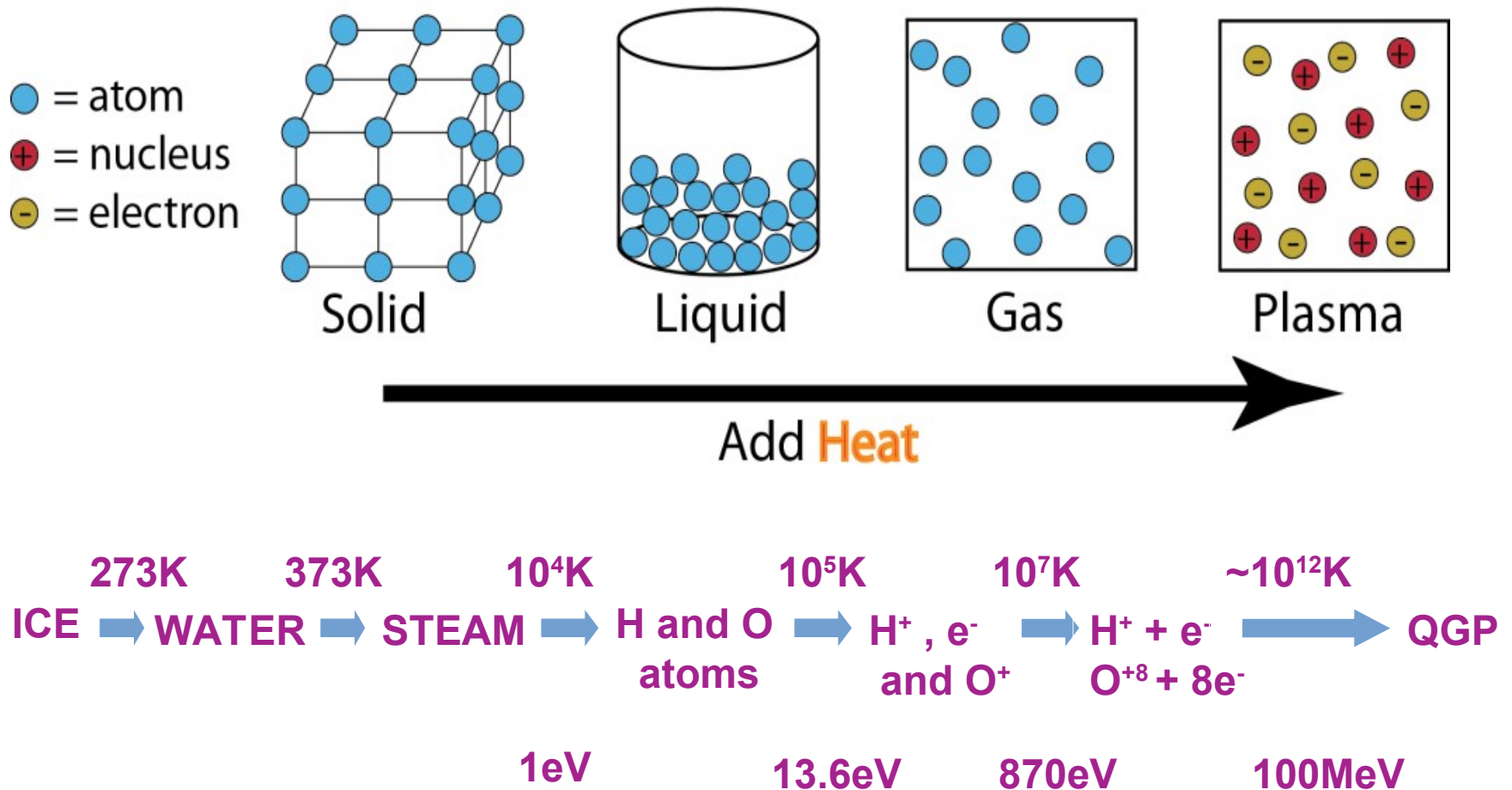
$$n_i \approx 10^{-97} \text{ m}^{-3}$$

$$n_i/n_n \approx 10^{-122}$$

$$n_i/n_n$$

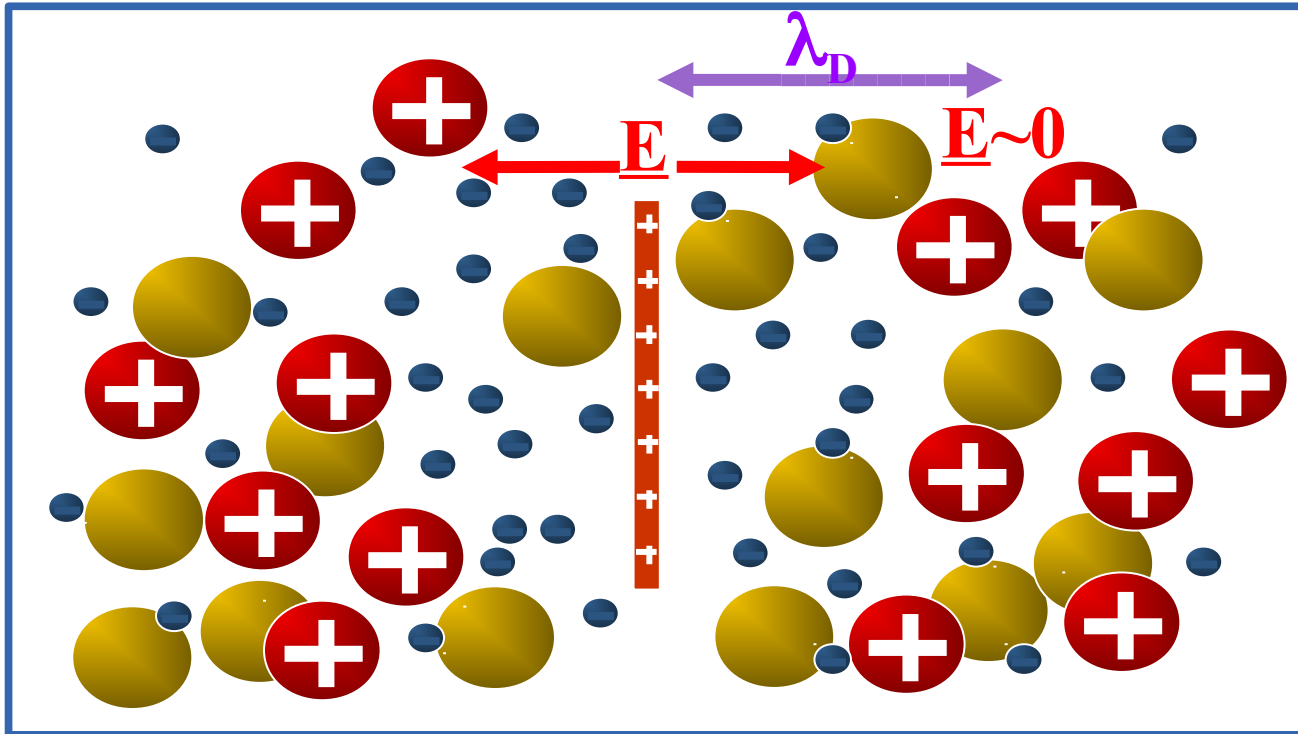


Plasma : The fourth state of matter

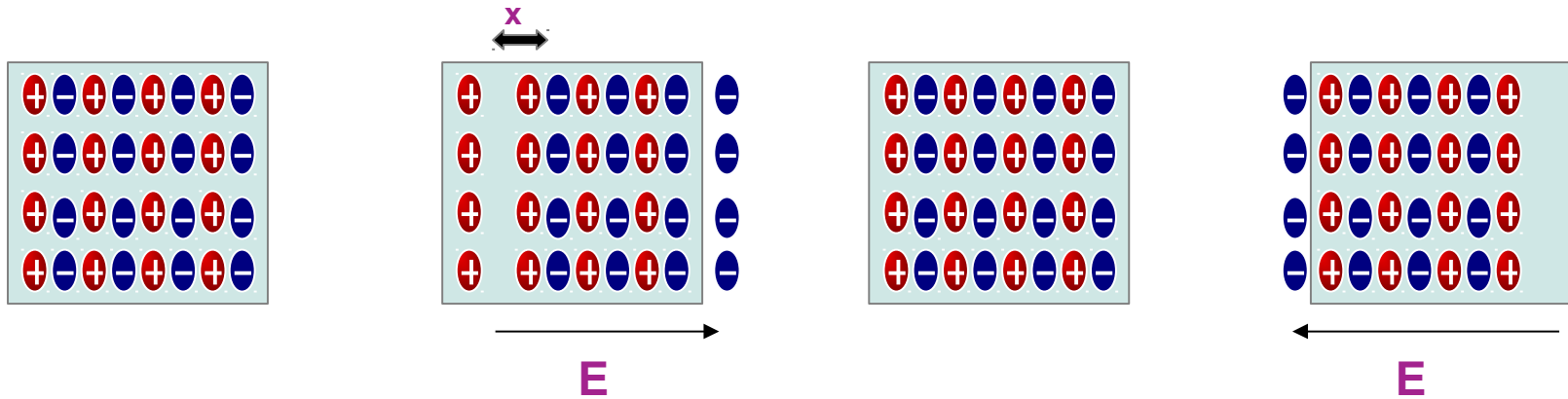


Debye Screening

The screened potential : $\phi(x) = \phi_0 \exp(-x/\lambda_D)$
where $\lambda_D = (kT/4\pi n_0 e^2)^{1/2}$ is called Debye length.



Plasma Oscillations



Plasma frequency

$$m \ddot{x} = \left(\frac{ne x}{\epsilon_0} \right) * -e$$

$$\Rightarrow \ddot{x} + \frac{ne^2}{\epsilon_0 m} x = 0$$

$$\Rightarrow \ddot{x} + \omega_p^2 x = 0$$

where

$$\omega_p = \left(\frac{ne^2}{\epsilon_0 m} \right)^{1/2}$$

is called the electron plasma frequency.

Plasma Conditions

A plasma is quasi-neutral:

$$\lambda_D \ll L$$

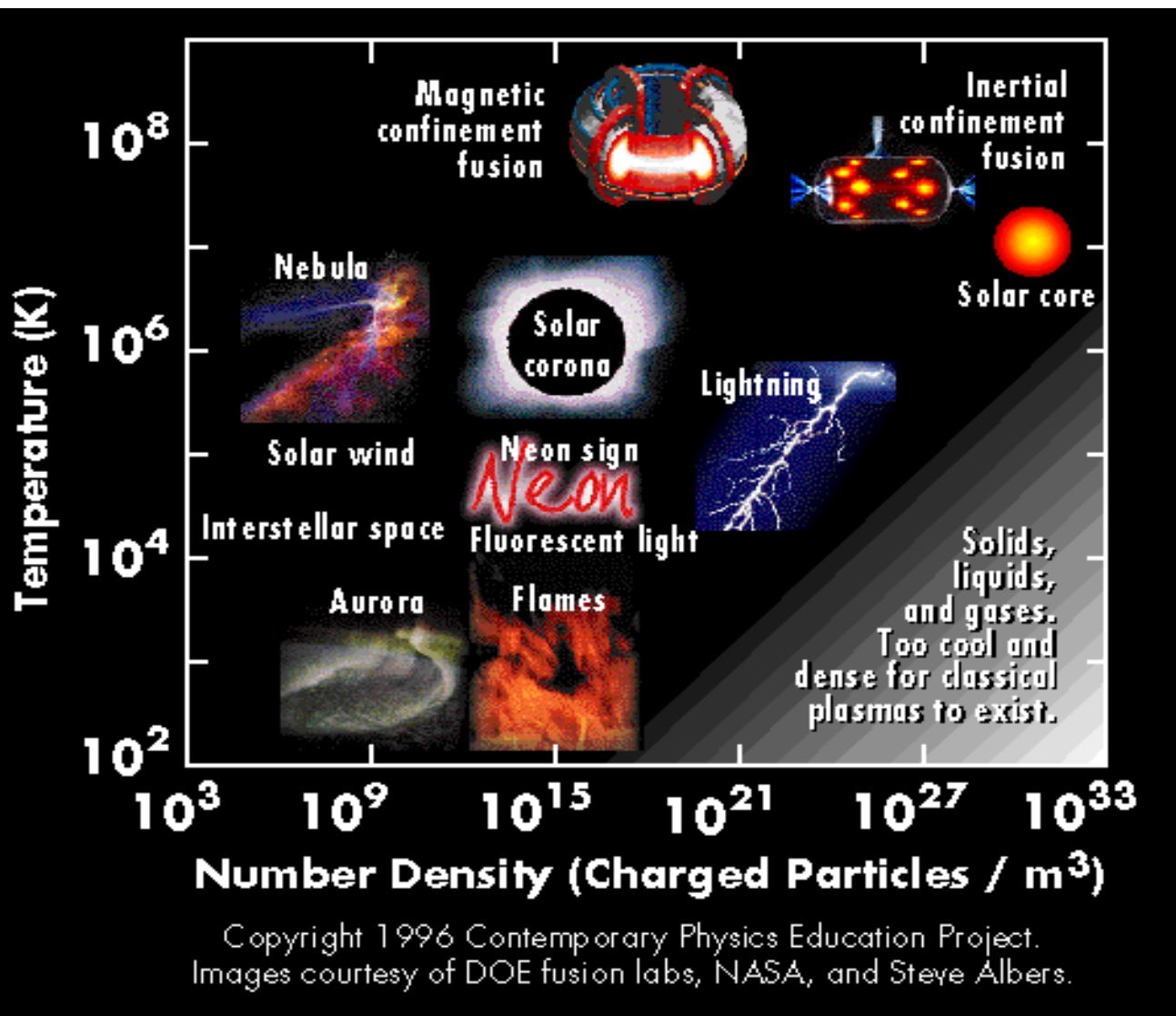
It exhibits “collective dynamics”

$$N_D = n (4\pi/3) \lambda_D^3 \gg 1$$

$$v_c < \omega_p$$

Plasma is a quasi-neutral collection of charged particles (and neutrals) which exhibits collective behaviour.

Plasma Abundance



RF Plasma Conductivity

Consider a plasma subjected to a uniform oscillating RF field

$$\mathbf{E}(t) = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-i\omega t}$$

Plasma electrons will oscillate at the same frequency

$$\mathbf{v}(t) = \mathbf{v}_0 e^{-i\omega t}$$

Eq. of motion for plasma electrons

$$m \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{v}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{v} \right) = -e \mathbf{E} - m \mathbf{v} \nu$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{v}}{\partial t} + \mathbf{v} \nu = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}}{m}$$

multiplying by $e^{\nu t}$ then integrating w.r.t.time

$$\mathbf{v} e^{\nu t} = -\frac{e}{m} \int_0^t \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-i\omega t'} e^{\nu t'} dt' + C$$


RF Plasma Conductivity

$$\mathbf{v} e^{\nu t} = -\frac{e}{m} \int_0^t \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-i\omega t'} e^{\nu t'} dt' + \mathbf{C}$$

$$= -\frac{e \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-i\omega t}}{m(\nu - i\omega)} e^{\nu t} + \mathbf{C}$$

$$\mathbf{v} = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-i\omega t}}{m(\nu - i\omega)} + \mathbf{C} e^{-\nu t}$$

At $t=0$, $\mathbf{v}=0$ so $\mathbf{C} = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}_0}{m(\nu - i\omega)}$


$$\mathbf{v}(t) = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}_0}{m(\nu - i\omega)} [e^{-i\omega t} - e^{-\nu t}]$$

This describes the drift velocity of plasma electrons in a uniform RF field.

RF Plasma Conductivity

$$\mathbf{v}(t) = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}_0}{m(\nu - i\omega)} [e^{-i\omega t} - e^{-\nu t}]$$

For times larger than the collision time, $e^{-\nu t} \rightarrow 0$

$$\mathbf{v}(t) = -\frac{e \mathbf{E}}{m(\nu - i\omega)}$$

The current

$$\mathbf{J} = -ne\mathbf{v}(t) = \frac{ne^2 \mathbf{E}}{m(\nu - i\omega)} = \sigma \mathbf{E}$$

$$\sigma = \frac{ne^2}{m(\nu - i\omega)}$$
 is the rf plasma conductivity.

Effective Plasma Permittivity

$$\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{r}, t) = \mathbf{E}_0(\mathbf{r}) e^{-i\omega t}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \times \mathbf{H} &= \mathbf{J}_f + \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t} \\ &= \sigma \mathbf{E} - i\omega \epsilon_0 \mathbf{E} \\ &= -i\omega \epsilon_0 \left(1 + \frac{i\sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0} \right) \mathbf{E}\end{aligned}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = -i\omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

where

$$\epsilon_{eff} = 1 + \frac{i\sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0}$$

Effective Plasma Permittivity

For a dielectric $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}$

For a metal $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$ with $\epsilon_{eff} = \epsilon_L + \frac{i \sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0}$

For a plasma $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$ with $\epsilon_{eff} = 1 + \frac{i \sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0}$

Effective Plasma Permittivity

For a dielectric $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}$

For a metal $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$ with $\epsilon_{eff} = \epsilon_L + \frac{i \sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0}$

For a plasma $\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = -i \omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$ with $\epsilon_{eff} = 1 + \frac{i \sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0}$

- Both Metal and plasma have a complex dielectric constant.

Effective Plasma Permittivity

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} &= 0 \\ \nabla \times \mathbf{E} &= -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}; \quad \mathbf{B} = \mu_0 \mathbf{H}\end{aligned}$$

Gauss' law $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} = \rho_f$

For dielectrics $\mathbf{D} = \epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}; \quad \rho_f = 0; \quad \nabla \cdot (\epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}) = 0$

Effective Plasma Permittivity

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} &= 0 \\ \nabla \times \mathbf{E} &= -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}; \quad \mathbf{B} = \mu_0 \mathbf{H}\end{aligned}$$

Gauss' law $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} = \rho_f$

For dielectrics $\mathbf{D} = \epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}; \quad \rho_f = 0; \quad \nabla \cdot (\epsilon_0 \epsilon_r \mathbf{E}) = 0$

For plasmas

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial \rho_f}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \mathbf{J}_f &= 0 \\ -i\omega \rho_f + \nabla \cdot (\sigma \mathbf{E}) &= 0\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} &= \rho_f \\ \nabla \cdot (\epsilon_0 \mathbf{E}) &= \frac{1}{i\omega} \nabla \cdot (\sigma \mathbf{E})\end{aligned} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \begin{aligned}\nabla \cdot \left(\epsilon_0 \left(1 + \frac{i\sigma}{\omega \epsilon_0} \right) \mathbf{E} \right) &= 0 \\ \nabla \cdot (\epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}) &= 0\end{aligned}$$

Effective Plasma Permittivity

Now RF conductivity of plasma $\sigma = -\frac{ne^2}{im(\omega + i\nu)}$

So effective permittivity of plasma

$$\epsilon_{eff} = 1 - \frac{ne^2}{\omega^2 \epsilon_0 m \left(1 + \frac{i\nu}{\omega}\right)}$$

$$\epsilon_{eff} = 1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2 \left(1 + \frac{i\nu}{\omega}\right)} < 1$$

where $\omega_p = \sqrt{\frac{ne^2}{\epsilon_0 m}}$ is the plasma frequency.

EM Waves in Plasmas

- Consider a plane wave traveling inside a plasma medium

$$\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{r}, t) = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{i(\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{r} - \omega t)}$$

So we can substitute $\nabla \rightarrow i\mathbf{k}$; $\partial/\partial t \rightarrow -i\omega$

Now from the Maxwell's curl equations

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \times \mathbf{E} &= -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} \\ \rightarrow \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E} &= +\omega \mu_0 \mathbf{H} \\ \nabla \times \mathbf{H} &= \mathbf{J}_f + \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t} = -i\omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E} \\ \rightarrow \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H} &= -\omega \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}\end{aligned}$$

EM Waves in Plasmas

Now taking curl of one of the curl equation

$$\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E} = +\omega\mu_0 \mathbf{H}$$

$$\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H} = -\omega\epsilon_0\epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

We obtain

$$\mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = +\omega\mu_0 \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H}$$

$$\rightarrow \mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = -\omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

EM Waves in Plasmas

Now taking curl of one of the curl equation

$$\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E} = +\omega\mu_0 \mathbf{H}$$

$$\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H} = -\omega\epsilon_0\epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

We obtain

$$\mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = +\omega\mu_0 \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H}$$

$$\rightarrow \mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = -\omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

Now if we take a dot product with wave vector \mathbf{k} ,

> left hand side will vanish

> so right hand side should also vanish, i.e.

$$\epsilon_{eff} (\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{E}) = 0$$



Either $\epsilon_{eff} = 0$ OR $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0$

EM Waves in Plasmas

(i) $\epsilon_{eff} = 0$:

$$\mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = -\omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E} = 0$$

$$\mathbf{k} (\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{E}) - k^2 \mathbf{E} = 0$$

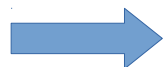


$$\mathbf{k} \parallel \mathbf{E}$$



Also

$$\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E} = \omega \mu_0 \mathbf{H} = 0$$



$$\mathbf{H} = 0$$

- This represents a longitudinal electrostatic wave.
- Electric field oscillates along the propagation direction.
- Electron density also oscillates along propagation direction.

EM Waves in Plasmas

(i) $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0$:

$$\mathbf{k} \times (\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E}) = -\omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

$$\mathbf{k}(\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{E}) - k^2 \mathbf{E} = -\omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

$$-k^2 \mathbf{E} = \omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E}$$

$$k^2 = \omega^2 \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff}$$

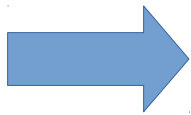


$$k^2 = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2 \left(1 + \frac{i\nu}{\omega} \right)} \right)$$

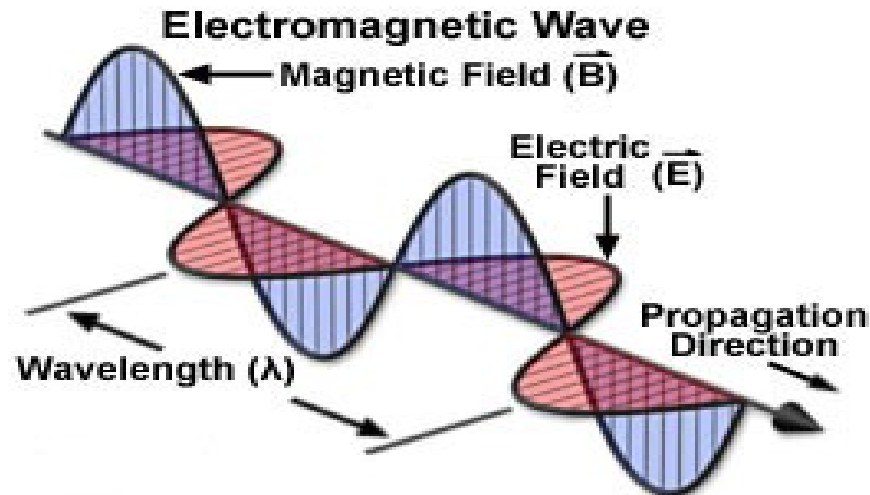
- This is the dispersion relation of an EM wave in a plasma.

EM Waves in Plasmas

- Now for nonzero ϵ_{eff}
$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{E} &= +\omega\mu_0 \mathbf{H} \\ \mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{H} &= -\omega\epsilon_0 \epsilon_{eff} \mathbf{E} \end{aligned}$$



- > \mathbf{k} and \mathbf{E} are perpendicular to \mathbf{H}
- > \mathbf{k} and \mathbf{H} are perpendicular to \mathbf{E}



EM Waves in Plasmas: Dispersion Relation

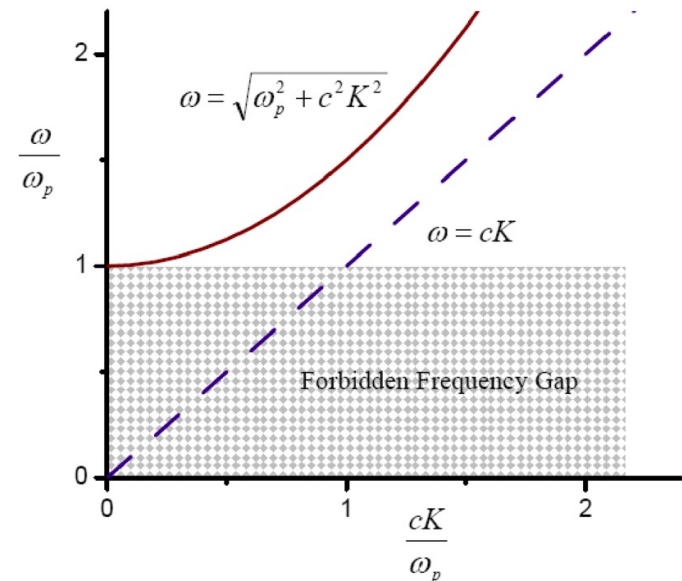
$$k^2 = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2 \left(1 + \frac{i\nu}{\omega} \right)} \right)$$

For $\nu \ll \omega$

$$k^2 = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} \right) = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} - \frac{\omega_p^2}{c^2}$$

Dispersion Relations becomes

$$\omega^2 = \omega_p^2 + k^2 c^2$$



Underdense and Overdense Plasmas

$$\omega^2 = \omega_p^2 + k^2 c^2$$

For $\omega > \omega_p$

$$\text{Refractive index} = c/v_p = ck/\omega = \sqrt{1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2}} < 1 \quad \Rightarrow \quad v_p > c$$

- Plasma is called **underdense plasma** and wave propagation is possible.

For $\omega < \omega_p$

$$k = \frac{\omega}{c} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} \right)^{1/2} \text{ becomes imaginary}$$

- Plasma is called **overdense plasma** and wave can not propagate inside the plasma.

EM Waves in Plasmas: Skin depth

$$\omega^2 = \omega_p^2 + k^2 c^2$$

For $\omega < \omega_p$ $k = \frac{\omega}{c} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} \right)^{1/2} = i \alpha$

where $\alpha = \frac{\omega}{c} \left(\frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} - 1 \right)^{1/2}$

For one dimensional wave propagation

$$\mathbf{E}(z, t) = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{i(kz - \omega t)} = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-\alpha z} e^{-i \omega t}$$

One can define the collision-less skin depth ($\nu \approx 0$)

$$\delta = \frac{1}{\alpha} = \frac{c}{\sqrt{\omega_p^2 - \omega^2}} \approx \frac{c}{\omega_p}$$

EM Waves in Plasmas: Skin depth

For $\nu \neq 0 \ll \omega_p$

$$k = \frac{\omega}{c} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2 (1 + i \nu / \omega)} \right)^{1/2} = k_r + i k_i$$

$$\text{where } k_r = \frac{\omega}{c} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} \right)^{1/2} ; k_i = \frac{\nu}{2c} \frac{\omega_p^2 / \omega^2}{\left(1 - \omega_p^2 / \omega^2 \right)^{1/2}}$$

For one dimensional wave propagation

$$\mathbf{E}(z, t) = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{i(kz - \omega t)} = \mathbf{E}_0 e^{-k_i z} e^{i(k_r z - \omega t)}$$

k_i dominates when $\omega \approx \omega_p \rightarrow$ the wave is heavily attenuated

EM Waves in Plasmas: Skin depth

Now for $\omega \ll \nu$

$$k^2 = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2 \left(1 + \frac{i\nu}{\omega} \right)} \right) \approx \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega \nu} i$$

$$k = \frac{\omega_p}{c} \left(\frac{\omega}{\nu} \right)^{1/2} \frac{1+i}{\sqrt{2}} = k_r + ik_i$$

And skin depth:

$$\delta = \frac{1}{k_i} = \frac{c}{\omega_p} \left(\frac{2\nu}{\omega} \right)^{1/2} \Rightarrow \delta \propto \frac{1}{\omega^{1/2}}$$

So for very low frequencies skin depth would be quite large.

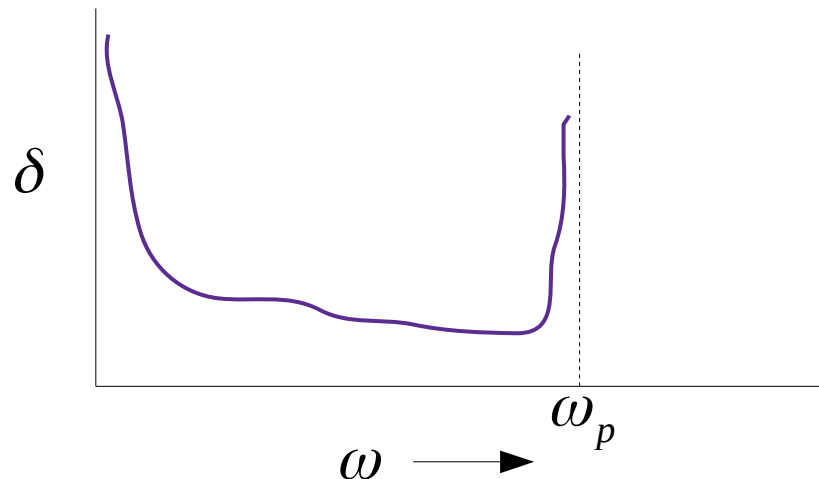
EM Waves in Plasmas: Skin depth

Now for $\omega \ll \nu$

$$\delta = \frac{c}{\omega_p} \left(\frac{2\nu}{\omega} \right)^{1/2}$$

whereas for $\omega \gg \nu$

$$\delta = \frac{c}{\sqrt{\omega_p^2 - \omega^2}}$$



Reflection from Plasmas

Incident, reflected and transmitted waves

$$\mathbf{E}_I(z, t) = \hat{x} E_{0I} e^{i(k_1 z - \omega t)}$$

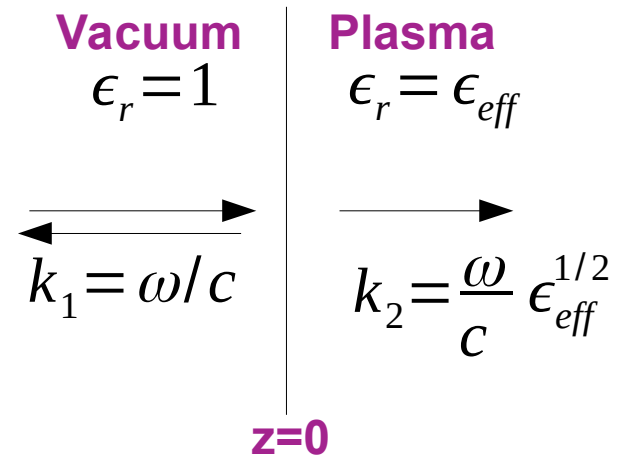
$$\mathbf{B}_I(z, t) = \hat{y} \frac{E_{0I}}{c} e^{i(k_1 z - \omega t)}$$

$$\mathbf{E}_R(z, t) = \hat{x} E_{0R} e^{i(-k_1 z - \omega t)}$$

$$\mathbf{B}_R(z, t) = -\hat{y} \frac{E_{0R}}{c} e^{i(-k_1 z - \omega t)}$$

$$\mathbf{E}_T(z, t) = \hat{x} E_{0T} e^{i(k_2 z - \omega t)}$$

$$\mathbf{B}_T(z, t) = \hat{y} \frac{k E_{0T}}{\omega} e^{i(k_2 z - \omega t)}$$



Applying boundary conditions at $z=0$

Continuity of E_x : $E_{Ix} + E_{Rx} = E_{Tx}$

Continuity of H_y : $H_{Iy} + H_{Ry} = H_{Ty}$

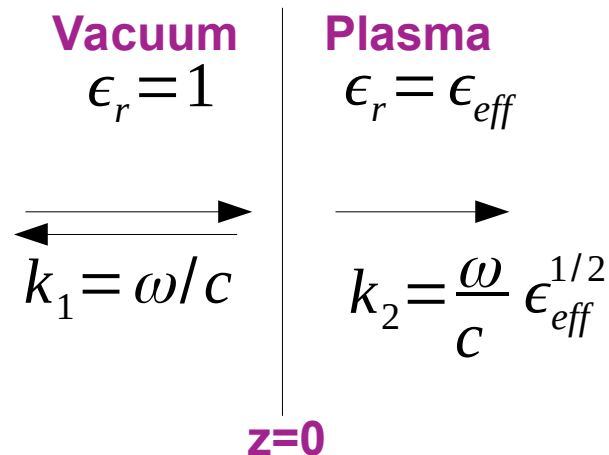
Reflection from Plasmas

Applying boundary conditions at $z=0$

Continuity of E_x : $E_{Ix} + E_{Rx} = E_{Tx}$
Continuity of H_y : $H_{Iy} + H_{Ry} = H_{Ty}$

$$E_{I0} + E_{R0} = E_{T0}$$

$$E_{I0} - E_{R0} = \frac{ck}{\omega} E_{T0}$$



Solving these equations one obtains

$$E_{R0} = \frac{1-\eta}{1+\eta} E_{I0}; \quad E_{T0} = \frac{2}{1+\eta} E_{I0} \quad \text{with} \quad \eta = \frac{ck}{\omega}$$

Reflection from Plasmas

$$E_{R0} = \frac{1-\eta}{1+\eta} E_{I0}; \quad E_{T0} = \frac{2}{1+\eta} E_{I0} \quad \text{with} \quad \eta = \frac{ck}{\omega}$$

For $\omega > \omega_p$, $\eta < 1$

> $E_{R0}/E_{I0} < 1$ but positive

> No phase change on reflection.

For $\omega < \omega_p$, $\eta = i\alpha'$

$$E_{R0} = \frac{1-i\alpha'}{1+i\alpha'} E_{I0} = \frac{(1-\alpha^2) - i(2\alpha)}{(1+\alpha^2)} E_{I0}; \quad \frac{|E_{R0}|}{|E_{I0}|} = 1$$

> All the incident energy gets reflected but phase changes on reflection.

Evanescent field:
$$\mathbf{E}_T = \hat{x} \frac{2 E_{I0}}{(1+i\alpha')} e^{-\frac{\omega}{c} \alpha' z} e^{-i\omega t}$$

