

A SEARCH FOR LIGHTLY IONIZING PARTICLES  
IN THE LUX DETECTOR AND R&D FOR FUTURE  
EXPERIMENTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

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For Future Experiments

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Write the abstract here.

To my mom, for always making me feel like I could do this. To my friends, for being there when I was sure I couldn't.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Some Text

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## ACRONYMS

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- SM Standard Model  
BSM Beyond the Standard Model  
SUSY Supersymmetry  
MSSM Minimal Supersymmetric Model  
cMSSM Constrained MSSM  
pMSSM Phenomenological MSSM  
LSP Lightest Supersymmetric Particle  
WIMP Weakly Interacting Massive Particle  
LIP Lightly Ionizing Particle  
LUX Large Underground Xenon  
LXe Liquid Xenon  
TPC Time Projection Chamber  
SURF Sanford Underground Research Facility  
ER Electron Recoil  
NR Nuclear Recoil  
HV High Voltage  
SHV Safe High Voltage  
SS Stainless Steel  
CF Conflat  
PMT Photomultiplier Tube  
QE Quantum Efficiency  
PTFE Polytetrafluoroethylene  
PEEK Polyether ether ketone

RMS root mean square

CCS Collisional Cross Section

PAI Photo Absorption Ionization

FVP Fermi Virtual Photon

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

---

*I was dreamin' when I wrote this, forgive me if it goes astray.*

— Prince

This Thesis goes like....

## PART I

# THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND EXPERIMENTAL STRATEGIES

This section describes the theoretical foundation for the analysis presented in [Part II](#). It includes an overview of the Standard Cosmology...

# 2

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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*I was dreamin' when I wrote this, forgive me if it goes astray.*

— Prince

### 2.1 A LITTLE HISTORY

Our understanding of the universe develops in a leap-frog of theory and observation, one catching up to and surpassing the other as technology improves, to be passed in turn by a new idea or new observation.

### 2.2 THE STANDARD COSMOLOGY

The standard cosmology is a parametrization of the Big-Bang cosmological model is also referred to as  $\Lambda$ CDM ("Lambda-CDM") and it accounts for the observed:

- cosmic microwave background (CMB)
- large scale structure of galaxies and clusters
- accelerating expansion of the universe
- abundances of hydrogen and helium

Since the CMB was discovered in 1965

## 2.3 EVIDENCE FOR DARK MATTER

### 2.3.1 GALAXIES AND CLUSTERS

### 2.3.2 COSMIC MICROWAVE BACKGROUND

## 2.4 DARK MATTER CANDIDATES MOTIVATED BY PARTICLE PHYSICS

### 2.4.1 WIMPS AND THE HIERARCHY PROBLEM

### 2.4.2 AXIONS AND THE STRONG CP PROBLEM

## 2.5 MOTIVATION FOR LIPS

# 3

## PARTICLE DETECTION WITH LIQUID XENON

---

### 3.1 LIQUID XENON AS A DETECTOR MEDIUM

Liquid xenon detectors are powerful tools for rare event searches. In particular, the dual phase [LXe](#) Time Projection Chamber ([TPC](#)) has been very successful in accessing Weakly Interacting Massive Particle ([WIMP](#)) parameter space and currently holds the worlds most sensitive limits on [WIMPs](#). This section describes the properties of [LXe](#) and the basic principles of [TPCs](#) that have allowed this technology to play a large role in the hunt for dark matter.

#### 3.1.1 PROPERTIES OF LIQUID XENON

Liquid xenon has many properties relevant to particle detection, particle identification, and also many properties related to the ease of detector operation:

- The density of [LXe](#) is  $2.9 \text{ g/cm}^3$  at  $170 \text{ K}$ , much denser than other possible [TPC](#) target materials, such as liquid argon which has density  $1.4 \text{ g/cm}^3$  at  $87 \text{ K}$ . The advantage in this two-fold: (1) the same volume contains more kg of Xe than Ar, so for two detectors of the same volume, one filled with Xe and the other with Ar, both running for one year, the Xe detector has more exposure; (2) xenon's high density effectively stops external radiation, producing an ultra-low-background volume in the center of the detector where rare-event searches can be performed (this region is called the “fiducial volume”).
- Xenon gas is easily liquefied with liquid nitrogen ( $77 \text{ K}$ ) or commercially available pulse tube refrigerators.
- Xenon has no long-lived radioisotopes that cause troublesome backgrounds. The one exception is the  $2\nu\beta\beta$  decay of  $^{136}\text{Xe}$  (natural abundance 8.875%) with measured half-life of  $2.1 \times 10^{21} \text{ years}$ . The long half-life and relatively low abundance together result in a very

low count rate, and the isotope can be used to search for neutrino-less double beta decay ( $0\nu\beta\beta$ ).

- Xenon, as a noble element, is easily purified with a heated getter to rid electronegative impurities (e.g. O<sub>2</sub>) that interfere with the ionization signal.
- The comparatively large mass of xenon allows it to be purified of other noble gasses via gas chromatography [1] and cryogenic distillation [2]. As other noble gasses cannot be removed via getter, this feature is extremely useful in removing the troublesome background of <sup>85</sup>Kr decay. <sup>85</sup>Kr decays via beta emission to stable <sup>85</sup>Rb with a half-life of 10.8 years and  $Q_\beta = 687$  keV. The decay proceeds directly to the <sup>85</sup>Rb ground state with a branching ratio of 99.6%. Since no de-excitation of <sup>85</sup>Rb follows, this beta decay cannot be rejected as background by coincidence with a gamma, and relies purely on the ability to discriminate between WIMP-like Nuclear Recoil (NR) and beta- or gamma- produced Electron Recoil (ER). While ER/NR discrimination is one of the features of LXe TPCs (described in section 3.3), leakage of ER events into the NR signal region can occur and the best mitigation is to remove as much of the <sup>85</sup>Kr as possible. Single-phase LXe detectors, with no ER/NR discrimination, benefit greatly from the ability to remove <sup>85</sup>Kr.
- Particles interacting in LXe excite atoms and create electron ion-pairs, producing detectable quanta: scintillation photons and ionization electrons, respectively (described in section 3.1.2).
- Xenon produces scintillation light of wavelength  $\lambda = 178$  nm (described in section 3.1.2). Xenon is transparent to this wavelength so it can propagate freely and be directly detected with current Photomultiplier Tube (PMT) technology, and doesn't require the use of e.g wavelength shifter.
- Ionization electrons produced in particle interactions can be drifted and extracted into a gaseous region via applied electric fields, where they undergo proportional scintillation. By this method, a single electron is amplified many-fold into detectable photons. This basic operating principle of dual-phase TPCs makes even a single ionization electron detectable.
- Xenon has high light and charge yields, and therefore a low threshold for producing detectable quanta. A useful quantity is the so-called ‘W-value’ of LXe:  $W = 13.7 \pm 0.2$  eV [3]. The W-value, analogous to a work-function, is a measure of the average energy expen-

diture to produce one quanta (scintillation photon or an ionization electron) from liquid xenon.

- [LXe TPCs](#) are easily scalable: creating a large homogenous volume is straightforward. In contrast, solid state detectors, such as cryogenic Ge, are more difficult to scale up directly and require instead the production of multiple small modules ( $O(10)$  cm) which each must be instrumented separately.

### 3.1.2 SCINTILLATION AND IONIZATION SIGNAL GENERATION

A particle can interact with a xenon atom through interaction with an orbiting electron, creating an [ER](#), or though an interaction with the xenon nucleus, where the nucleus is imparted with momentum and recoils, [NR](#). Some energy is lost to atomic motion (heat). The recoiling electron or nucleus loses energy via interaction with neighboring xenon atoms, creating more excited atoms and electron-ion pairs. The excited xenon atoms,  $\text{Xe}^*$ , combine with other atoms to form an excited dimer, or excitons,  $\text{Xe}_2^*$ . The excited dimer forms two states: a triplet and a singlet, which de-excite with the emission of a 178 nm photon. The lifetimes of the triplet and singlet are measured to be 24 ns and 3 ns, respectively [4]. The  $\text{Xe}^+$  ions of the electron-ion pairs combine with other  $\text{Xe}$  atoms to form dimers  $\text{Xe}_2^+$ , and these dimers can combine with electrons (from the electron-ion pairs) to form excitons,  $\text{Xe}_2^*$ , which then decay and produce additional 178 nm scintillation photons. This process is called recombination. If no electric field is applied, all electron-ion pairs recombine to produce additional scintillation photons. If an external electric field is present, some electrons can be drifted away from the interaction site to be detected with other methods.

The sensitivity of liquid xenon detectors to low energy recoils depends on their ability to detect the 178 nm scintillation photons with high-efficiency. High Quantum Efficiency ([QE](#)) PMTs constructed with ultra-low radioactivity materials are the go-to instrument for this purpose. In addition to high-efficiency photon-detectors, liquid xenon detectors must also have high geometrical light collection efficiency to optimize sensitivity. Single-phase liquid xenon detectors, where no electric field is applied, maximize light-collection by with a spherical geometry, endeavoring to cover  $4\pi$  steradians surrounding the [LXe](#). The XMASS detector uses spherical geometry to accomplish photocathode coverage of 62%, and two types of Hamamatsu PMTs (R10789-11 and R10789-11MOD) with [QE](#) of 28%, and quote a signal collection efficiency of 20% [5], [6]. Dual-phase [TPC](#) detectors are lined with Polytetrafluoroethylene ([PTFE](#)) to take advantage of its extremely high (99%) reflectivity for 178 nm light in [LXe](#) [7]. The LUX de-

### 3.2 DUAL-PHASE LIQUID XENON TIME PROJECTION CHAMBER

tector uses a cylindrical geometry, with all non-light-collecting surfaces lined with PTFE, and Hamamatsu R8778 PMTs (QE of 33%) only on the top and bottom of the detector (low photocathode coverage), to accomplish a light collection efficiency of 90% [8].

If the detector is a TPC the ionization electrons are drifted away from the interaction site to be detected. Single phase TPC employ thin wires to collect the ionization electrons. For example, the EXO-200 experiment is a single-phase liquid TPC that uses crossed-wire planes to collect ionization electrons and avalanche photodiodes to collect the scintillation photons [9]. LUX is a dual-phase TPC, where ionization electrons are drifted and extracted into gaseous xenon via applied electric fields, where they undergo proportional scintillation. The proportional scintillation light is the same 178 nm wavelength as scintillation in the liquid region, and it is similarly collected via high QE PMTs.

## 3.2 DUAL-PHASE LIQUID XENON TIME PROJECTION CHAMBER

### 3.3 ER, NR DISCRIMINATION

### 3.4 LUX

#### 3.4.1 OPTIMIZATION FOR WIMPS

#### 3.4.2 WIMP RATES AND CROSS SECTION

#### 3.4.3 LIP SEARCH ABILITY

## PART II

### BIG SCIENCE

This section describes research done with the LUX Detector.

# 4

## THE LUX DETECTOR

---

### 4.1 DETECTOR COMPONENTS

4.1.1 CRYOSTAT

4.1.2 PMTS

4.1.3 WATER TANK

4.1.4 TRIGGER AND DATA ACQUISITION

### 4.2 CALIBRATIONS

4.2.1 TRITIUM

4.2.2 DD

4.2.3 KR

# 5

## LIGHTLY IONIZING PARTICLE SEARCH

---

### 5.1 MODELING LIP INTERACTION

#### 5.1.1 COLLISION CROSS SECTION

A Lightly Ionizing Particle ([LIP](#)) interacting in the [LXe](#) volume loses energy via interaction with electrons. To model [LIPs](#) in Large Underground Xenon ([LUX](#)), the expression of interest is the collision cross section Collisional Cross Section ([CCS](#)). The differential [CCS](#) describes the energy lost to electrons in a single collision for incident energy of the LIP. For particles with charge  $ze$  and mass  $M$  heavier than the electron mass,  $m_e$  (“heavy” particles), the Rutherford cross section is a familiar differential [CCS](#) [10]:

$$\frac{d\sigma_R}{dE} = \frac{2\pi r_e^2 c^2 z^2}{\beta^2} \frac{1 - \beta^2 E/T_{max}}{E^2} \quad (1)$$

where  $r_e$  is the classical electron radius,  $E$  is the energy loss of incoming particle,  $\beta = v/c$  of the incoming particle, and  $T_{max}$  is the maximum energy transfer possible in a single collision:

$$T_{max} = \frac{2m_2 c^2 \beta^2 \gamma^2}{1 + 2\gamma m_2/M + (m_e/M)^2} \quad (2)$$

Often the expression  $T_{max} \approx 2m_e c^2 \beta^2 \gamma^2$  for  $2\gamma m_2/M \ll 1$  is used implicitly, or is referred to as the “low energy approximation” in older texts. The Rutherford cross section is a good starting point, but it describes the “hard interaction” or head-on, billiard-ball type collision of a particle interacting with free electrons. Real electrons are bound in atoms, and an incident particle can undergo “soft interactions”, in which virtual photons are exchanged. When the virtual photon matches the energy of electron orbitals of the target material, there are resonances in the [CCS](#). The energy transfer,  $E$ , must also be finite in real atoms, where the dielectric properties modify the electromagnetic field of a moving charged particle and limit the growth of the cross section. This real-world behavior is de-

scribed by a correction factor  $B(E)$ , also sometimes called an “inelastic form factor” [10]:

$$\frac{d\sigma_{CCS}}{dE} = \frac{d\sigma_R}{dE} B(E) \quad (3)$$

Various attempts, spanning a better half of the last century, have been made to take into account the real-world behavior of electrons bound in matter. Some of these can be found in [cite 18,27, 41-43 papers from Bichsel]. More well-known contributions are those of Bethe and Fano. In 1930, Bethe derived a cross section doubly differential in energy loss and momentum transfer using the first Born approximation for scattering on free atoms [11]. In 1963, Fano extended the method to describe atoms in solids [12]. Combining their two methods yields the Bethe-Fano cross-section, which has undergone much study and by our current understanding has been verified to be close to reality [13]. There is another method, called the Photo Absorption Ionization (**PAI**) model, that is easier to calculate than the Bethe-Fano cross section, and approximates the Bethe-Fano calculation very closely. This thesis uses the **PAI** model as a base, building the full signal model for **LIPs** interacting in the **LUX** detector.

### 5.1.2 PHOTO ABSORPTION IONIZATION MODEL FOR CHARGE PARTICLE ENERGY LOSS

The **PAI** model is also sometimes known as the Fermi Virtual Photon (**FVP**) or Weis&Ouml;cker-Williams approximation. A full description of the **PAI** model is described in detail in [14]. The complex dielectric constant  $\epsilon = \epsilon_1 + i\epsilon_2$  can be thought of as encoding all the information about a medium. The real part  $\epsilon_1$  describes the polarization of the material and imaginary part  $\epsilon_2$  describes the absorptive properties. Typically both  $\epsilon_1$  and  $\epsilon_2$  are thought of as functions of  $\omega$ , or incident photon energy. So  $\epsilon(\omega) = \epsilon_1(\omega) + i\epsilon_2(\omega)$ . This description is limited to free photons, but we desire to describe inelastic collisions as well. So  $\epsilon(k, \omega)$ , a generalized dielectric constant, is introduced to describe momentum transfer  $k$  to atomic electrons. The generalized dielectric constant  $\epsilon(k, \omega)$  can be related to atomic matrix elements, and if desired, calculated completely and tediously. However, the **PAI** model allows us to avoid these tedious calculations by making specific approximations, which, when taken together, define the **PAI** model itself.

In particular, the **PAI** model approximates  $\epsilon_2(k, \omega)$  by noting that typically, the momentum  $k$  transferred to an electron is much less than the energy transfer  $\omega$ .

5.1.3 STRAGGLING

5.1.4 ENERGY RESOLUTION IN LUX

5.1.5 POSITION RESOLUTION IN LUX

## 5.2 LIP SEARCH

5.2.1 LUX RUN03 CONDITIONS

## 5.3 LIP SEARCH ANALYSIS

5.3.1 ENERGY CONSISTENCY

5.3.2 TRACK LINEARITY CRITERIA

5.3.3 BACKGROUND REJECTION

5.3.4 MUONS

5.3.5 GAMMAS

5.3.6 ELECTRON TRAINS?

## 5.4 RESULT: VERTICAL FLUX LIMIT

### PART III

## LITTLE SCIENCE

This section describes research with a small test bed at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

# 6

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE LXE TPCS

---

A small test bed was built at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to study various detector effects facing large [LXE TPCs](#). The test bed was built and instrumented over the course of about two years, from 2015 through 2016. This chapter describes some of the details of that instrumentation.

### 6.1 EXPERIMENTAL APPARATUS

The experimental apparatus consisted of an inner vessel, a vacuum outer vessel, and a xenon circulation system. The inner vessel was a Stainless Steel ([SS](#)) canister, topped with a 2.75 in Conflat-adaptable tower that allowed space for instrumentation cabling and High Voltage ([HV](#)) feedthroughs. The inner vessel was offset below a 7.09 in ISO K flange, which held the (removable) vacuum outer vessel in place. Several Mini-CF ports were welded to the ISO K flange for instrumentation cabling.

The inner vessel contained the [TPC](#). A PTFE housing cylinder fastened a PMT in place. Above the PTFE housing, a series of interlocking PTFE rings held strung wire grids and a segmented anode in place. During data taking, the entire PMT and housing were immersed in [LXE](#). The liquid level was chosen depending on the experiment at hand, approximated by the S2 width. In some cases, the TPC was “overfilled” by allowing the liquid level to rise above the anode. The segmented anode was instrumented with charge amplifiers for direct charge readout. When the [TPC](#) was overfilled, the charge amplifiers detected the ionization electrons directly from the liquid. During typical dual phase [TPC](#) operation, the charge amplifiers provided a secondary measurement of the ionization electrons in addition to S2.

### 6.2 CIRCULATION SYSTEM

The xenon circulation system is shown in Figure 3. A stainless steel capillary extending into the liquid drew xenon from the inner vessel during

## 6.2 CIRCULATION SYSTEM

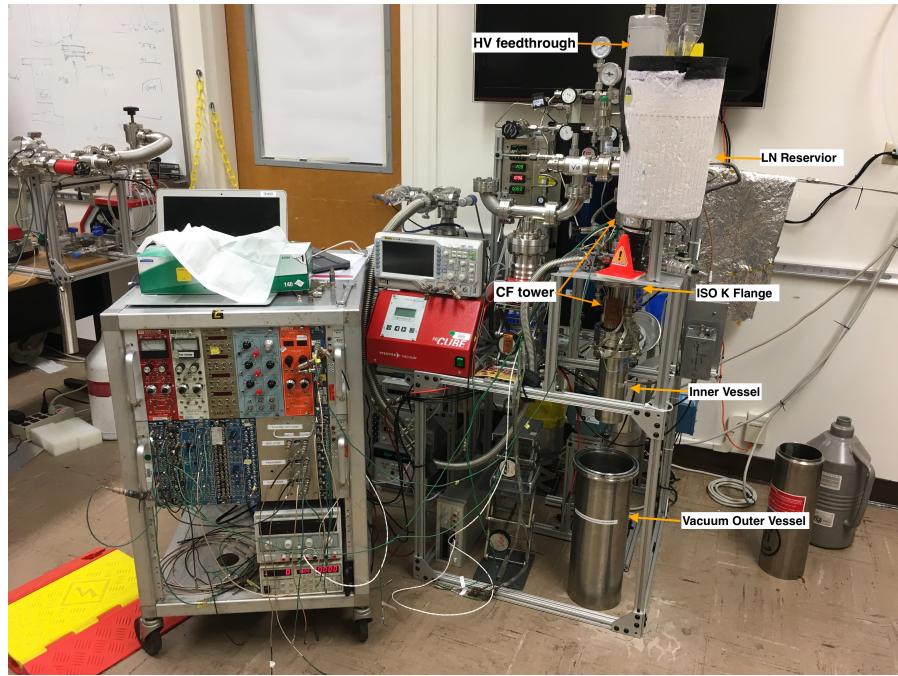


Figure 1: Large scale view of the experimental apparatus showing key parts.

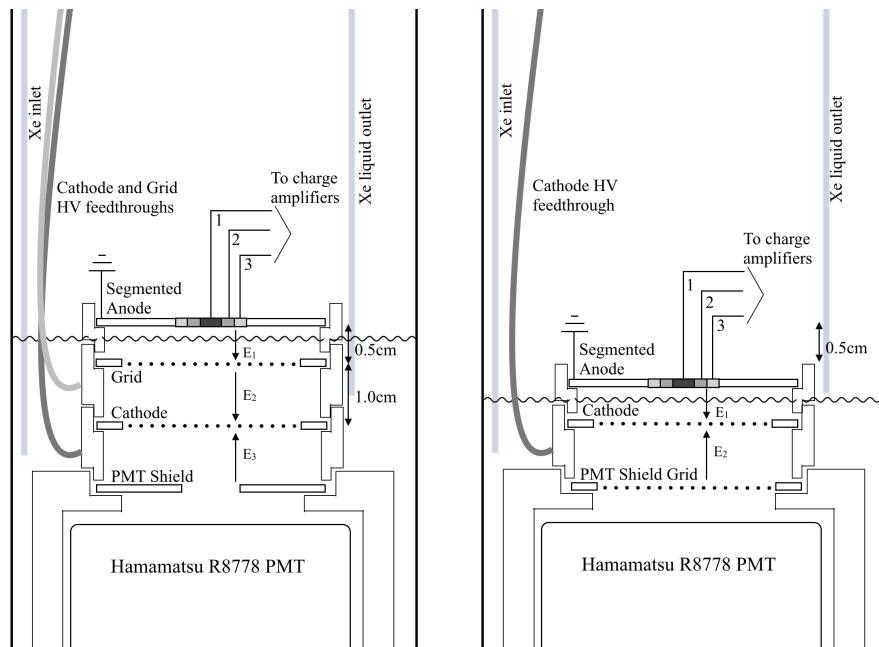


Figure 2: Diagrams of two often used internal arrangements.

operation to be purified. Purified xenon that was returned to the vessel was directed into the liquid via a PTFE tube so it could condense quickly. A gas purge was added to the Conflat (CF) tower above the inner vessel to continually renew the gas column.

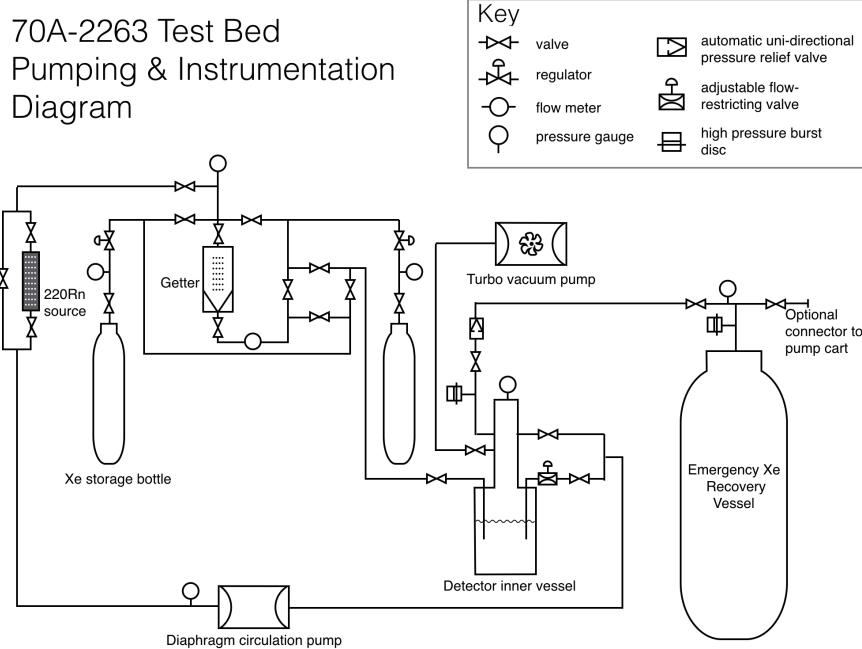


Figure 3: Pumping and instrumentation diagram of the test bed. Special symbols are labelled in the diagram, see key for other symbols. For readability, all gauges are not shown.

## 6.3 CHARGE AMPLIFIERS

The segmented anode was instrumented with three CR-110 charge amplifiers from Cremat (Figure 4). The raw charge amplifier signals were each fed into a CR-160-R7 shaper evaluation board, also from Cremat. The evaluation board houses two more modules: one CR-200-X shaping amplifier and one CR-110 baseline restorer. The CR-200-X shaping amplifier is an  $X-\mu\text{s}$  gaussian shaping amplifier; it was determined that  $1 \mu\text{s}$  was most appropriate for the test bed signals.

The shaper evaluation board produced gaussian pulses from raw charge signals as shown in Figure 5.

The charge amplifiers were originally placed inside the experimental vessel, mounted directly on the segmented anode. The functionality in LXe conditions didn't deviate from manufacturer's specifications, however it was found that the CR-110 units generated enough heat to create a

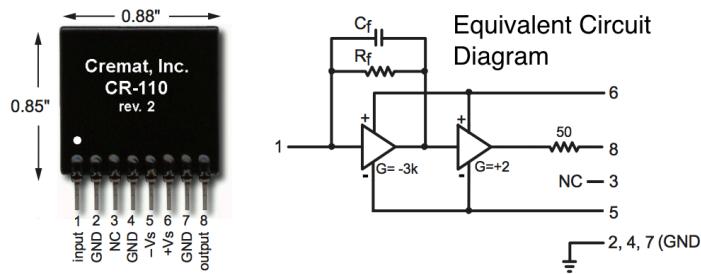


Figure 4: A picture of the CR-110 charge amplifier from the manufacturer's data sheet, shown with an equivalent circuit diagram.

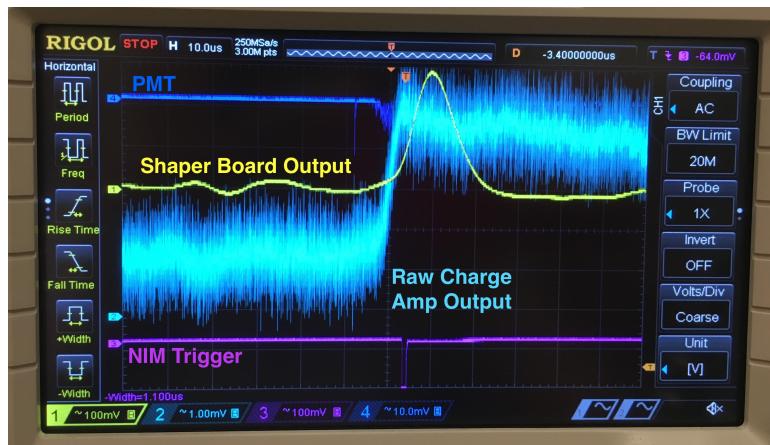


Figure 5: A raw and shaped charge amp signal taken in -100C gaseous xenon, with the radon source plumbed in

perpetual gas layer under the anode. In general this is not an issue, but for the purpose of the intended absolute electron extraction efficiency measurement, overfilling the TPC and using the charge amplifiers as a direct read-out of electrons in the liquid was required. The charge amplifiers were moved to the outer vessel space, surrounded by small Faraday cage made of copper mesh. See Figure 6 for the charge amplifier mounting configurations.

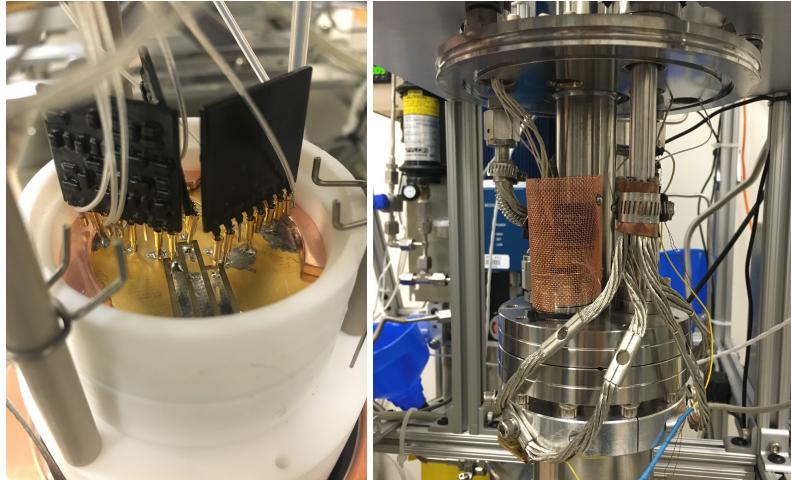


Figure 6: (Right) original mounting of CR-110 charge amplifiers inside the experimental vessel. (Left) Mounting in the outer vacuum reduced heat load on the TPC.

### 6.3.1 CHARGE AMPLIFIER NOISE BEHAVIOR

Charge amplifiers have baseline RMS noise proportional to the attached capacitance. Figure 7 shows the RMS noise of a CR-110 unit attached to different lengths of BNC cable. The longer the cable, the higher the RMS noise. TPCs are essentially capacitors, and when filled with LXe have a higher capacitance than when the detector is at vacuum. The capacitance of large LXe TPCs like LUX prohibit the use of charge amplifiers for direct readout of the S2 electrons because the RMS noise would swamp the signal.

Charge amplifiers also respond to acoustics. Tapping a finger near a charge amplifier will show as a baseline-jumping response on an oscilloscope. This additional source of noise makes LXe TPCs challenging places to use charge amplifiers for signal readout because any bubbles in the LXe create micro-acoustic signals which the charge amplifiers pick up. By design, dual phase LXe TPCs are operated near the xenon liquid-gas boundary so the formation and dissipation of gas bubbles in the liquid is likely.

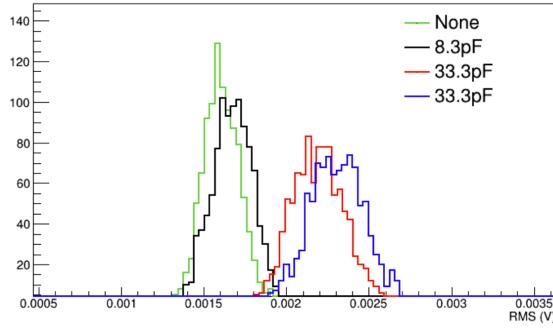


Figure 7: Different lengths of BNC cable attached to a CR-110 test board.

Additional sources of acoustic noise like circulation of xenon into the experimental vessel also produce visible responses in charge amplifiers. The difference in micro-acoustic noise environment is illustrated in Figure ??.

As TPCs are large capacitors, any transients coupling to the “TPC capacitor” may be picked up by the charge amplifiers. In particular, instabilities in the HV chain induce a current in the “TPC capacitor” that is picked up by the charge amps. Instabilities in HV can come from many places. It was observed that for the characteristic capacitance and impedance of the the test bed, partial breakdowns in a length of R60 cabling caused a disruption in the functionality of the charge amplifiers. It was also found that a standard laboratory HV supply, a Glassman 20 kV negative polarity unit, created pick-up in the charge amplifiers.

## 6.4 PMT

The test bed was instrumented with an R8778 PMT, the same PMTs used in LUX. Both LUX and LZ PMT bases were used. The radon daughters study presented in Chapter 7 exclusively used the LUX PMT base, the electron trains studies first used the LUX base, and later used the LZ base. The LZ base was favored for its larger capacitors. Various shaping amplifiers were used when digitizing the PMT over the course of these studies because the 8 ns sampling interval of the data acquisition was subject to aliasing the fast-rising alpha S1 signals.

## 6.5 SLOW CONTROL

The inner experimental vessel was instrumented with a platinum RTD to monitor temperature and a capacitance manometer to monitor pressure. A flow meter in the circulation line determined the flow rate of xenon as

it passed through the getter and returned to the inner vessel. The voltage applied to two  $25\ \Omega$  resistors in parallel

## 6.6 DATA ACQUISITION

Data were acquired with a Picoscope 5000a, a USB-compatible “oscilloscope.” The picoscope python library was used to write voltage records of PMT and charge signals to ROOT files, which were opened later for re-processing into reduced quantities such as pulse area or pulse height. The picoscope was run as a 14 bit ADC with 125 MHz sampling. For special cases, when only one channel was desired, it was possible to increase the sampling rate to 500 MHZ (or 2 ns).

## 6.7 HIGH VOLTAGE FEEDTHROUGH DESIGN

A significant amount of time was spent developing and testing HV feedthroughs for the test bed. This section describes a few of the feedthroughs that were unsuccessful, leading to the final design, which is capable of delivering -11kV to the cathode with no observable breakdown or other effects. Extensive detail of the tests and procedures are not provided. Instead, the following vignettes are intended as an overview to be useful to a student tasked with designing a HV feedthrough.

### 6.7.1 IMPLEMENTING SHV FEED THROUGHS FROM VACUUM SUPPLIERS

The first attempts at building feedthroughs were to use off-the-shelf products from typical vacuum supply vendors such as MDC and Kurt Lesker. Vacuum HV feedthroughs are intended to for use from air to vacuum, not air to LXe, so it is not surprising that these were not successful. Additionally, by combining ceramic and metal (typically aluminum, stainless steel, nickel, copper) they are especially prone to breakdown at the meeting of these different materials, known colloquially as “triple points”. When there are interfaces between materials with different permittivities (dielectric constants), the electric fields are distorted. Field is pushed out of the higher dielectric material into the lower dielectric material. This creates a field enhancement where peak fields can be much higher than average fields in the system. The field enhancement from ”triple points” where there is an interface between a conductor and two dielectrics (e.g a plastic or ceramic feedthrough insulator and a gas or liquid) is a common source of breakdown along insulator surfaces. Good design prac-

tices, namely choices of geometry reduce the field enhancements in these regions.

Note that ceramic feedthroughs are not appropriate for low background experiments due to high radioactivity, but for test beds, where low radioactivity is not a priority, they may be used.

The first few feed throughs used a 12kV Safe High Voltage (SHV) weldable feed though as shown in Figure 8. If used as operation is intended, the side indicated by A is used on the vacuum-side and B connects to the voltage supply. Instead, we trimmed the long B side and attached a copper, screw-port connector to make the 90 degree connection from vertical feed through to horizontal grid. This was done to avoid placing a conducting surface at high voltage (the tip of side A) in gaseous xenon, thereby increasing the risk of breakdown to the walls of the detector. The feed through's vertical placement is designed such that the copper connector is fully submersed in LXe.

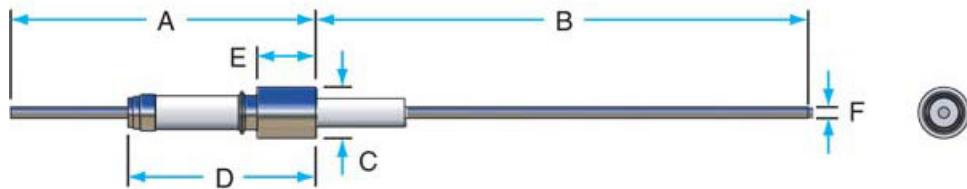


Figure 8: A 12kV SHV weldable connector from vacuum supplier Kurt Lesker.

Feed throughs were tested by performing a cool down, ramping the HV supply slowly, and watching an oscilloscope for a higher than baseline photon rate Figure 12 or a full xenon breakdown Figure 13. The effect of raising the voltage on the HV supply at a specific rate was also tested, and it was determined that the extremely slow and steady rate of a computer program was not necessarily superior to the imperfect method of the human experimenter – the construction of the feed through, itself, outweighed any gains from computer-supervised voltage ramping.

Iterations of the 12kV SHV feed though were not able to reach more than about 9kV, and not more than about 7kV for extended periods of time like those that would be required for data acquisition. A summary of the issues with this type of feed through design is given below:

- Gas gaps
- Triple points
- Prone to aging



Figure 9: 12kV SHV weldable connector, inverted, clipped, and attached with a machined copper connector. The connector uses a screw to capture the SHV feed though, and the same screw to capture a stranded wire, visible in this picture, which is then fed through a hole drilled in the PTFE to connect to the wire grid frames. The wire was wrapped around the grid frame.

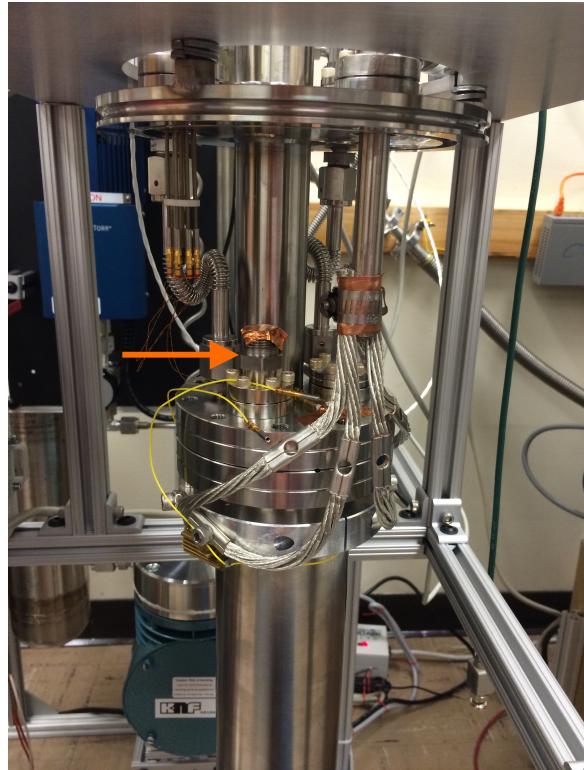


Figure 10: The copper tape in this picture is sitting on top of a 1/2 -in swage connector. The swage connector captures a 1/2 in pipe, which has the 12kV SHV feedthrough welded to the end.

## 6.7 HIGH VOLTAGE FEEDTHROUGH DESIGN

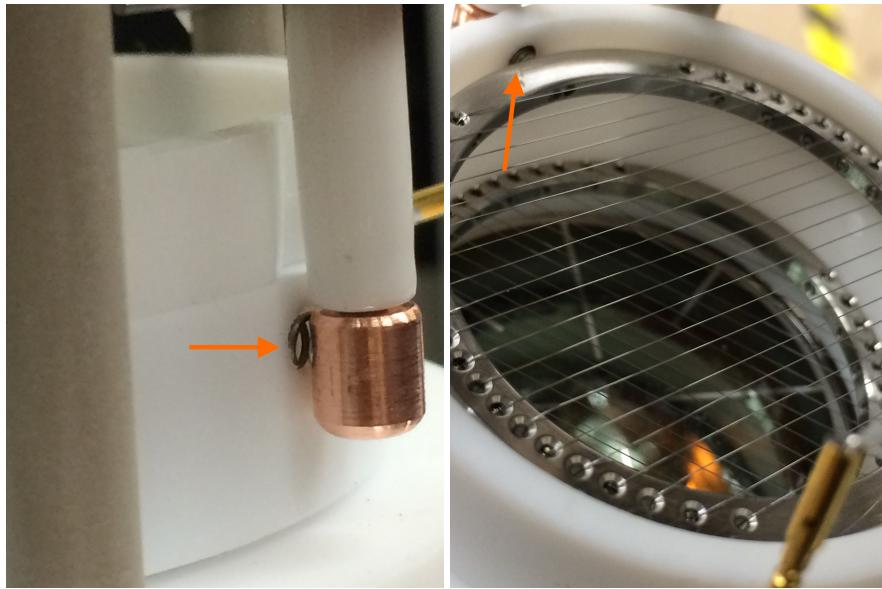


Figure 11: The same 12kV SHV feed through, now with a modified spring connection connecting the feed through to the grid frame. A close up of the cathode grid showing the spring connection is on the **right**

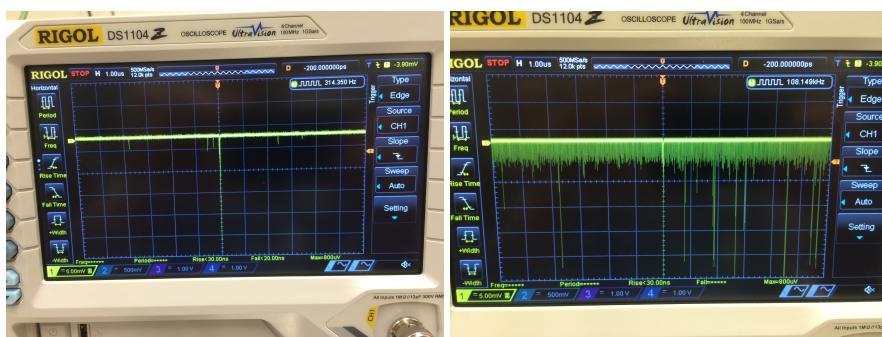


Figure 12: Oscilloscope showing baseline rate of single photons (left) compared to a high rate of single photons (right) caused by the high voltage feed through.

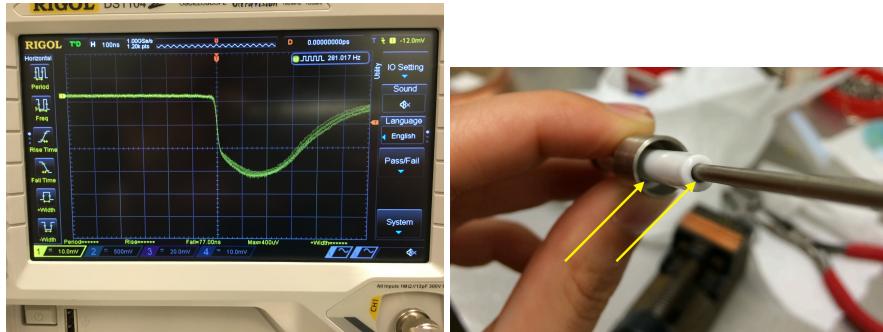


Figure 13: (Left) Full xenon breakdown as visible on the PMT trace. The large, saturated pulse is caused by the high intensity of light. This type of breakdown was often accompanied by an audible buzz, and a rise in current that would initiate a trip of the high voltage supply. (Right) a close up of the xenon-facing side of the feedthrough. Visible gaps where xenon gas is exposed to high fields are particularly problematic for breakdowns.

We also tried a stock 20kV SHV feed through with a custom end cap designed by a HV engineer, meant to smooth out typical triple point issues. This feed through was mounted on a CF flange far from the active region. A length of cable was stripped of grounding sheath for its entire length. A small section on one end was stripped of dielectric, this end was tied to the SHV feed though with copper wire, and the custom end cap was placed over this. The side of the cable making the connection to the cathode grid was drilled out for a short length on the bottom, leaving only a tube of dielectric with no conductor. A threaded rod was inserted into the cable, such that the rod made contact with the conductor. The cathode grid frame was screwed onto the threaded rod. The SHV-20 feed though is summarized in pictures in Figure 14, and was found to hold sufficient voltage ( 10kV) for extended periods of time. However, it was found that the voltage capability of this feed though decreased over time; this is discussed in the next section.

#### 6.7.1 FEEDTHROUGH AGING

It was noticed during subsequent operation that the SHV-20 feed through was subject to some sort of aging process (black line in Figure 16). A month of use resulted in noticeably lower voltage capabilities. The issue could have been any point along the entire voltage chain: feed through - custom cap - connection to cable - cable - connection to grid - grid. Tests focusing on different parts of the voltage chain didn't reveal any weak points. Instead, it was found that the SHV-20 feed though, itself, was subject to aging (red line in Figure 16).

## 6.7 HIGH VOLTAGE FEEDTHROUGH DESIGN

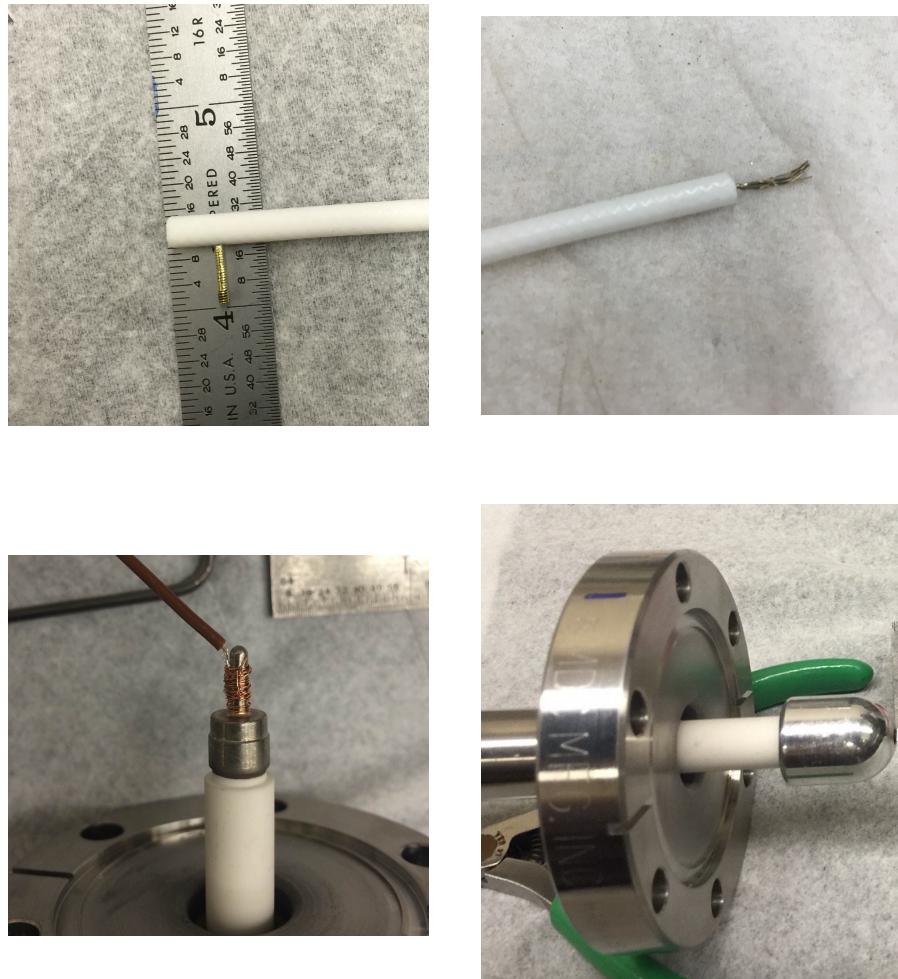


Figure 14: Top: (left) cathode connection side (right) SHV-20 connection side  
Bottom: (left) an example showing how the cable was attached to the stock SHV-20 feed though end (right) a custom cap fit over the connection, smoothing out triple points.



Figure 15: Effect of holding the feed through in place with PEEK zip ties was explored, effects were minimal.

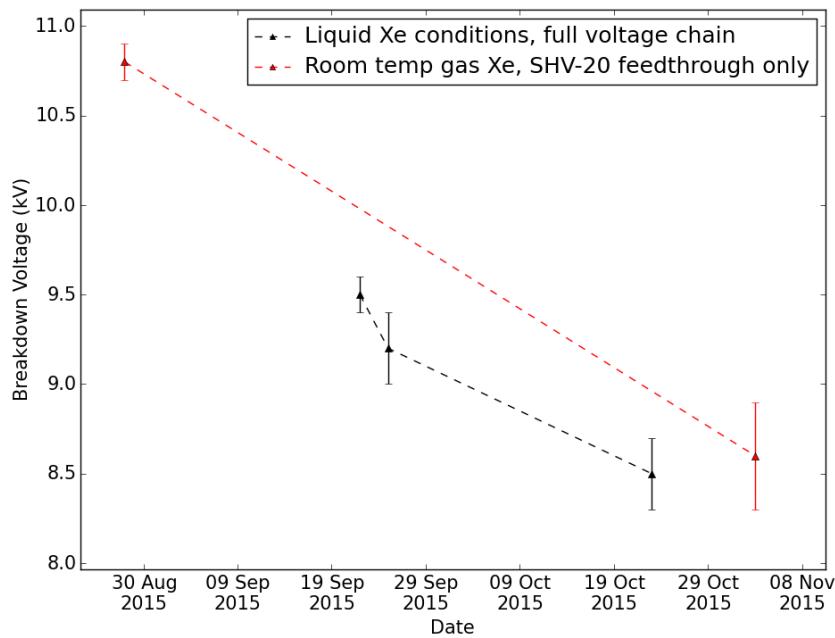


Figure 16: The black line shows the aging observed in the course of normal operations. The red line shows breakdown tests of the SHV-20 feed through in gas, illustrating that the aging observed during operation was due to aging of the feed though.

Feedthrough aging can be the result of arcing and discharges which cause local heating and carbonization of an insulator surface. Once there is a carbon path, the insulator is considered "tracked" and then holds a much lower voltage than before. Sophisticated HV systems keep peak currents and fault energies to a minimum using series resistors. In this way, a breakdown event does not degrade system performance in the future. In addition to carbon tracks, there can also be insulator degradation from exposure to UV if there is ionization in the region. Xenon ionization is in the UV region of the spectrum, and so any ionization near a feed through insulator may degrade the feed through performance. In the case of this particular feed through, the high field which caused the breakdowns or ionization was likely a result of poor triple-point geometry.

## 6.7.2 CUSTOM FEEDTHROUGHS

To achieve better voltage performance, we moved away from typical feedthroughs composed of ceramic and metal. Figure 17 shows a feed through made with a Swagelock reducing union. This blue and white PTFE piece connects 1/4 in SS pipe to an 1/8 in PTFE tube, which then houses a SS rod. The rod is screwed onto a connector, which holds a wire to connect to the grid. This feed through had stable voltage performance, but could not achieve sustained voltages higher than about 9 kV. A woven SS shield was added to the feed though to reach higher voltages (Figure 17 (left)) but this actually decreased the voltage performance to a maximum of about 5 kV.

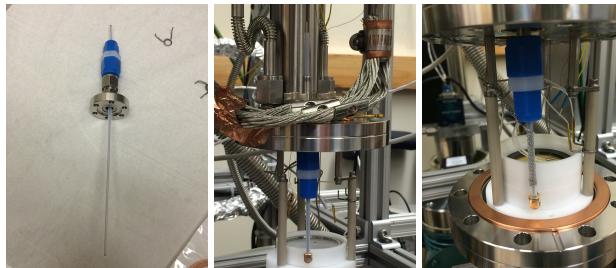


Figure 17: First attempt at a custom feed through built out of Swagelock parts combined with basic materials like PTFE and stainless steel rods. The orientation shown (left) was later inverted due to concerns of temperature stress and pressure stress on the PTFE ferrules. The feedthrough as assembled (center) was functional, but higher voltage capability was desired. The effect of adding a grounding braid (right) was found to decrease the voltage capability instead of increasing it.

There are two issues with the approach of adding a grounding braid in this method: (1) the braid is not tight to the dielectric, which intro-

duces peak fields between the dielectric and the braid (Figure 18) (2) at the braid termination, a small effective radius creates an enhanced radial field through the dielectric and an enhanced field along the cable dielectric facing the high voltage. Peak fields can occur in unexpected places, greatly decreasing the voltage capability of a feedthrough that seems, naively, robust. The breakdown field of xenon gas depends on a variety of factors such as temperature (i.e density), purity, electrode shape, etc. Peak fields arising in gas regions in or around HV feedthroughs are sources of unwanted of light and in the worst case complete breakdown and eventual degredation of the feedthrough.

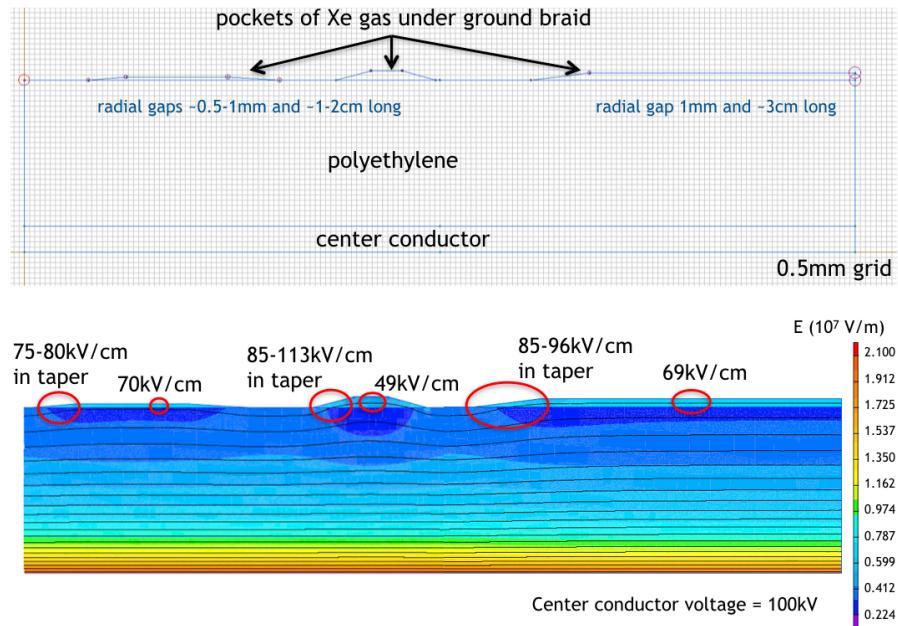


Figure 18: A COMSOL model by high voltage engineer W. Waldron showing that peak fields arise when gaps exist between dielectric and grounding braid.

To move away from stock SHV feedthroughs which were prone to aging, a feedthrough was built out of a SS rod with PTFE dielectric and no shield braid (Figure 19). The end is a copper rod bent into a U-shape which connects to the SS conduction rod via a pin, and the other end, which is threaded, screws into to the cathode grid frame. The bare copper section is only exposed under the liquid level, elsewhere the PTFE dielectric helps contain the electric field and prevent breakdown to the inner vessel wall. This feedthrough had good voltage performance, and there was no sign of aging. It was decided, however, that the charge amplifiers were more susceptible to detecting transients from an unshielded feedthrough, so another feedthrough with shielding was constructed (Figure 20).

## 6.7 HIGH VOLTAGE FEEDTHROUGH DESIGN

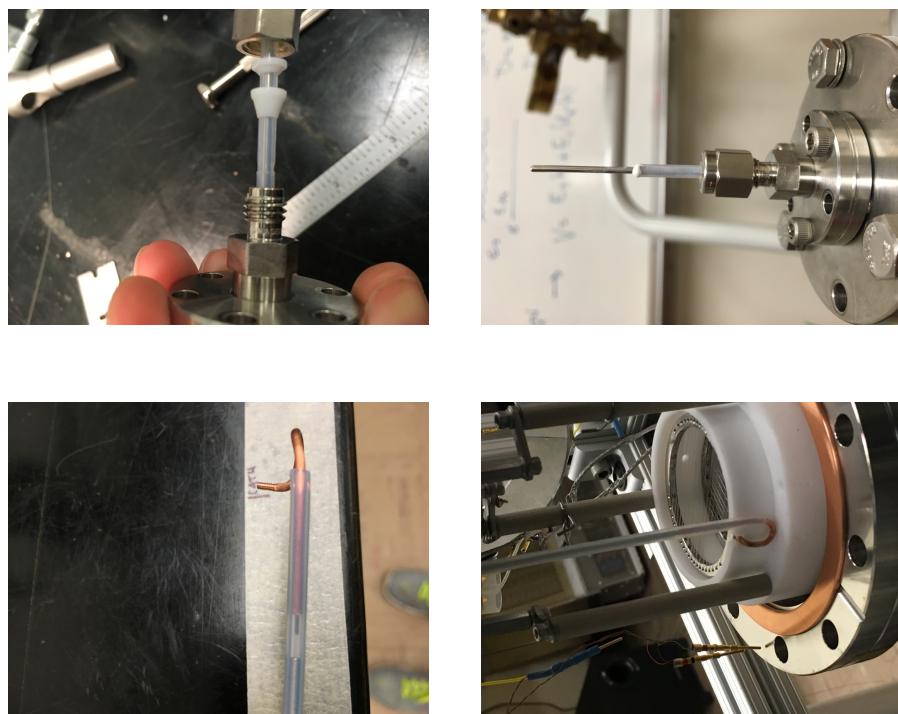


Figure 19: Top: (left) (right) . Bottom: (left) (right).

## 6.7 HIGH VOLTAGE FEEDTHROUGH DESIGN



Figure 20: Top: (left) (middle) (right) . Bottom: (left) (middle) (right).

# 7

## SOLUBILITY OF RADON DAUGHTERS IN LIQUID XENON

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Rare-event searches are very sensitive to backgrounds from radioactivity in and on detector materials. Some of the most omnipresent and troublesome are  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters. Decay products from  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  plate out on detector surfaces and have typically been assumed to be fixed there. In this chapter, a series of experiments is described; the results provide evidence that radon daughters can dissolve in liquid xenon.

### 7.1 MOTIVATION

Radon and radon daughters produce problematic backgrounds for rare-event searches [15]. Of particular concern for liquid xenon dark matter detectors are “naked” beta decays. These ground-state to ground-state decays have no accompanying gammas and cannot be rejected via coincidence tagging. Rejection of these backgrounds in WIMP search experiments relies solely on being able to discriminate electron recoils from nuclear recoils. For example, the ER leakage fraction from the LUX Run03 tritium calibration is on the order of 2/1000 over the WIMP search region [16] (See Chapter ?? for more details). The  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain contains  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  ( $T_{1/2} = 22.23$  y), effectively splitting the decay chain into a “fast chain” and “slow chain” (Fig. 21). Radon can be introduced via two pathways: (1) during detector construction and (2) during detector operation (see Fig. 22). Great care is taken to ensure minimal contamination via pathway 2 because the fast chain naked betas,  $^{214}\text{Pb}$  and  $^{214}\text{Bi}$ , may decay in the fiducial volume before the purification system can remove them or before they can plate out on detector surfaces. In pathway 1,  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and daughters plate out onto detector surfaces during construction of parts, and construction of the detector itself. Models for plate out can be found in [17] and [18]. Typically it is assumed that once  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and daughters plate out, they remain fixed at that position, and can be rejected by a fiducial volume cut. This means that the slow chain naked betas of  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  and  $^{210}\text{Bi}$  from initial exposure during construction are assumed to occur outside the fiducial volume. However, evidence of  $^{210}\text{Bi}$  mobility has been

observed in the liquid scintillator environment of KamLAND [19], [20] and Borexino [21]. If radon daughters are soluble in liquid xenon, the late chain naked betas (from both pathway 1 and 2) pose a serious background distributed throughout the fiducial volume.

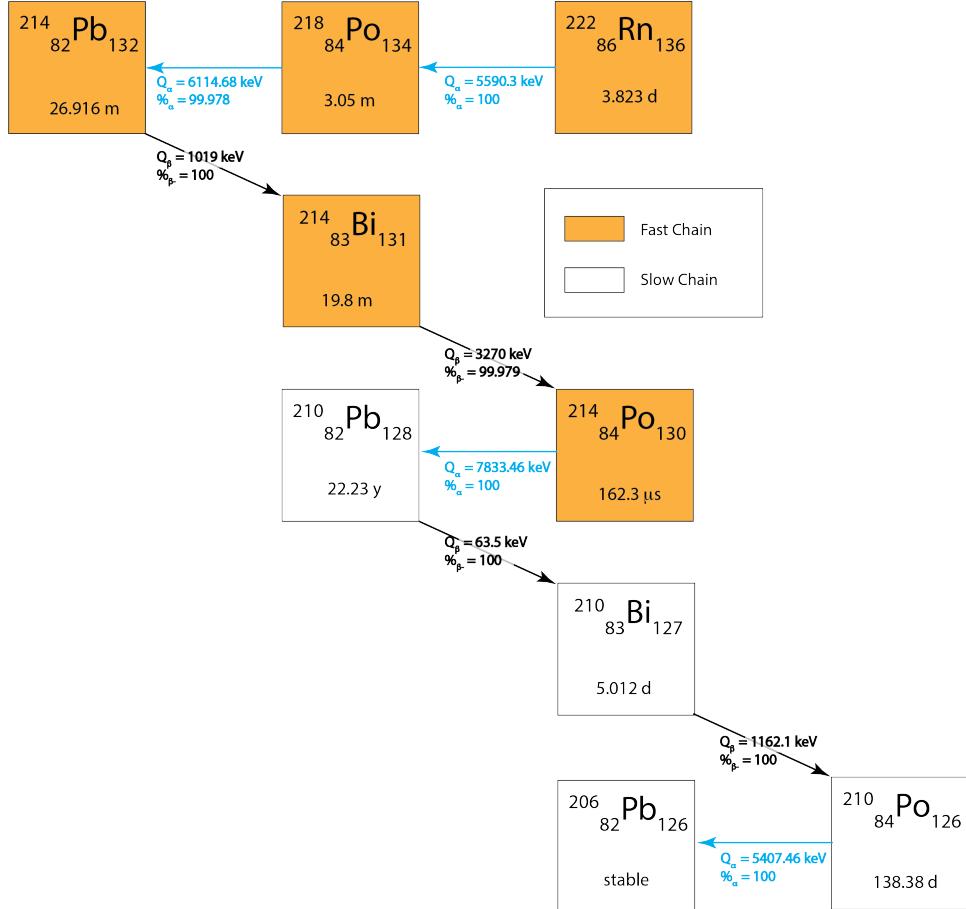


Figure 21: The  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  decay scheme. The fast and slow chains are indicated.

In order to investigate the solubility of radon daughters in liquid xenon, a  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  source was employed. The analogous long lived daughter in this chain,  $^{212}\text{Pb}$ , has a half-life of 10.6 h, making it appropriate for a laboratory test. Investigating pathway 2 in the laboratory by introducing radon in a  $\text{LXe}$  environment will necessarily yield inconclusive results, because it is impossible to tell if the daughter decay of interest plated out before decaying. Therefore, we required the radon daughters to be on a surface.

Xenon gas was circulated through the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  source and detector components for a period of >24 h. The detector was then evacuated, thereby assuring the initial position of radon daughters on a detector surface. Any radon daughters subsequently observed in the bulk region after condensing liquid xenon must therefore have dissolved.

## Pathways to Radon and Radon Daughters Contamination

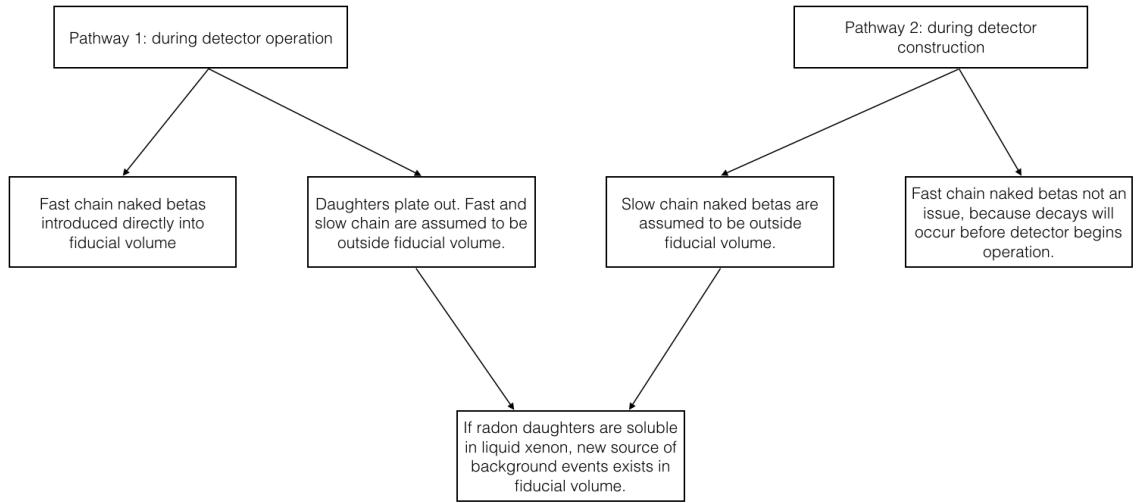


Figure 22: Pathways to radon and radon daughter contamination.

### 7.1.1 PLATE OUT

The term “plate out” is used above but not defined. The literature indicates that there two known types of radon daughter plate out [22]. The following terms are used in [22] to identify each type.

1. *implantation* Alpha recoil implantation of a daughter nucleus
2. *sticking* Daughters are sitting on the surface of a material, it is possible to wash a percentage of these off with various surface cleaning methods.

The percentages of daughters plated out in these different modes are not indicated, but [22] relates a story of researchers being unable to remove  $^{214}\text{Po}$  from glass samples, where as  $^{218}\text{Po}$  was easily removed with surface cleaning methods. This is explained by the fact that further down the  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain, more alpha decays have occurred, so a late-state daughter has had more chance to be implanted. It is also noted that the durability of the implanted activity subject to change under different conditions, as is the implant integrity. The author cites factors such as humidity and temperature affecting whether daughters implant, and whether they remain implanted; since the conditions for plate out are different in pathways 1 and 2 and it logical to infer that implantation functions differently in these two environments for LXe TPCs.

The chemistry of radon has been studied as well, and may provide some context to the plate-out discussion. Radon is frequently regarded as a totally inert element. It is, however, classified as a “metalloid”, and exhibits some of the characteristics of both true metals and nonmetals. For example, it is known to react chemically with fluorine, halogen fluorides, dioxygenyl salts, fluoro-nitrogen salts, and halogen fluoride-metal fluoride complexes to form ionic compounds [23]. It is also known to co-crystallize with hydrogen chloride, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide [24]. In the latter case, the author notes that the radon is not forming true chemical bonds, but rather is held in place by weak Van der Waals forces. These chemical experiments found radon to be readily reactive at “room temperature and lower”, but the low temperate range is not stated. Chemical bonds formed by radon may make up a different type of plate out, or sub-type of ‘sticking’. Presumably weak surface Van der Waals forces belong in the ‘sticking’ type as well.

If we look to surface physics, the plate-out term ‘sticking’ is well defined by the terms physisorption and chemisorption. Physisorption is distinct from chemisorption in that it is a general phenomenon occurring between the adsorbed atom and surface, where chemisorption involves a chemical reaction between surface and adsorbate, and is characterized by higher bond strengths. Chemisorption potentials have been calculated for many atoms and surfaces [25] and are generally greater than 1 eV. Physisorption potentials, such as the well-known Van der Waals potential, are less than 1 eV and as low as 10 meV.

Plate out occurs with different rates on different materials [26], and can be an order of magnitude larger on PTFE than stainless steel, likely due to PTFE’s tendency to accumulate negative static charge [27]. Plate out of radon daughters can be reduced by employing a nitrogen gas purge or an electric field (approximately 90% of radon daughters are charged) [28]. However, [26], [27], and [28] do not distinguish between implantation and sticking, and only use the term “plate out”.

## 7.2 EXPERIMENTAL CONFIGURATION AND METHOD

A diagram of the TPC for this work is shown in Fig. 23. A 50 mm diameter cathode wire grid, extraction wire grid, and a planar, segmented anode were held in Teflon PTFE housing. The anode was instrumented with charge-sensitive preamplifiers. Both grids were constructed from a stainless steel frame strung with 4  $\mu\text{m}$  diameter stainless steel wire on a 2 mm pitch. The xenon inlet was a PTFE tube which introduced xenon gas into the liquid region where it was condensed. The xenon liquid outlet was a thin stainless steel capillary that drew liquid from the TPC into the

## 7.2 EXPERIMENTAL CONFIGURATION AND METHOD

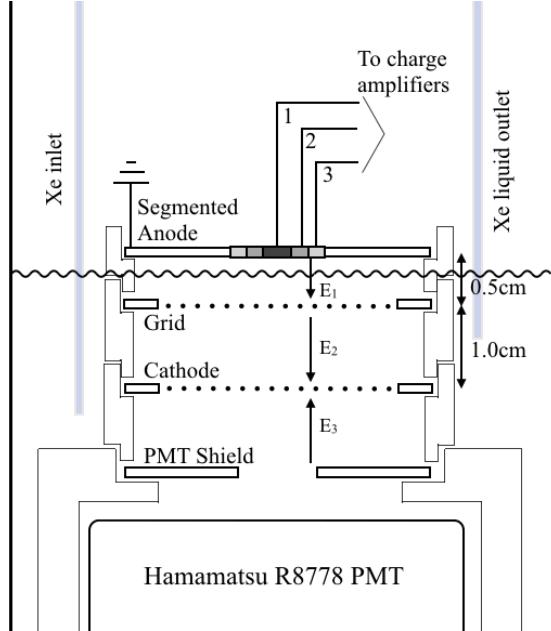


Figure 23: Diagram of the test bed. For this study, the cathode is held at -6.0 kV, and the grid is held at -4.0 kV.  $E_1^{liq} \approx 5.0$  kV/cm,  $E_1^{gas} \approx 10.0$  kV/cm  $E_2 = 1.0$  kV/cm.  $E_3 = 2.7$  kV/cm. The large gray regions represent the structural rings of PTFE. The line between the grid and anode represents the liquid xenon level. The xenon inlet pipes incoming gas directly into the liquid region, and the liquid outlet pulls from the level of the active region. A gas outlet (not pictured) also draws xenon gas into the circulation system to be purified.

purification system. Both inlet and outlet tubes were placed near holes drilled in the PTFE to aid circulation into the active volume.

A particle interaction in the liquid xenon volume produced primary scintillation photons (S1) and ionization electrons. The ionization electrons were drifted with an electric field into the gas phase, where they produced secondary scintillation light (S2). A single Hamamatsu R8778 VUV-sensitive PMT was installed in Teflon PTFE housing, facing upward to view the active region. Directly above the PMT was a copper shield mask, held at the same voltage as the PMT bias of -1250 V.

The TPC was filled with 1.5 bar of xenon gas at room temperature. The gas was circulated continuously through the TPC and a heated zirconium getter for at least 24 hours to remove contaminants. The TPC was then cooled to  $-100^\circ$  C while circulating xenon gas. Circulation was stopped, and xenon was condensed into the TPC until the liquid level rose to between the extraction grid and anode. The process of filling the TPC took 4 to 5 hours. The liquid level was kept stable by keeping the temperature and pressure constant in the TPC. During data collection, xenon from the

TPC was circulated through a getter and re-condensed into the TPC to remove impurities.

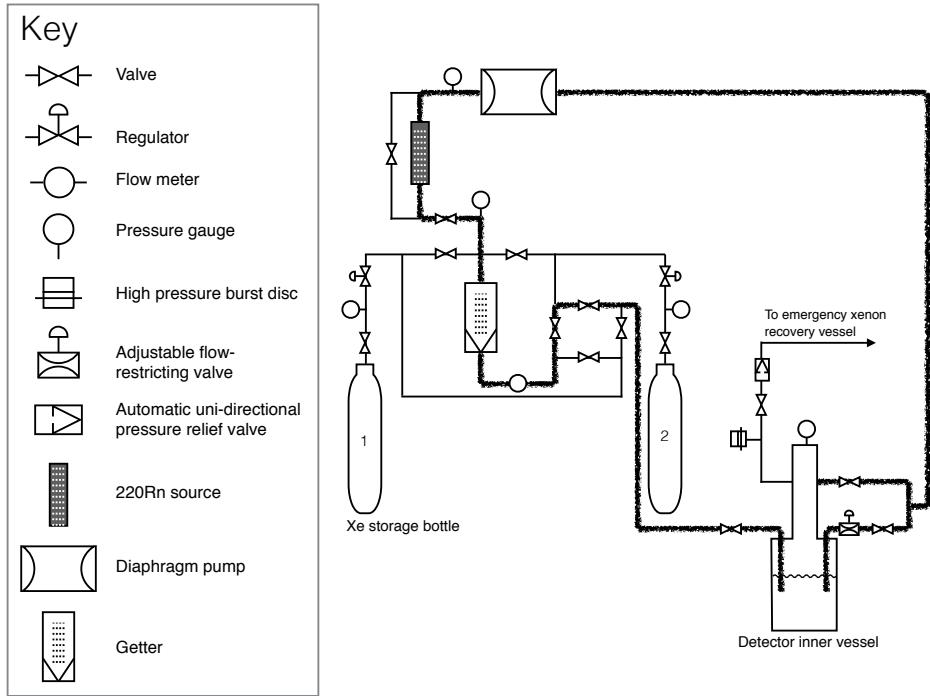


Figure 24: An example a circulation path used for plate out is shown on the pumping and instrumentation diagram. During data-taking the radon source was bypassed. The typical liquid level is indicated on the diagram to show that the outlet drew from the liquid via a capillary, ensuring purification of the liquid xenon. A gas purge also purified the gas column in the detector.

### 7.2.1 PLATE OUT OF $^{220}\text{Rn}$ DAUGHTERS

The procedure to plate out  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  daughters on the inner surfaces of the detector was the same as described in Sec. ??, except that the circulation path was directed through a 2 kBq  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  source. The  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  is shown in Fig. 25. The rate of radon activity in the TPC was measured to be  $4.5 \pm 0.5$  Hz during plate out. The total alpha rate was measured by taking repeated 1200 ms traces on an oscilloscope of the PMT with a falling edge trigger and counting the alpha decays. This rate was then halved to get the rate of radon decays. The  $4.5 \pm 0.5$  Hz rate of radon activity represents activity for all of the space internal to the PTFE support structure. Decay daughters diffused until they contacted a wall or other surface, where they could plate out. Some percentage of decay daughters are expected to be positively charged ions. If the cathode grid was biased, charged decay

daughters drifted preferentially to the cathode grid. The cathode voltage during plate outs is noted in Table 1.

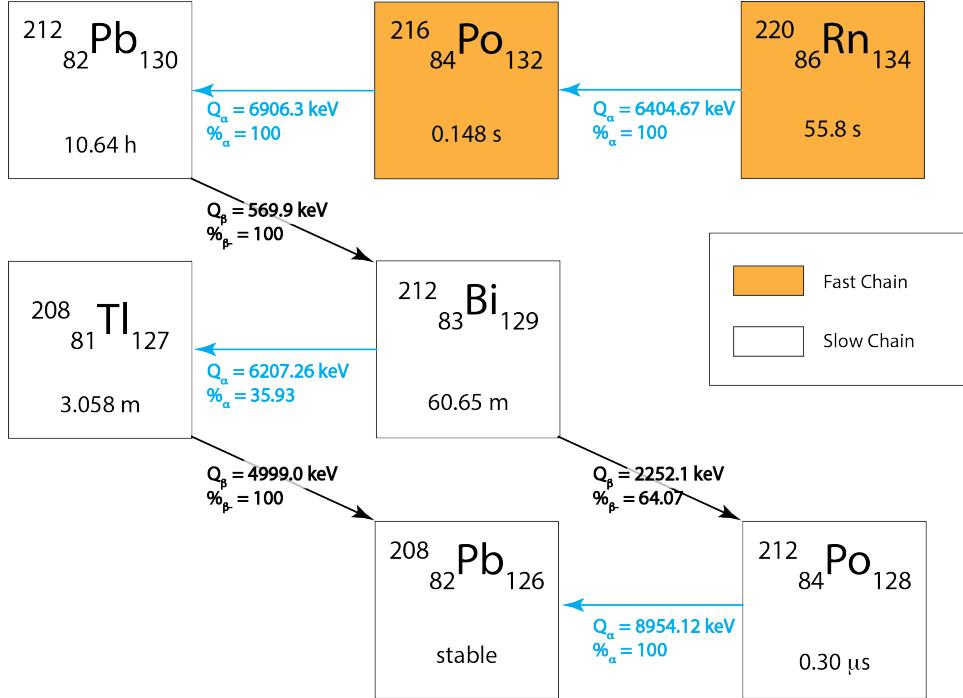


Figure 25: The  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  decay scheme. The fast and slow chains are indicated. Events in the plate out data sets are from the slow chain.

Prior to filling the TPC with liquid xenon, the circulation was stopped and the xenon gas removed from the TPC and the circulation lines. A vacuum pressure of a few  $10^{-4}$  Torr was achieved in a period of ten minutes. This step ensured removal of  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  and decay daughters which are dissolved in the gas, leaving only those daughters which had plated out on a detector surface. Since the fill time of the TPC is 4 to 5 hours, there were no fast chain alpha decays of  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  and  $^{216}\text{Po}$  in the plate out data. Additional details are summarized in Table 1.

## 7.2.2 DATA COLLECTION

Voltage records from PMT and charge channels were collected with a 14-bit ADC with 125 MHz sampling and a 20 MHz low-pass filter. The trigger was a coincidence between the PMT and the central anode segment, used to select events in the central ( $r < 3 \text{ mm}$ ) column of xenon. This avoids any electric field fringing effects.

	dataset ID	A	B	C	D
Plate-Out	Circ thur $^{220}\text{Rn}$ Source	yes	yes	no	-
	Circulation Time (h)	24	48	24	-
	Cathode Voltage (kV)	-1	0	0	-
Data-Taking	Circ thur $^{220}\text{Rn}$ Source	no	no	no	yes
	Cathode Voltage (kV)	-6	-6	-6	-6
	Grid Voltage (kV)	-4	-4	-4	-4
Livetime (h)		$12.02 \pm 0.5$	$23.93 \pm 0.5$	$25.02 \pm 0.2$	$4.15 \pm 0.2$

Table 1: Summary of plate out and data-taking conditions. Data sets A and B are taken after circulating radon gas and data set C, background, had no radon circulation. Data set D was taken following dataset A, and radon was circulated in a liquid xenon environment, purposefully introducing radon into the detector bulk to calibrate the detector.

### 7.2.3 CALIBRATION

In order to identify a signal region for bulk radon daughters, the flow through  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  source was employed directly following dataset A, allowing  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  to flow into the liquid bulk of the TPC. The bulk daughter decay of interest,  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha, has an energy approximately equal to the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  alpha decay. The alpha signals were sufficient to saturate the biasing circuit of the PMT, so alpha decays within 1 MeV of each other were indistinguishable. Therefore, the region in S1 area vs. S2 area where the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  alphas appeared was also where  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas were expected (Fig. 30).

### 7.2.4 POSITION RECONSTRUCTION

The central anode segment was assumed to select events from the central column with 100% efficiency. Events occurring under one of the outer concentric segments can produce a signal on the central anode, but the signal was largest at the anode nearest the charge. It was not required that there be zero signal on the outer segments, so the (x,y) position of the event is treated as a source of uncertainty, which is taken into account in the calculation of fiducial volume. The drift time of the events was

calculated from the time difference between the S1 and S2 pulses, and a linear scaling of 2 mm/us was applied using the Miller (1968) electron drift velocity in LXe measurements.

### 7.2.5 FIDUCIAL VOLUME

Different values for the fiducial volume are presented below.

---

Anode Segments	1	2	3	Full
Radius (mm)	3	6	9	24
Area (mm <sup>2</sup> )	28	113	255	1810
Volume (mL)	0.39 ± 0.03	1.6 ± 0.1	3.6 ± 0.3	25.3 ± 1.8
Mass (g)	1.1 ± 0.1	4.6 ± 0.3	10 ± 1	73.4 ± 5.2

---

Table 2: Calculations of fiducial volume. Liquid level is taken to be 14 ± 1 mm. Density of LXe near boiling point is 2.9 g/mL.

## 7.3 ANALYSIS

### 7.3.1 NUMBER OF $^{220}\text{Rn}$ DAUGHTERS IN THE TPC

As described in Sec. 7.2.1, the rate of  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  in the TPC was measured to be  $4.5 \pm 0.5$  Hz during plate out. From this, the number of daughter atoms  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  and  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  present in the TPC just prior to filling the liquid xenon were calculated. The number of daughter atoms as a function of the plate out time is shown in Fig. 26 along with the data acquisition periods for each dataset. This calculation assumes that the diffusion time in the PTFE walls was less than removal time via the capillary.

### 7.3.2 DATA SELECTION

The trigger described in Sec. 7.2.2 captured the slow chain decays as shown in Fig. 25. The  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  beta decay is followed by the 300 ns alpha decay of  $^{212}\text{Po}$ ; these decays are referred to herein as “Bi-Po”.

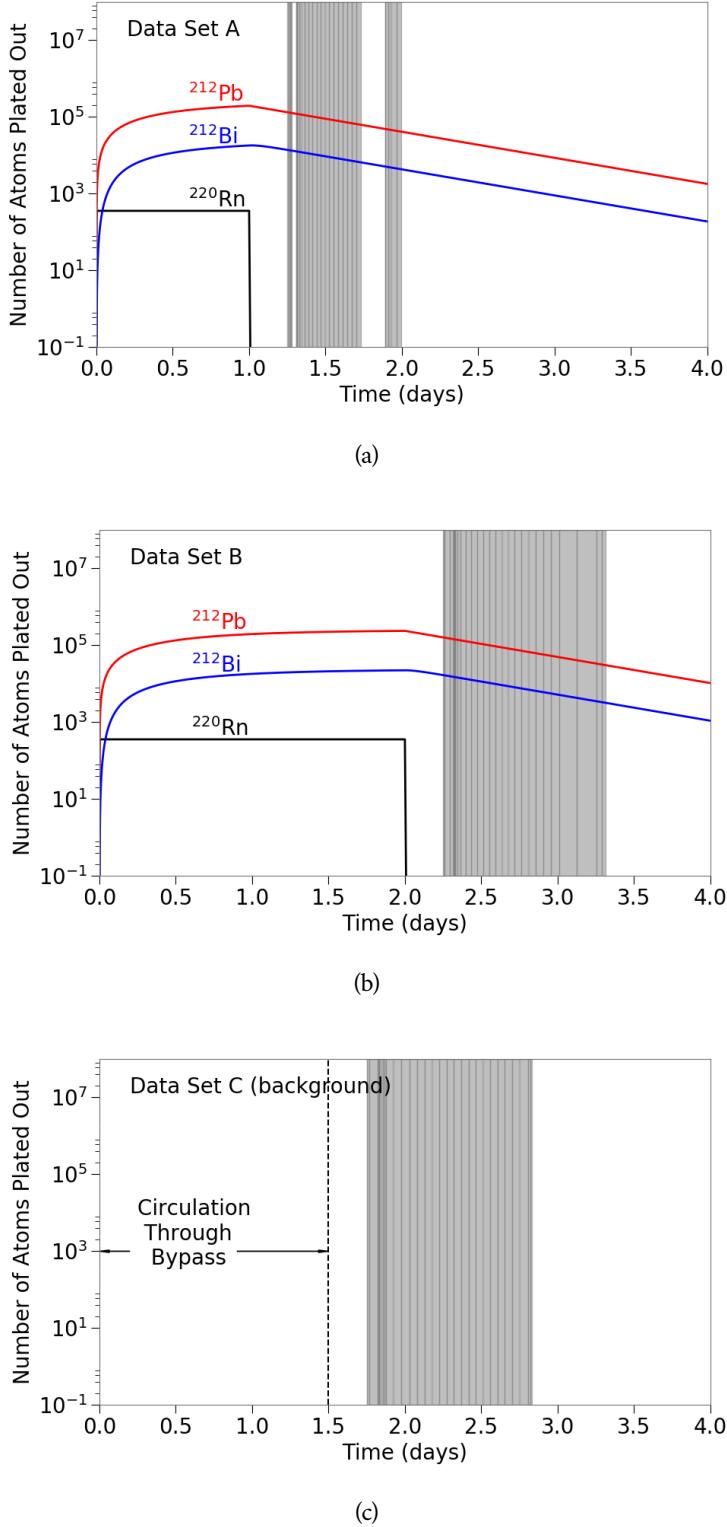


Figure 26: a) and (b) and (c) show the plateout conditions of datasets A, B, and C, respectively. The gray bands indicate time when data was being acquired. Dataset D (calibration) was taken following dataset A and consisted of a few hours.

The aim of this analysis was to reconstruct the z-position of radon daughter alpha decays via the timing difference between the S1 and S2 of an event. Therefore, Bi-Po events were rejected, as the two S2s presented a timing ambiguity. The focus was instead on identifying  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha decays. All events were expected to take place on detector surfaces, so  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha decays in the drift region indicate mobility of plated-out daughters  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  and/or  $^{212}\text{Bi}$ ; it was not possible to determine whether the original position was on the cathode wires, PTFE walls, or other detector surface.

The software cuts used to select  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas are described below:

1. **Data Cleaning** Remove events with any railed charge channel.
2. **Fiducialization** Require more signal in the central anode segment than the other two concentric anode segments.
3. **Select Alpha Events** The tallest pulse in an event was required to be an S1. Alphas are higher energy than the other decays in the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  chain, and have a characteristically high light yield, so this cut is generous in keeping all alpha events.
4. **Reject Bi-Po Topology** Of the alpha events, those with one S1 and one S2 (single-scatter) were classified as  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha. Events with two S1s (one of which is alpha-like), and one or two S2s were classified as Bi-Po.
5. **Reject Bi-Po Energy** There are two ways a Bi-Po event can mimic the topology of  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha: (i) alpha decay was prompt and so the scintillation signals from the beta and alpha were combined into one large S1 (ii) the beta was ejected into the cathode wire and therefore there was no signal detectable from the beta. To robustly identify  $^{212}\text{Bi}$ , the alpha S1 areas of  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha and Bi-Po events from Step 2 were histogrammed and fit with Gaussian functions.  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha events were tightly selected with a high and low S1 area cut placed on single-scatter alpha events: anything above  $(\mu - 3\sigma)_{\text{Bi-Po}}$  was considered a Bi-Po event and anything below  $(\mu + 3\sigma)_{\text{Bi-alpha}}$  was considered a beta or gamma, and discarded (Fig. 27). It should be noted that this cut doesn't affect the signal region for  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha in bulk; it affects the region for  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha on the cathode. This cut is conservative in discarding Bi-Po events, as this leads to a more conservative fraction for dissolved fraction of  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas.
6. **Z-position Cut** Events in the cathode region were separated from events in the bulk region with a z-position cut (discussed further below).

7. **Bulk Signal Area Cut** Only  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha tagged events which also fell in a signal region expected from calibration with the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  flow though source (Fig. 30h) were considered to be daughters which have dissolved.

In order to choose the value for the z-position cut in Step 4, a Monte Carlo approach was used. A Bi-Po decay with a prompt alpha (appears as single-scatter) where the beta penetrates into the bulk region, could mimic a  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha bulk event. To better understand Bi-Po cathode events and the danger of mis-identifying them as  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas in bulk, a Monte Carlo study was done with the  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  beta spectrum (the highest energy beta in the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  chain) to determine the maximum distance a beta could penetrate into the bulk region. The study yielded a maximum beta penetration of  $z_{max,MC} = 0.12$  cm, see Fig. 28. The z position cut separating cathode from bulk was then defined to be  $z_{cut} = z_{max,MC} + 3\sigma_{fit}$ , where  $\sigma_{fit}$  is just the width of a Gaussian fit for the position of the cathode. Figures 29a and 29c show the cathode position fits as well the the location of  $z_{cut}$ . The cathode position fit error,  $\sigma_{fit}$ , was the same for both datasets A and B, and was also used to determine  $z_{cut}$  for the background and calibration sets.

One feature that merits further discussion from Figure 29 is the strong anti-correlation in S1 Pulse Area vs. S2 Pulse Area apparent in cathode events. The cathode region was subject to very high, non-uniform fields due to the thin wires that comprised the cathode grid. Events that occurred on the wires encountered different fields depending on their position on the surface of the wire. Additionally, two events that occurred at exactly the same spot encountered different fields depending on which direction the decay particle (alpha, beta, etc.) traveled. The amount of scintillation and ionization from an interaction in liquid xenon depends on the field at the interaction site. Higher fields result in more ionization electrons being separated from the interaction site and therefore more S2. Mono-energetic events occurring in a uniform field have small anti-correlated fluctuations in S1 and S2 size. Non-uniform fields greatly exaggerate the typical variation in S1 and S2 size resulting in the spread out cathode region (blue) observed in Figures 29 and 30 (right). Events in the bulk region encounter a relatively low, uniform field resulting in a compact signal region in S1 vs. S2 (visible in red region of calibration data, Dataset D).

## 7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We observed 11 bulk  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas for dataset A, 20 for dataset B, and 1 background event in the signal region from dataset C. The counts of cath-

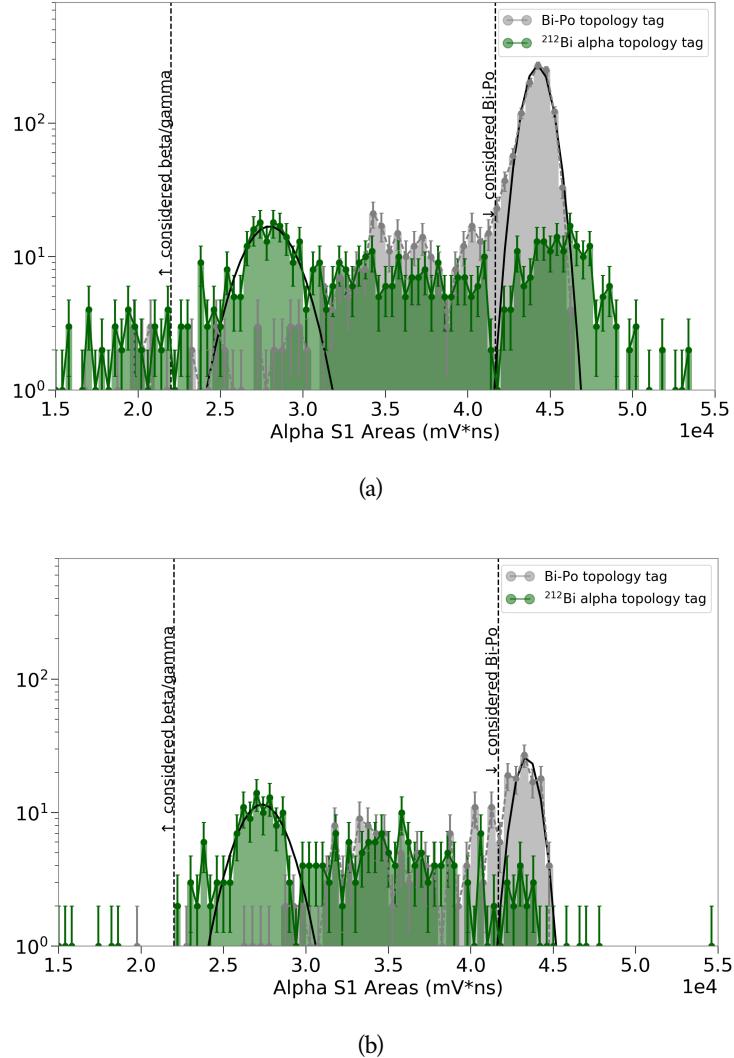


Figure 27: The S1 areas of events that were tagged using topological features.

These distributions were then used to employ the cuts in Step 3. The branching ratio for  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  is 36:64 for  $\alpha$ :Bi-Po. Dataset (a) showed 10:90 and dataset (b) showed 35:65. It is unclear why the branching ratios for dataset (a) deviate so much from expectation. The trigger is more efficient for Bi-Po events because those decays would produce more a larger charge signal. It's possible that the cathode being left on during the plate out procedure had some effect on the geometrical distribution of daughters on the cathode wires, which further biased the trigger.

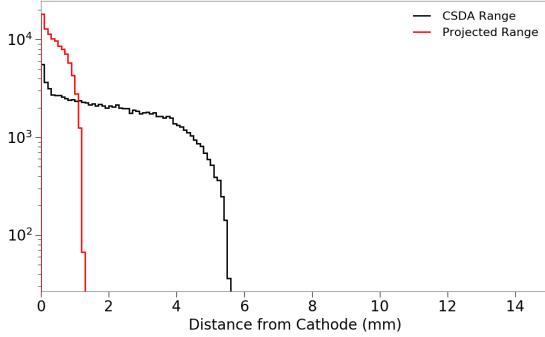


Figure 28: Monte Carlo study to find the maximum distance a  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  beta (2.2 MeV) on the cathode could penetrate into the drift region. The projected range (red) is the relevant curve for this analysis; it shows a beta is not expected to travel more than 1.2mm from the cathode.

ode region  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas are presented in Table 3. There was only one background event observed in the signal region, so with 95% confidence the true background count is at most 4.74. The observed counts for dataset A and B lie far above the 95% confidence limit for background, indicating they are true observations of  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas in bulk. Defining dissolved fraction as  $N_{bulk} / N_{cath}$ , the dissolved fraction of  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas for dataset A ( $\approx 13$  h livetime) is  $0.035 \pm 0.010$ , and for data set B ( $\approx 25$  h livetime) is  $0.099 \pm 0.020$ .

These results indicate that either  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  or  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  itself is soluble to a small degree in liquid xenon.

Table 3: Number of detected alpha particle events whose energy determination was consistent with  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  decay to  $^{208}\text{Tl}$ . Live times are quoted in Table 1

dataset ID:	A	B	C
Bulk Events	11	20	1
Cathode Events	300	183	4

The solubility is presented in the following units:

$$\frac{\frac{Bq (dissolved)}{kg LXe}}{\frac{Bq (plated out)}{cm^2 (detector surface)}}$$

## 7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

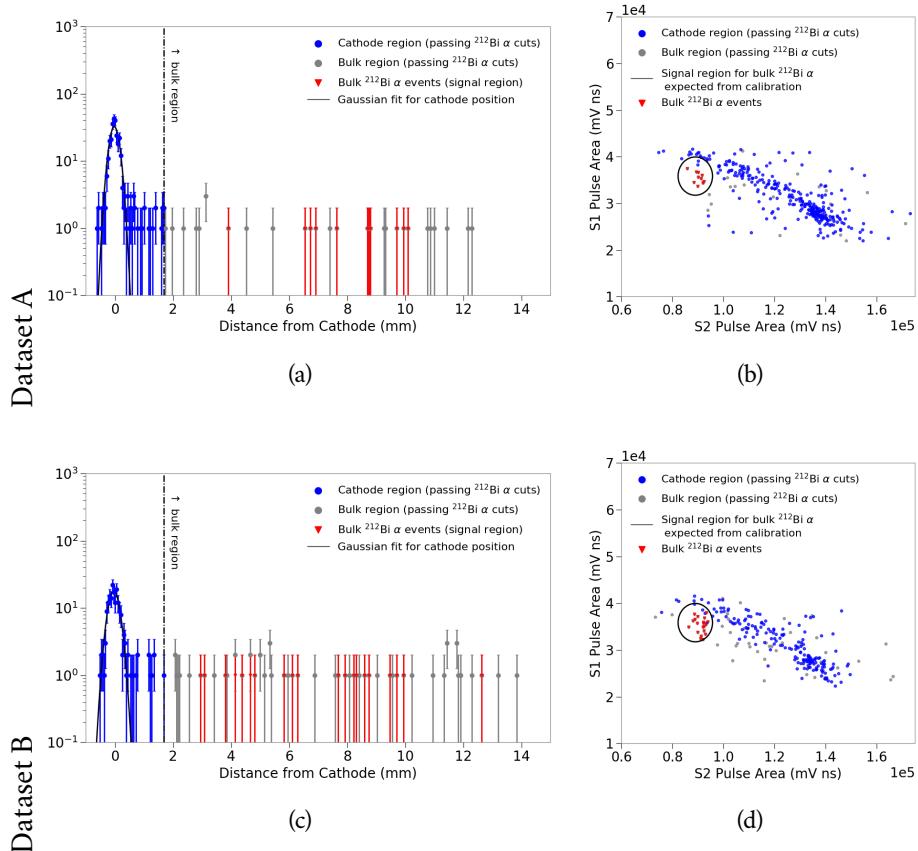


Figure 29: For datasets A and B: **(left)** Distribution of events in  $z$ . **(right)** The same events distributed in the S1-S2 plane, showing selection criteria for candidate  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha events in the bulk liquid xenon.

## 7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

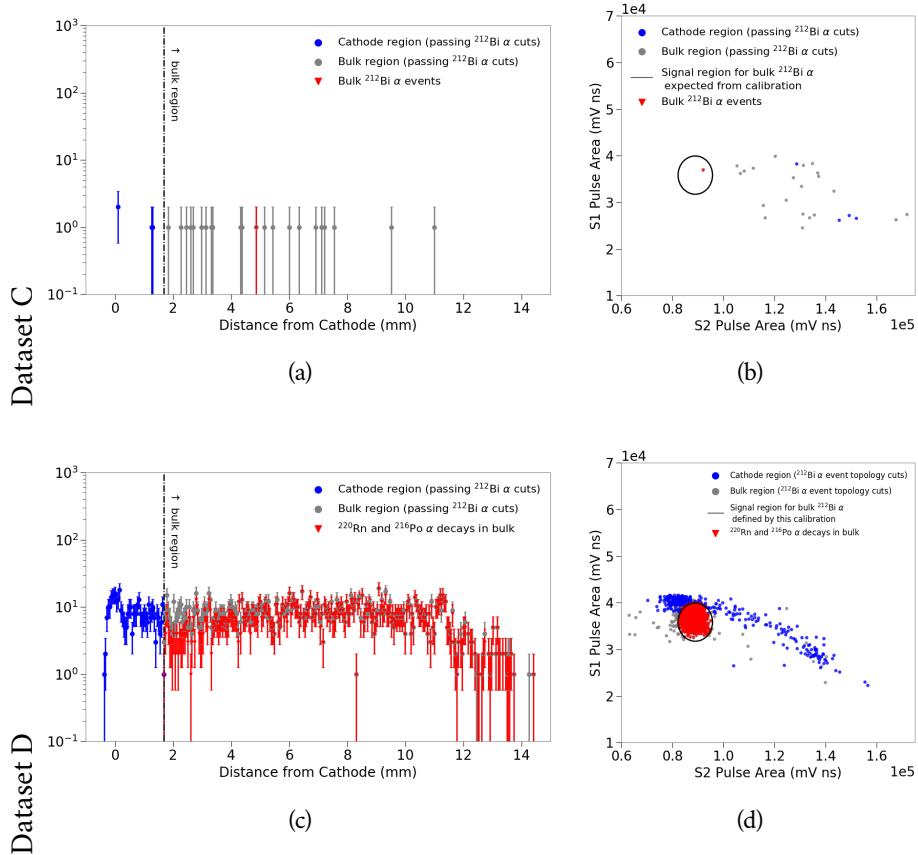


Figure 30: For datasets C and D: **(left)** Distribution of events in  $z$ . **(right)** The same events distributed in the S1-S2 plane, showing selection criteria for candidate  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha events in the bulk liquid xenon.

The solubility calculation is subject to errors from the following factors. Where appropriate, it is noted how the error taken into account in the calculation; otherwise, the assumption is stated.

1. Liquid height (folded into fiducial volume)
2. Area over which charge amps are sensitive (calculation using different fiducial volumes)
3. Area over which daughters are plated out (varying area over which  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  is distributed; assume 10% error in area calculation)
4. Initial activity of plated out daughters (assume circulation time for gas to leave inner PTFE stack > decay time of  $^{216}\text{Po}$ )
5. Live time calculation (uncertainty included)

The solubility found in dataset A is at worst  $84 \pm 26 \text{ Bq/kg/Bq/cm}^2$  and at best  $0.091 \pm 0.030 \text{ Bq/kg/Bq/cm}^2$ . For dataset B, the worst case is  $58. \pm 18. \text{ Bq/kg/Bq/cm}^2$  and the best case is  $0.064 \pm 0.021 \text{ Bq/kg/Bq/cm}^2$ .

These results are first evidence that the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  daughters  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  and/or  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  are soluble in liquid xenon. The dissolved events are a small fraction of events that are plated-out on detector surfaces. These daughters are proxies for the isotopes  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  and/or  $^{210}\text{Bi}$ , which undergo naked beta decays in the  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain and pose a problem for liquid xenon dark matter detectors. Our study counts dissolved  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alpha events as well as  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  alphas plated out on the cathode. We found 11 counts in dataset A and 20 counts in dataset B consistent with  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  decay in the bulk region; these counts are significantly above a background count of 1. The experimental apparatus is not characterized extensively. Regardless, we carried through the solubility calculation, taking into account uncertainties to arrive at a ‘best case’ and ‘worst case’ result.

The limit derived from LUX observations, stated in the LZ projected sensitivity paper [29], is  $0.1 \mu \text{Bq/kg LXe}$  for  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  mobility, given  $50 \text{nBq/cm}^2$  on PTFE panels. Our observed solubility is much greater than this. One explanation is that we are sensitive to the ‘stuck’ radon daughters that wash off easily in the first few days of an experiment due to the introduction of [LXe](#). Large TPCs may then expect an increased rate of radon daughter decays in the fiducial volume at the beginning of a search, but a decreasing rate as these are removed by the getter or are implanted in detector materials.

Another, testable, explanation that would reconcile the different solubilities in the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  and  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain is beta ejection. Referring to Figures ?? and ??, both bottleneck decays,  $^{XXX}\text{Pb}$ , are beta decays. However,  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  in the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  chain has a beta decay endpoint of 570 keV, which

## 7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

about 10 times of the endpoint energy for  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  in the  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain. Daughter recoils from beta decay are indeed small; the endpoints are approximately 0.6 eV for the recoil from  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  decay in the  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  chain and 0.006 eV for the recoil from  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  decay in the  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  chain. The physisorption potential in for both cases is expected to be below 1 eV. Depending on the exact value, which is unavailable, the  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  decay could provide enough energy to liberate the daughter  $^{212}\text{Bi}$  most of the time, whereas  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  decay produces a maximum recoil value below the potential depth.

Further study, where a known amount of  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  daughters are plated out on a known area is necessary to measure dissolution rates. Additional studies that compare the solubility of radon daughters adsorbed on different materials, and under different conditions (e.g. temperature) would also be useful. The effect of cleaning these surfaces before searching for dissolved daughters should also be investigated.

If beta recoil, not ‘washing’ by the  $\text{LXe}$ , is the cause of radon daughter solubility, then the high rate seen by this study of  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  can be reconciled with the low rate of  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  daughter dissolution seen in large experiments.

## 7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4: Using observations from 3, proceed through solubility calculation.

dataset ID:	A	B
Total Inferred Bi decays	$20 \pm 6$	$36 \pm 11$
Livetime (hours)	$12.02 \pm 0.5$	$23.93 \pm 0.5$
$\mu\text{Bq}$ Bi in bulk	$460 \pm 140$	$420 \pm 130$
Bq (dissolved) / kg LXe (smallest fiducial)	$0.42 \pm 0.13$	$0.38 \pm 0.12$
Bq (dissolved) / kg LXe (largest fiducial)	$0.0063 \pm 0.0020$	$0.0057 \pm 0.0018$

Plate-Out Areas		
	Area	
Total Internal Area Including PMT	$496 \text{ cm}^2$	
Active Region PTFE	$36 \text{ cm}^2$	

dataset ID:	A	B
Number of $^{212}\text{Bi}$ Plated-Out	13191	17280
Bq (plated-out)	2.5	3.2
Bq (plated) / $\text{cm}^2$ min	$0.0050 \pm 0.0005$	$0.0065 \pm 0.0007$
Bq (plated) / $\text{cm}^2$ max	$0.069 \pm 0.007$	$0.089 \pm 0.009$

Solubility		
dataset ID:	A	B
Solubility min	$0.091 \pm 0.030$	$0.064 \pm 0.021$
Solubility max	$84. \pm 26.$	$58. \pm 18.$

# 8

## ELECTRON TRAIN STUDIES

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### 8.1 ELECTRON TRAIN STUDIES

8.1.1 MOTIVATION

8.1.2 EXPERIMENTAL CONFIGURATION

8.1.3 RESULTS

PART IV

## APPENDIX

# A

## DUMMY APPENDIX

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