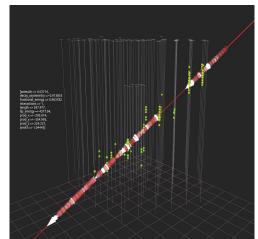
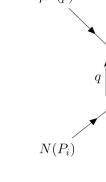
# Search for Long Lived Particles at the IceCube Neutrino Observatory



Axel Pontén, PhD Student Uppsala University

axelpo@icecube.wisc.edu

Partikeldagarna Nov 24th 2025



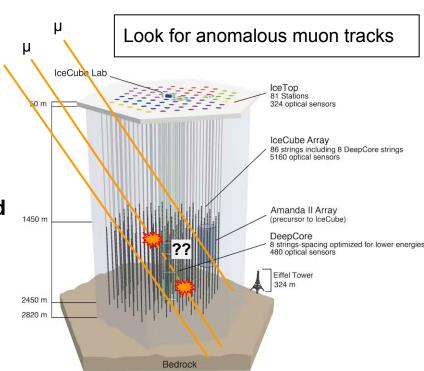




 $N(P_f)$ 

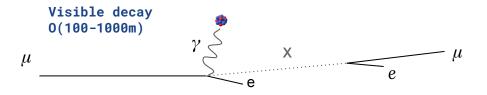
## Is there hidden physics in the abundant atmospheric muon flux at IceCube?

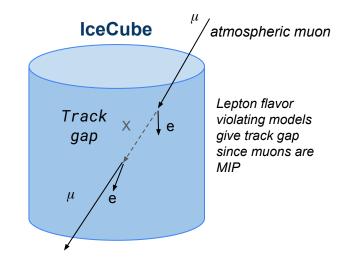
- 1.5 kHz muon rate
  - ~10<sup>10</sup> muons per year
  - Most are discarded as bkg
- Rare BSM physics coupling to muons?
  - Modified in-ice signature of muons
  - Gaps in muon tracks from Long Lived Particles with displaced vertex?
- Can IceCube complement accelerator searches for LLPs?

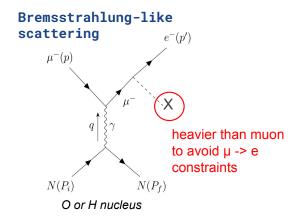


#### The Idea

- Long Lived Particles from atmospheric muons
  - Produced in exotic muon-nucleus scattering
  - Decays into visible SM particles
- Event signature -> muon track with gap
  - No Cherenkov light during LLP propagation
- Advantage over accelerator searches
  - Many nuclei in 1 km3 of ice: very thick target
  - No fixed decay length: large decay volume







#### **Long Lived Particles (LLPs)**

- Light particles with very weak coupling to the SM
  - Dark photon, Dark Z', ALPs, Dark Higgs, Heavy Neutral Leptons, etc.
- Produced in rare scattering or decays
- Decays visibly with macroscopic decay lengths
  - Displaced production and decay vertices
- Searched for at ATLAS, CMS, NA62, FASER, etc.

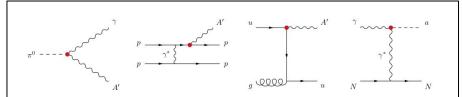
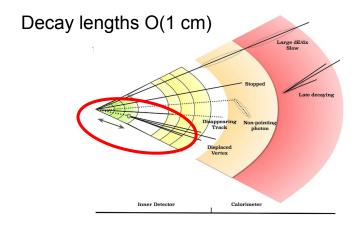


FIG. 4. Representative Feynman diagrams for the LLP production processes outlined in this section: dark photon production from pion decay (left), dark photon production via dark bremsstrahlung (center left), dark photon production in hard scattering (center right), and ALP production via the Primakoff process from photons scattering in the TAN (right).

Decay lengths O(100 m)

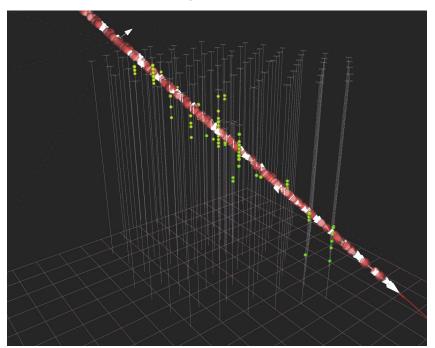




### MC Simulation

#### Signal vs. Background

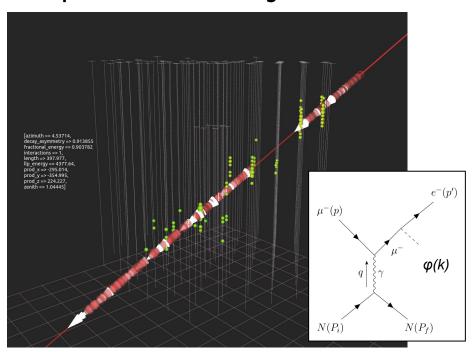
#### **Atmospheric muon**



Red spheres and white arrows are MC energy losses which yield Cherenkov photons that hit the DOMs.

Those pulses are the only event observables.

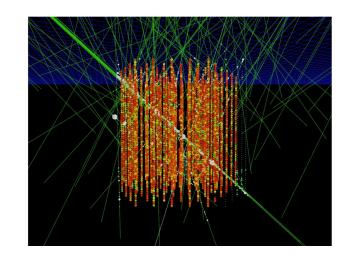
#### Atmospheric muon with Long Lived Particle

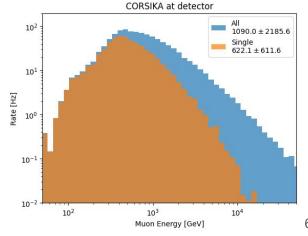


Benchmark model: Dark Leptonic Scalar <u>arXiv:2202.04410v3</u>

### Beam: Atmospheric Muon Flux at IceCube

- 1.5 kHz muon trigger rate (vs. 10 mHz neutrino rate)
- Complex and correlated covering orders of magnitude in energy!
  - Energy, zenith, length in detector, multiplicity etc.
  - Characterizing the "beam" is hard! No prior info
- Compare to e.g. fixed-target experiments with monochromatic beams hitting the same target from same direction

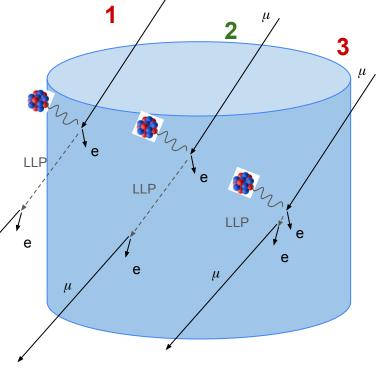




#### **Production Estimation: Event-by-event LLP probability**

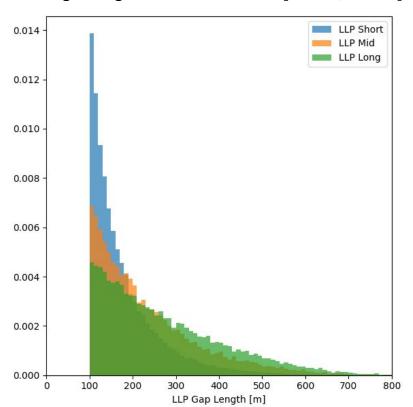
- Muon spectrum is complex
  - Need full MC simulation to estimate signal rate
- Single muons only!
  - Bundles cover gap
  - Limits us to low energy end of spectrum
- Production and decay compete  $_{ au \propto 1/\left(\epsilon^2 \cdot m_x
  ight)}$

- 1. Decay outside detector :(
- 2. Detectable LLP :)



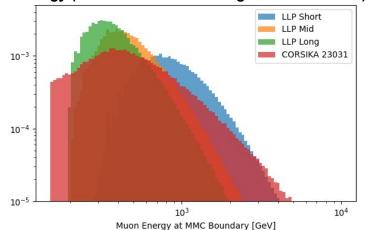
#### LLP energy spectrum is model dependent!

Gap needs to be short enough to be contained and long enough to be detectable -> [~100m, 1000m]

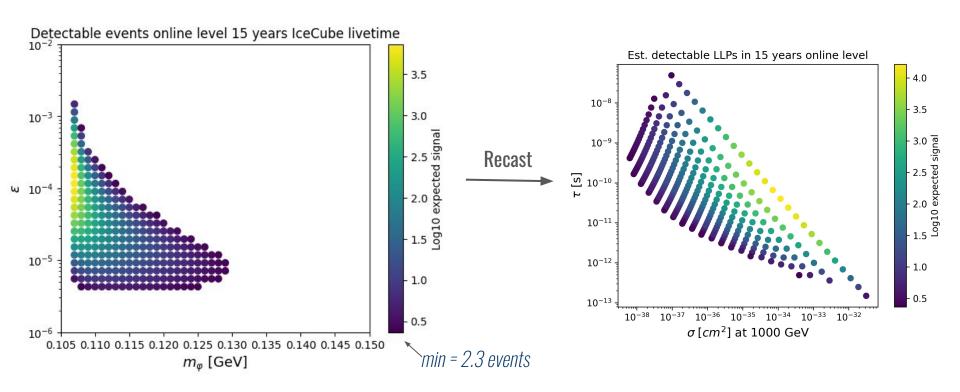


Sample	LLP Short	LLP Mid	LLP Long
Mass	110 MeV	110 MeV	108 MeV
Coupling	3e-5	1e-5	8e-6
Lifetime	5.62e-11 s	5.06e-10 s	2.67e-9 s
Decay length @1TeV	153 m	1380 m	7416 m

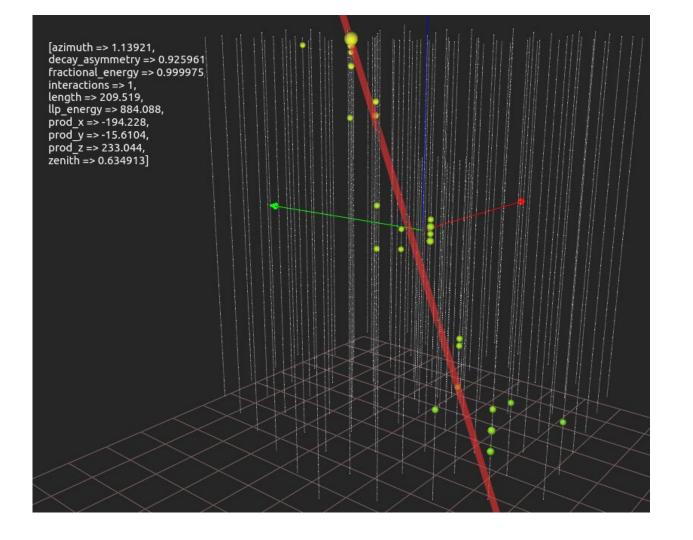
#### **Energy (short lifetimes need larger Lorentz Boost)**

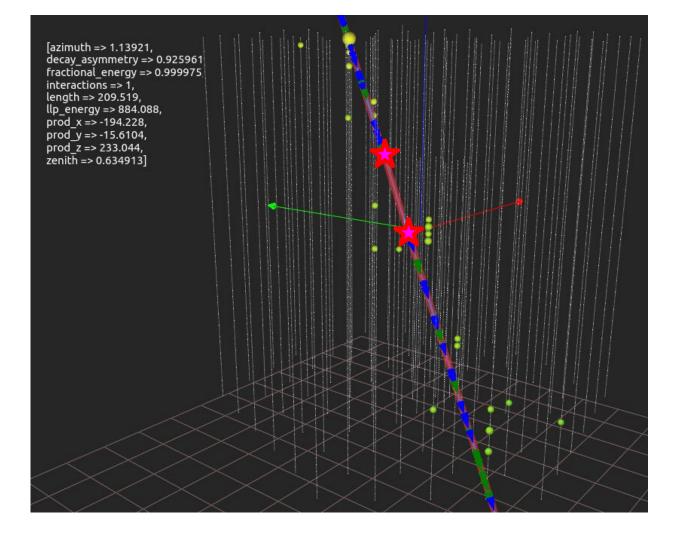


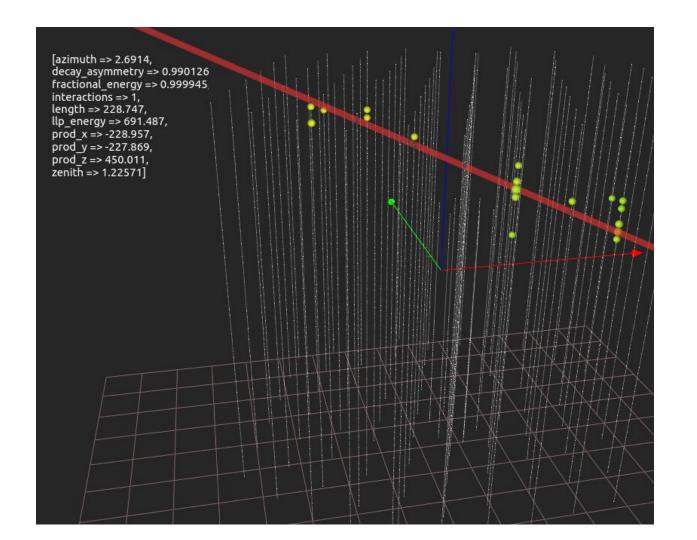
#### Estimate signal rate using CORSIKA single muon spectrum

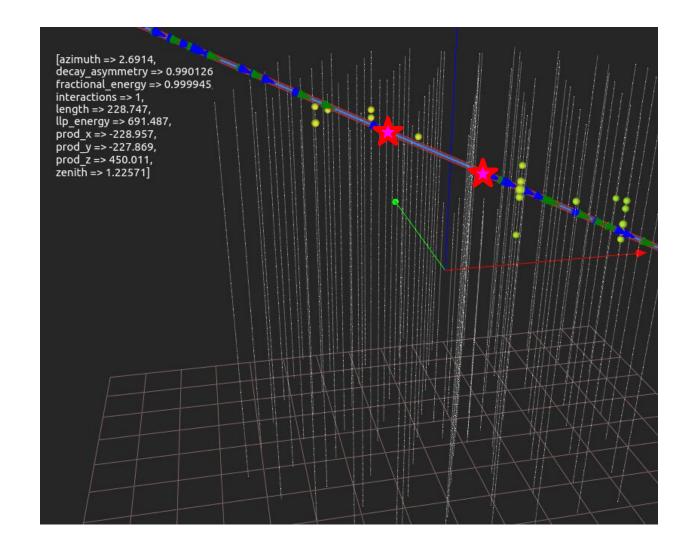


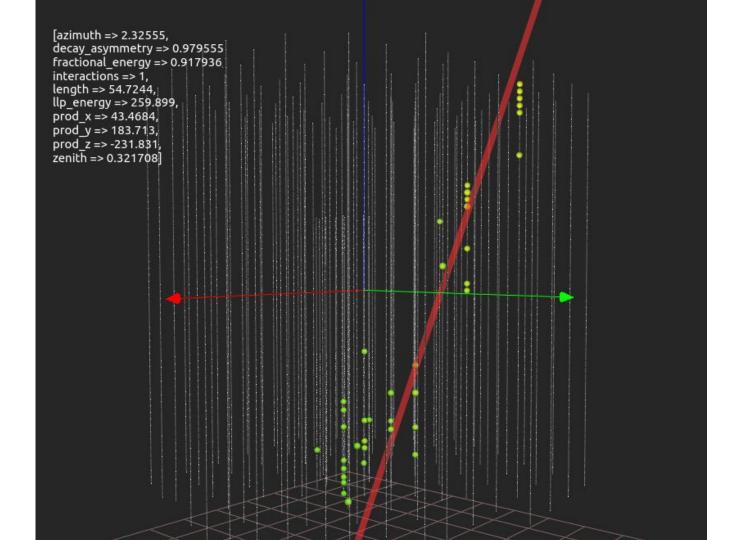
## Game! Find the Long Lived Particle

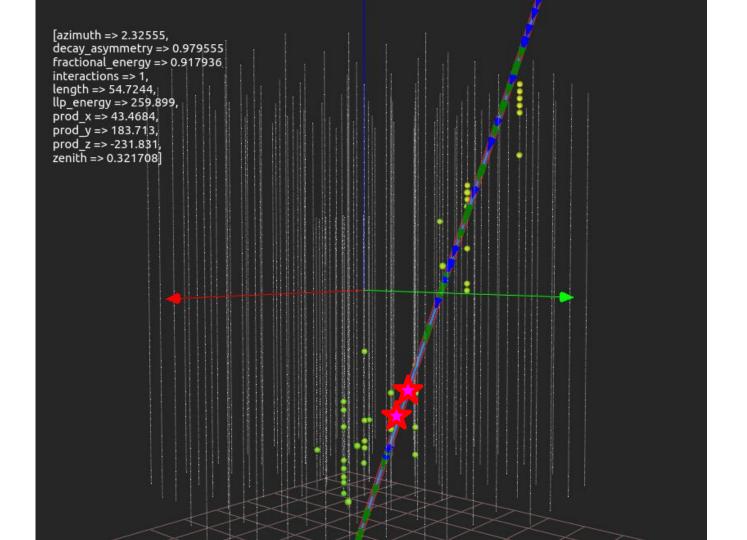


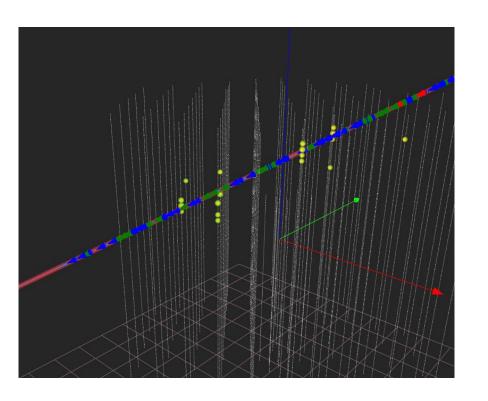


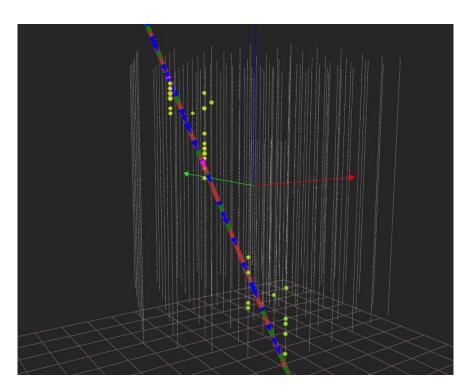




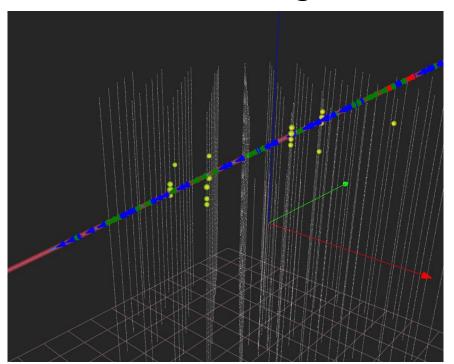


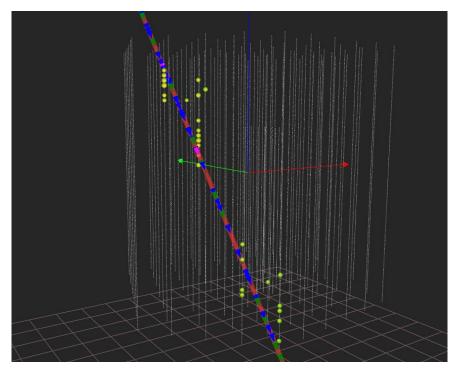






#### Regular atmospheric muons...



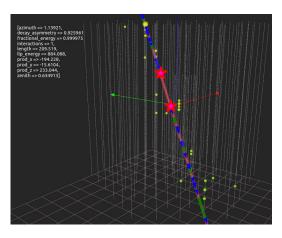


#### Gap in photon hits is common

- Detector is sparse (~17-125 m resolution) and light travels far
- Gaps in Cherenkov emission is not always gap in detector hits, and vice versa

#### **Summary and Outlook**

- IceCube could potentially complement accelerator searches for Long Lived Particles
  - Pros: Very thick target, enormous decay volume
  - Cons: Low statistics, low spatial resolution
  - No one has done this type of analysis at a neutrino telescope!
- Hard to distinguish from background due to sparse detector
- LLP MC simulation chain finished, event selection chain in progress
- Next up:
  - Finish event selection
  - Simulate other event topologies (e.g. cascade at decay point)
  - Analyze data



#### Backup



50 m



#### IceCube Laboratory

Data is collected here and sent by satellite to the data warehouse at UW-Madison

1450 m



Digital Optical Module (DOM) 5,160 DOMs

deployed in the ice

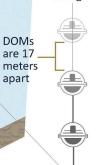
2450 m

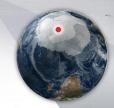
IceCube

detector

Antarctic bedrock







Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, Antarctica

A National Science Foundationmanaged research facility



60 DOMs on each string



#### **Detector signatures mainly limited to two topologies**

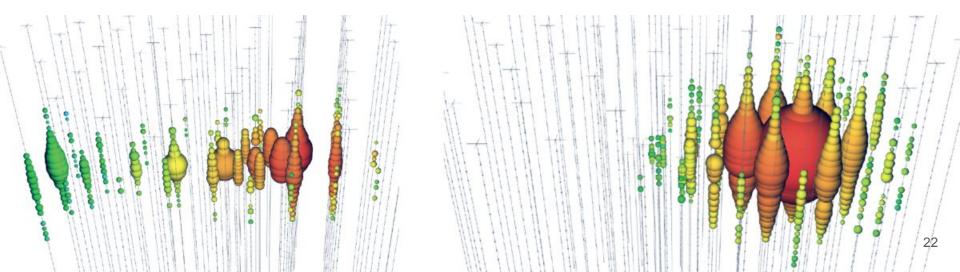
#### **Tracks**

Downgoing tracks almost exclusively atmospheric muons ~x2 energy resolution

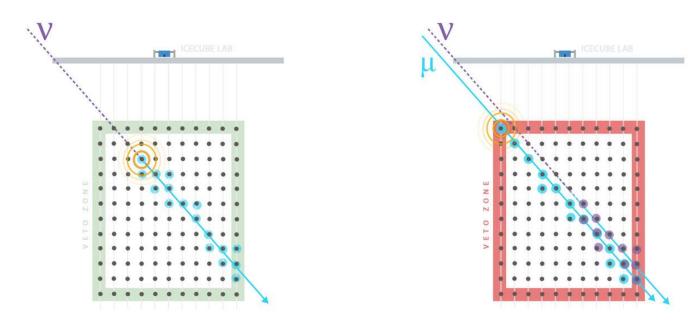
- Sub-degree angular resolution
- Minimum Ionizing Particles

#### Cascades

- 10-20% energy resolution
- 10 degree angular resolution (at high energies)



#### Atmospheric muons are background to neutrino searches



Most IceCube analyses try to remove them

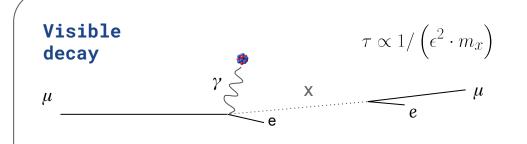


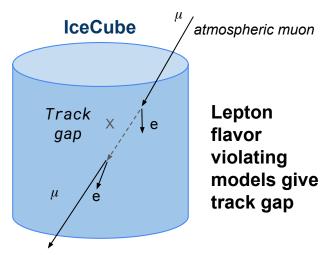
Atmospheric muon flux might hide new physics

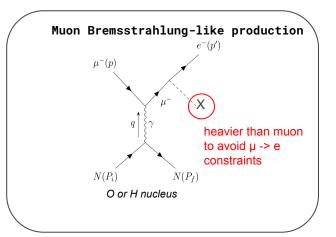
#### **Production & Decay**

- Exotic bremsstrahlung-like muon-nucleus scattering
- IceCube low spatial resolution but enormous volume
- No fixed distance between production and decay
  - Unlike accelerator experiments

#### Decay lengths O(100 - 1000 m) -> IceCube



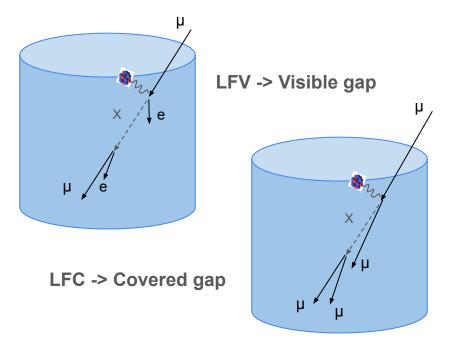




#### Can IceCube complement LLP searches at collider experiment?

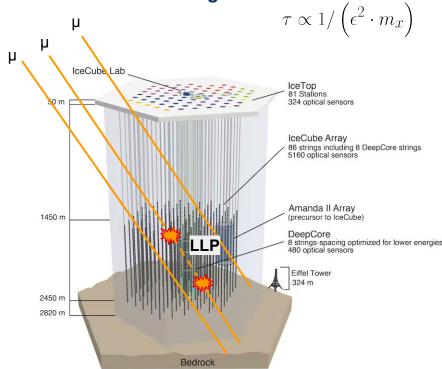
#### If the model gives visible gaps!

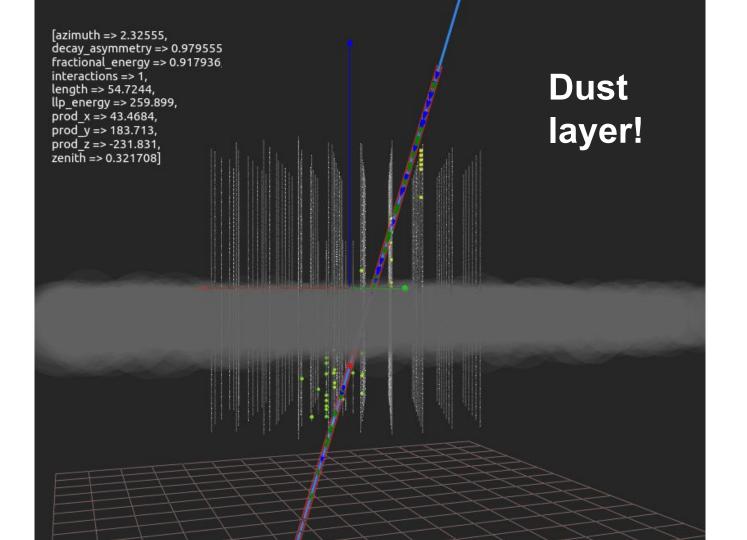
- No Cherenkov light between production and decay vertices
- Lepton flavor violation ensures gap

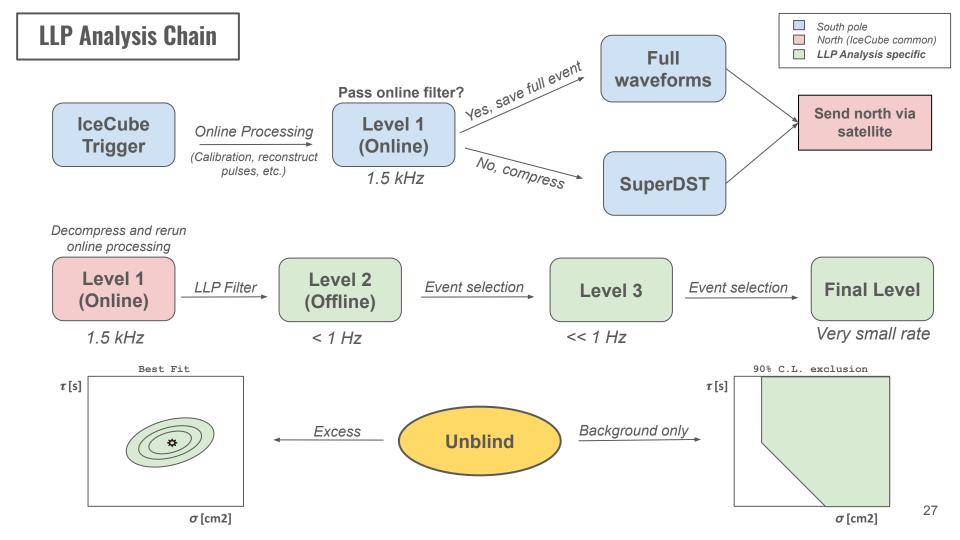


#### If we have enough statistics, rare events!

- Production & decay compete
- Is 10<sup>10</sup> muons enough?







#### **Production Estimation : Event-by-event LLP probability**

Muon spectrum is complex, use MC simulation to estimate production!

l. Decay outside detector :(

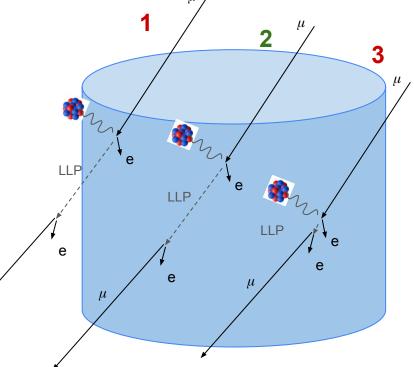
2. Detectable LLP :)

Gap too small :(

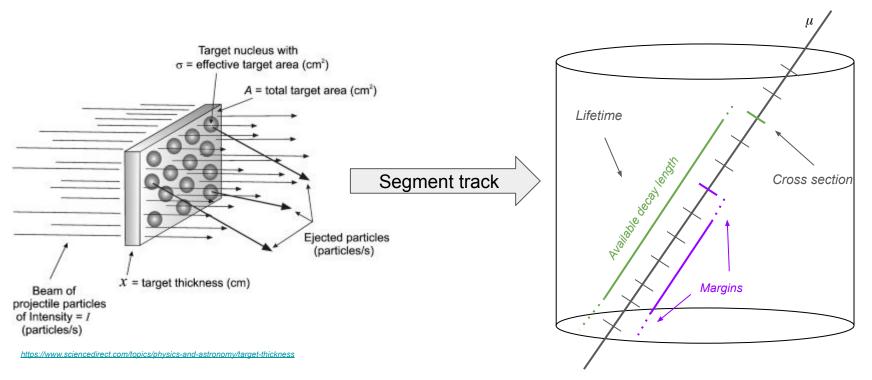
- Single muons only!
  - Bundles cover gap
  - Limits us to low energy end of spectrum
- Production and decay compete  $au \propto 1/\left(\epsilon^2 \cdot m_x\right)$

#### Segmented thin target approximation with decay

- 1. Chop up track into many segments
- 2. Probability of LLP production, thin target approx
- 3. Multiply by decay factor at each point [0, 1]
- 4. Sum together

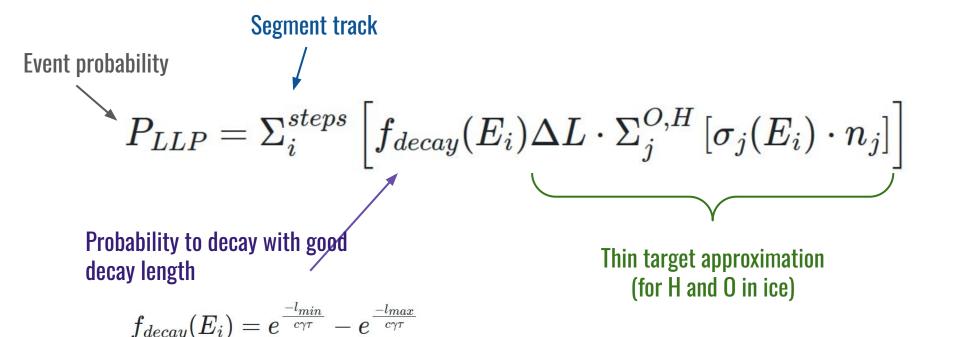


#### Modified thin target approximation: segment + decay factor



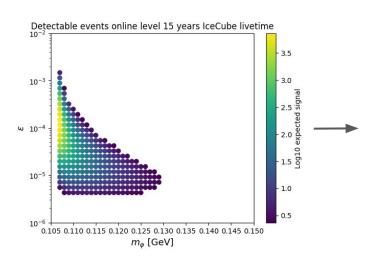
Chop up track -> Sum probability of LLP production + decay in the detector at each point

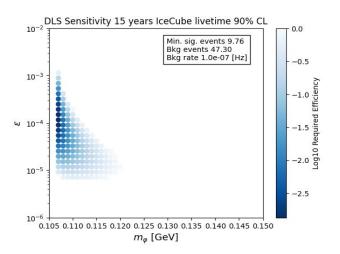
#### Final formula detectable LLP probability

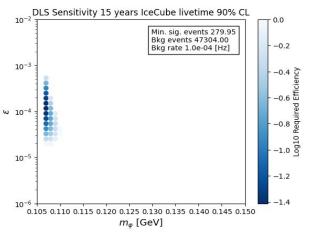


Need energy of muon along track -> Use MC truth energies of CORSIKA simulated muons

## If background only, what signal efficiency is required to exclude Dark Leptonic Scalar at 90% C.L.?





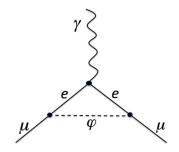


#### Benchmark model: Dark Leptonic Scalar arXiv:2202.04410v3

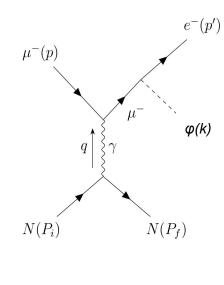
- Scalar boson with flavor violating coupling
- Heavier than muon to avoid  $\mu$  -> e constraints
- Produced in brehmstrahlung-like process
- Decay to SM or DM particles
- Could contribute to muon g-2 anomaly

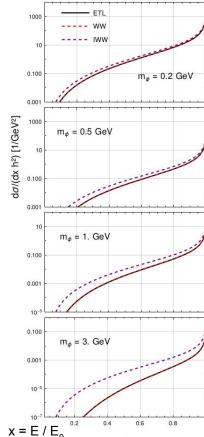
$$L_{arphi\mu e}=-h_{\mu e}ar{e}_L\mu_Rarphi+H.c.$$
 effective lagrangian, not gauge invariant or renormalizable

#### Muon g-2 contribution



#### Production cross section



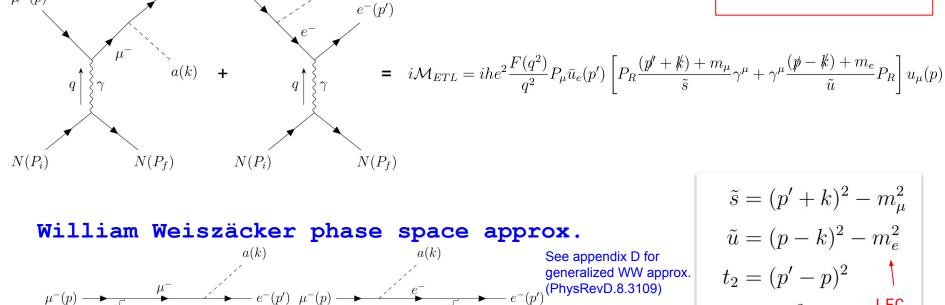


 $\mu^-(p)$ 

#### Tree Level 3-body final state

s-channel

 $\gamma(q)$ 

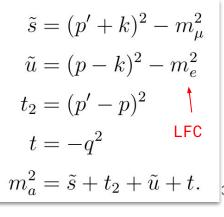


 $\gamma(q)$ 

u-channel

a(k)

Note: different fermion propagator in the two channels due to LFC



(I perform these integrals numerically)

#### ETL cross section

$$\left(\frac{d^2\sigma}{dx d\cos\theta_k}\right)_{ETL} = \frac{h^2\alpha^2}{4\pi} \frac{E_{\mu}|\mathbf{k}|}{|\mathbf{p}|V} \int_{t_{min}}^{t_{max}} dt \, \frac{F^2(t)}{t^2} \int_0^{2\pi} \frac{d\phi_q}{2\pi} \, \frac{|A_{2\to3}|^2}{8M^2}$$

$$\left(\frac{d\sigma}{dx}\right)_{ETL} = \frac{h^2\alpha^2}{4\pi} \frac{E_{\mu}|\mathbf{k}|}{|\mathbf{p}|} \int_0^{\theta_{max}} d\cos\theta_k \frac{1}{V} \int_{t_{min}}^{t_{max}} dt \frac{F^2(t)}{t^2} \int_0^{2\pi} \frac{d\phi_q}{2\pi} \frac{|A_{2\to3}|^2}{8M^2}$$

**Total cross section:** calculate ds/dx for an array of x-values, interpolate those values, and integrate the result from xmin to xmax

#### Weizsäcker-Williams cross section

$$\left(\frac{d^2\sigma_{2\to3}}{dxd\cos\theta_k}\right)_{WW} = \frac{\alpha\chi^{WW}}{\pi(1-x)}E_{\mu}|\mathbf{k}| \frac{d\sigma_{2\to2}}{d(p\cdot k)}\Big|_{t_{min}} \qquad \frac{d\sigma_{2\to2}}{d(p\cdot k)} = 2\frac{d\sigma_{2\to2}}{dt_2} = \frac{1}{8\pi\tilde{s}^2}\langle|\mathcal{M}|^2\rangle 
= \frac{\alpha h^2}{2\tilde{s}^2}|A_{2\to2}|^2.$$

$$|A_{2\rightarrow2}|^2 = -\frac{\left(\tilde{s}+\tilde{u}\right)^2}{2\tilde{s}\tilde{u}} + \Delta m^2 \left[\frac{\left(\tilde{s}+\tilde{u}\right)\left(\tilde{s}m_e^2+\tilde{u}m_\mu^2\right)}{\tilde{s}^2\tilde{u}^2} - \frac{t_2}{\tilde{s}\tilde{u}}\right] \quad \text{from FeynCalc}$$
 evaluate at tmin

$$|A_{2\rightarrow 2}|^2_{t_{min}} = \frac{x^2}{2(1-x)} + \Delta m^2 \cdot \frac{\tilde{u}x + m_a^2(1-x) + x \left[m_e^2 + m_\mu^2(x-1)\right]}{\tilde{u}^2}.$$

$$\tilde{s} \approx -\frac{\tilde{u}}{(1-x)} \qquad \text{Mandelstam at } t_{\min}$$

$$t_2 \approx \frac{x\tilde{u}}{(1-x)} + m_a^2$$

$$\tilde{u} \approx -xE_\mu^2\theta_k^2 - m_a^2\frac{1-x}{x} + m_\mu^2(1-x) - m_e^2$$

$$m_a^2 \approx \tilde{s} + t_2 + \tilde{u}. \qquad \text{Extra term due to } m_i \text{ != } m_{\rm f}$$

#### Weiszäcker-Williams cross sections

Double differential cross section

$$\left(\frac{d^{2}\sigma_{2\to3}}{dxd\cos\theta_{k}}\right)_{WW} = \frac{\alpha^{2}h^{2}\chi^{WW}}{2\pi}E_{\mu}^{2}x\beta_{k}\frac{(1-x)}{\tilde{u}^{2}}\left[\frac{x^{2}}{2(1-x)} + \Delta m^{2}\cdot\frac{\tilde{u}x + m_{a}^{2}(1-x) + x\left[m_{e}^{2} + m_{\mu}^{2}(x-1)\right]}{\tilde{u}^{2}}\right]$$

Fractional energy differential cross section

$$\left(\frac{d\sigma}{dx}\right)_{WW} = \frac{h^2\alpha^2}{2\pi} E_{\mu}^2 x \beta_k (1-x) \int_0^{\theta_{max}} d\cos\theta \, \frac{|A_{2\to 2}|_{t_{min}}^2}{\tilde{u}^2} \chi^{WW}.$$

- Integrate above expression from xmin to xmax for total cross section
- $\diamond$  Can solve integral over  $\cos(\theta)$  analytically in Improved Weizsäcker-Williams by assuming photon flux independent of  $\theta$ .

## Improved Weiszäcker-Williams cross sections

$$\left(\frac{d\sigma}{dx}\right)_{WW} = \frac{h^2\alpha^2}{2\pi} E_{\mu}^2 x \beta_k (1-x) \int_0^{\theta_{max}} d\cos\theta \, \frac{|A_{2\to 2}|_{t_{min}}^2}{\tilde{u}^2} \chi^{WW}.$$

Change variables and move photon flux outside

$$\chi^{WW} \to \chi^{IWW}$$

$$\chi^{WW} \to \chi^{IWW}$$

$$d\tilde{u} = -2xE_{\mu}^{2}\theta_{k}d\theta_{k}$$

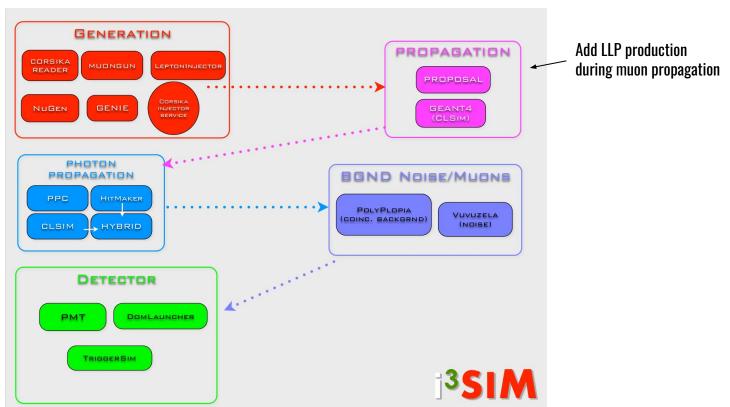
$$= 2xE_{\mu}^{2}d\cos\theta_{k}$$

$$\int_{\tilde{u}_{min}}^{\tilde{u}_{max}} d\tilde{u} \, \frac{\langle |A_{2\to 2}|^2 \rangle_{t_{min}}}{\tilde{u}^2} = \int_{\tilde{u}_{min}}^{\tilde{u}_{max}} d\tilde{u} \, \left[ \frac{x^2}{2(1-x)\tilde{u}^2} + \frac{\Delta m^2 x}{\tilde{u}^3} + \Delta m^2 \frac{m_a^2 (1-x) + x \left[ m_e^2 + m_\mu^2 (x-1) \right]}{\tilde{u}^4} \right]$$

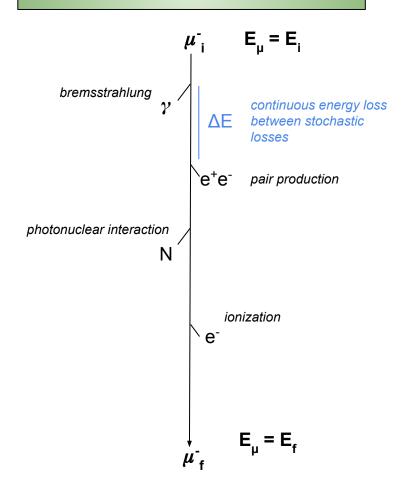
$$= \left[ \frac{x^2}{-2(1-x)\tilde{u}} + \frac{\Delta m^2 x}{-2\tilde{u}^2} + \Delta m^2 \frac{m_a^2 (1-x) + x \left[ m_e^2 + m_\mu^2 (x-1) \right]}{-3\tilde{u}^3} \right]_{\tilde{u}_{min}}^{\tilde{u}_{max}}$$

### LLP Simulation in IceCube

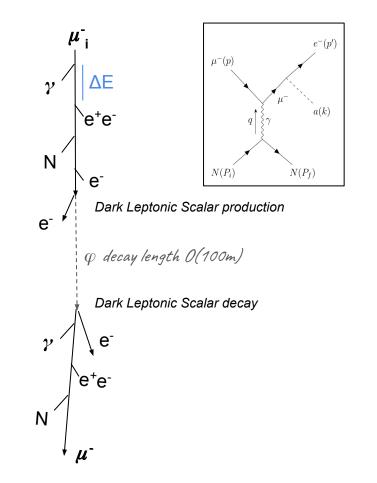
Branch with LLP modified PROPOSAL: <a href="https://github.com/icecube/icetray/tree/axelpo/main/PROPOSAL">https://github.com/icecube/icetray/tree/axelpo/main/PROPOSAL</a>



### Standard PROPOSAL



### Standard PROPOSAL + LLP production



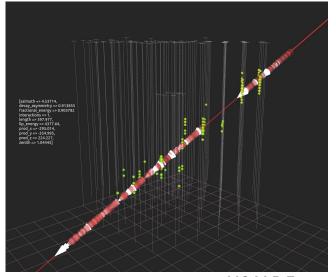
### If LLP interaction happens

### 1. Sample decay length

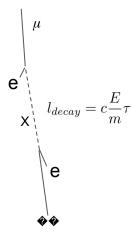
- a. Exponential distribution of lifetimes in rest frame
- b. Multiply by speed of light and Lorentz boost

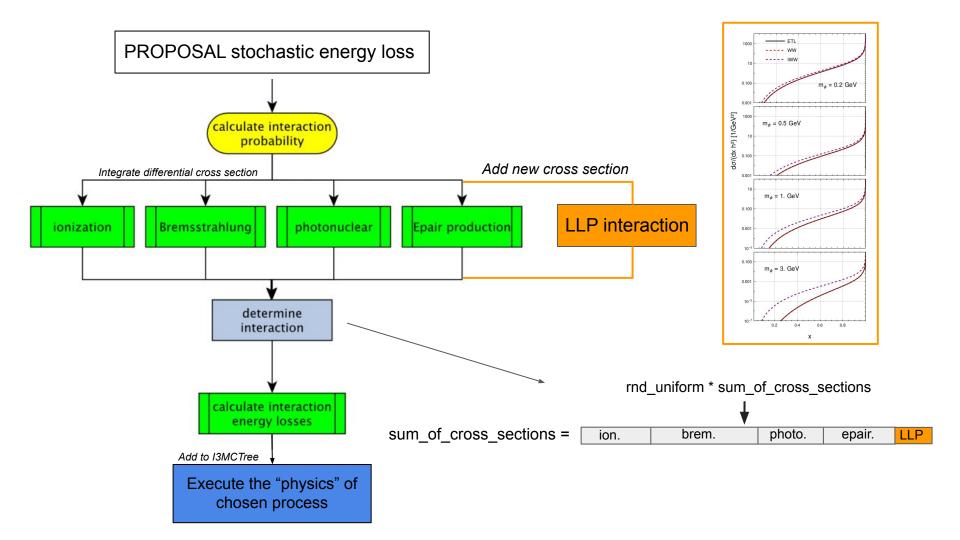
#### 2. Create daughter particles

- a. One lepton at production point
- b. Two leptons at decay point
- Set time, energy, position and direction of product particles
- 4. Propagate the products

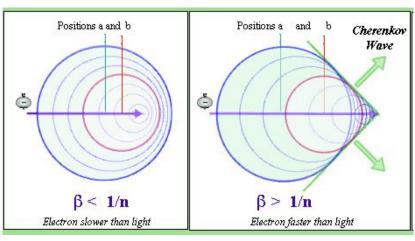


**MC LLP Event** 





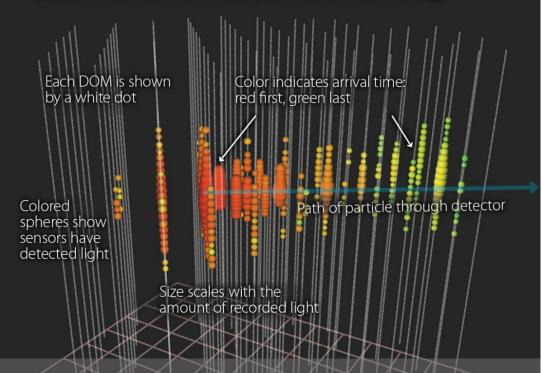
# Detection principle IceCube detects Cherenkov light



https://radioactivity.eu.com/articles/phenomenon/cherenkov\_effect

#### How does IceCube work?

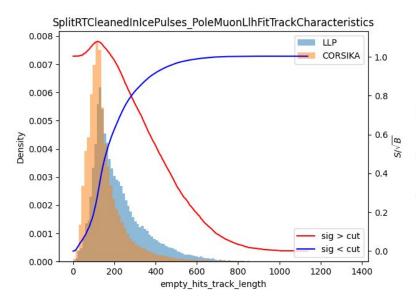
When a neutrino interacts with the Antarctic ice, it creates other particles. In this event graphic, a muon was created that traveled through the detector almost at the speed of light. The pattern and the amount of light recorded by the IceCube sensors indicate the particle's direction and energy.



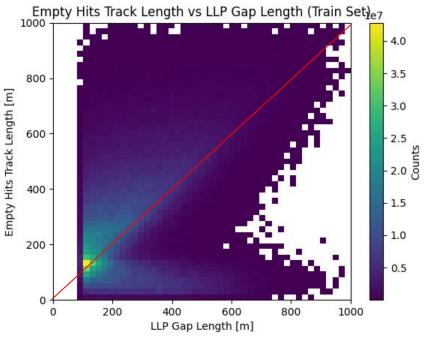
date: November 12, 2010 duration: 3,800 nanoseconds energy: 71.4 TeV declination: -0.4° right ascension: 110° nickname: Dr. Strangepork

## LLP Gap Length != Gap in photon hit distribution

- Detector is very sparse (~17-125 m resolution) and light travels far
- Gaps in photon emission not always gap in photon hits, and vice versa



**empty hits track length:** The maximal track length of the track, which got no hits from hit DOMs within the specified cylinder radius around the track.

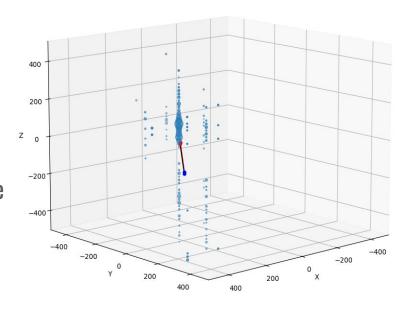


### LLP Gap Reco with Deep Learning

Event 1: E: 7831.55, Z: 0.14, L: 1047.74

label: 150.57 m pred: 150.28 m

- > Transformer + Conditional Normalizing Flow (TNF)
  - Input -> Pulses
  - Output -> Gap Position
- Trained only on MC signal
- Conditional normalizing flow (CNF)
  - Probability density functions instead of single values
  - Event-by-event uncertainty on gap position



prod\_x

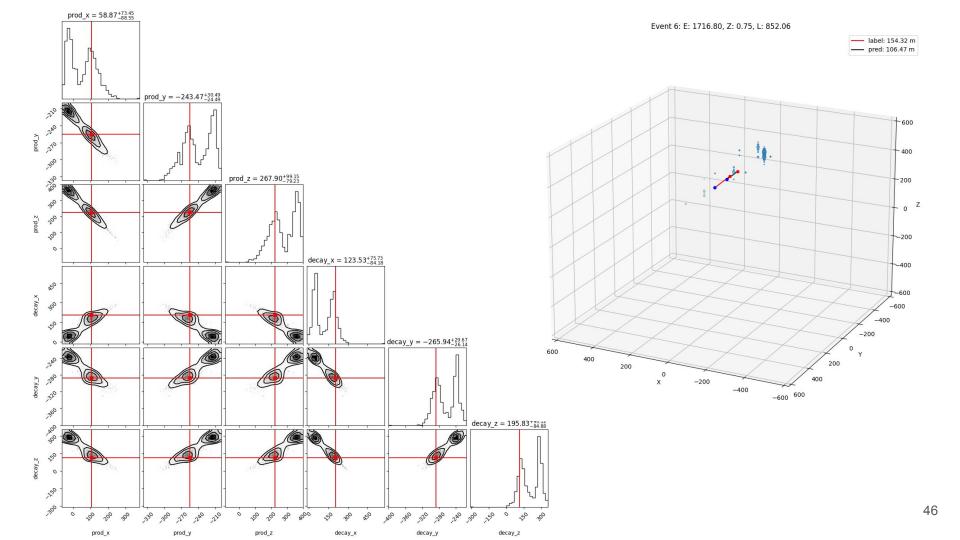
prod\_y

prod\_z

decay\_x

decay\_y

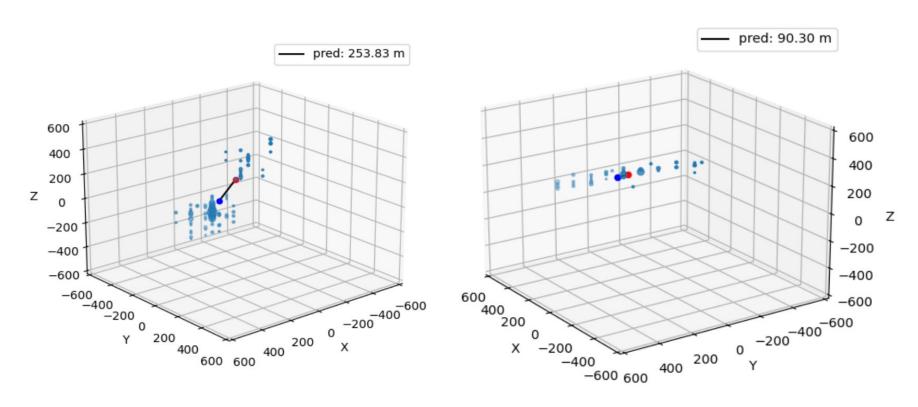
decay\_z



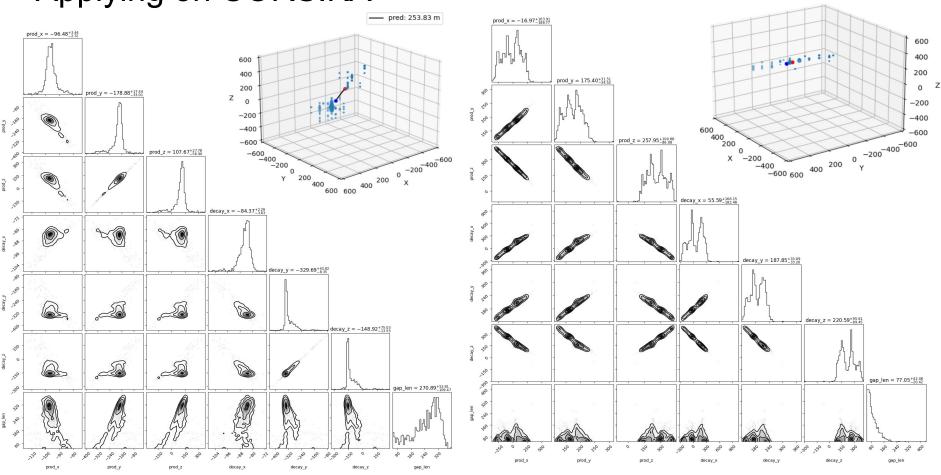
# Is the TNF gap reco a reconstruction or classification tool?

- Both, sort of.
- The output is nonsensical for non-signal events. Only LLPs have gaps.
- Network is only trained on signal. Unfamiliar input (aka bkg) will give wonky pdf's from the CNF.
- Probability density function metrics can be used for event selection!
  - Mean, std, covariance, entropy, etc.
- This wouldn't work for networks without normalizing flows, need the pdf's!

# Applying on CORSIKA



Applying on CORSIKA

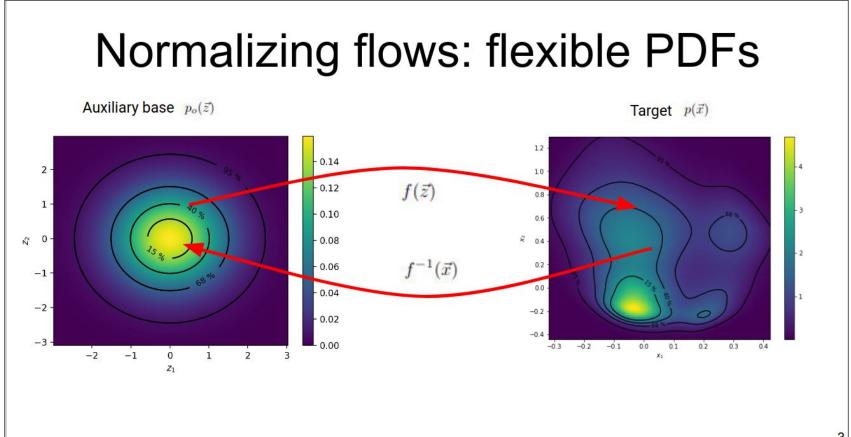


pred: 90.30 m

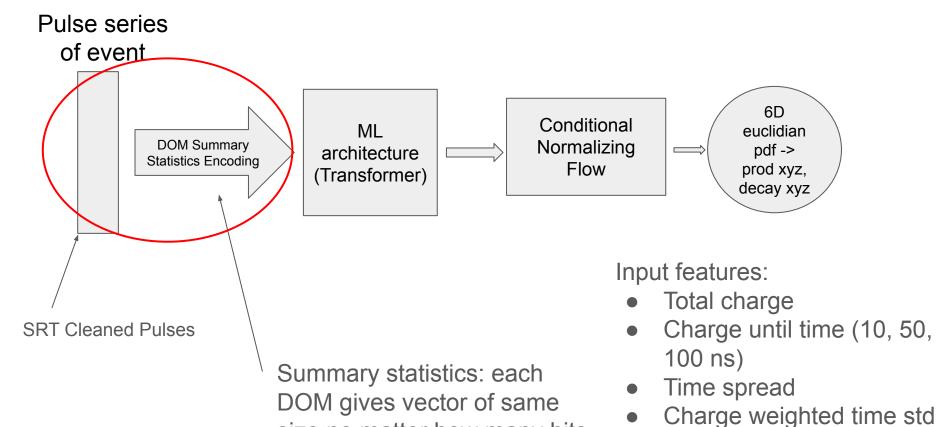
# What is a normalizing flow?

(The following two slides are taken from Thorsten Gluesenkamp's plenary talk at Grand Rapids 2023)

https://events.icecube.wisc.edu/event/168/contributions/9558/



### Conditional NF structure Auxiliary base space "z": Encoding: $g_{\theta}(y)$ Target space "x": GNN/CNN... $p_0(z) = \mathcal{N}(z; \mathbf{0}, \mathbb{1})$ $p_{\theta}(x|y) = p_0(f_{g_{\theta}(y)}^{-1}(x)) \cdot |\det J_{g_{\theta}(y)}^{-1}(x)|$ predicts mapping affine: $x = \sigma \cdot z + \mu$ 0.4 general: $x = f_{\phi}(z)$ 0.2 0.10 0.08 ≩ bijective mapping -1-2-1.0 14



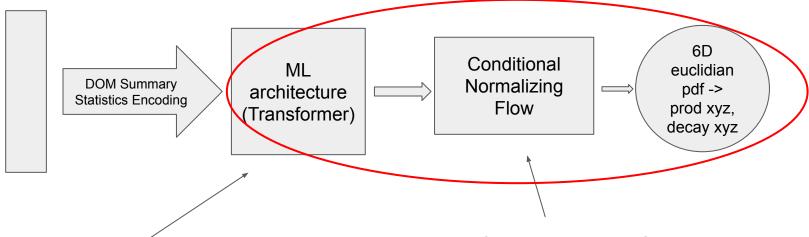
size no matter how many hits

53

and mean

Time of first pulse

# Pulse series of event

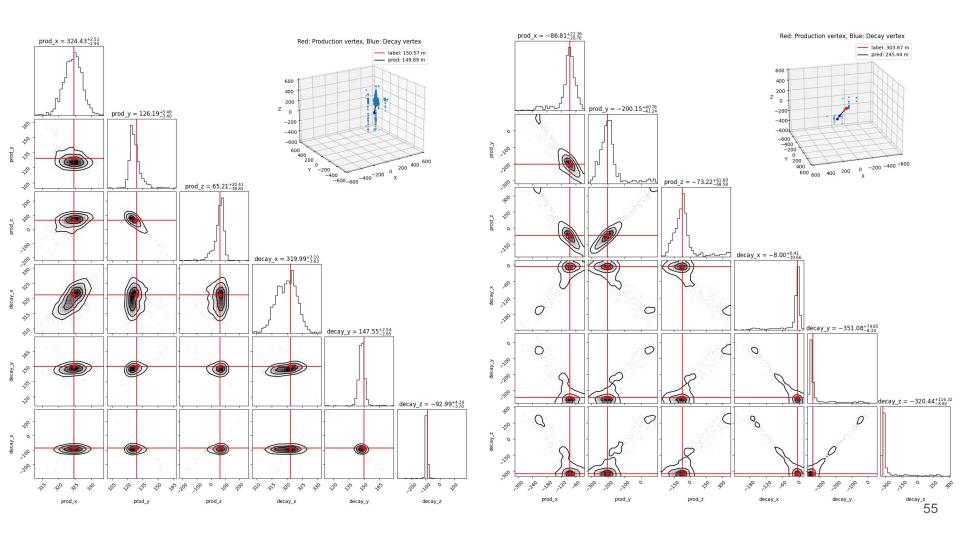


pytorch implementation of transformer architecture

- Based on code by Thorsten Gluesenkamp
- Self attention algorithm is xFormers which allows variable sequence length (no. of hit DOMs) <a href="https://github.com/facebookresearch/xformers">https://github.com/facebookresearch/xformers</a>
- "Encodes" the event for the CNF, outputs 128 values per event

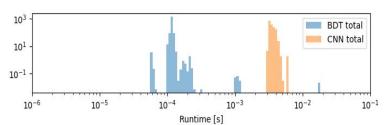
jammy flows by Thorsten Gluesenkamp <a href="https://github.com/thoglu/jammy\_flows">https://github.com/thoglu/jammy\_flows</a>

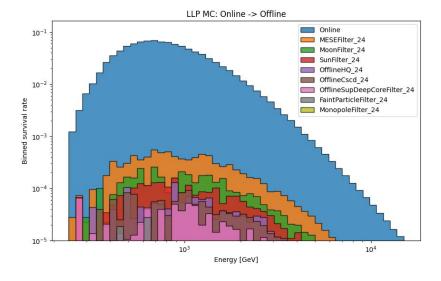
- Conditional input is 128 values from transformer encoder
- 6D euclidian base pdf mapped with five gaussianization flows and one affine flow -> final output is the 6D pdf of the gap positions



### LLPFilter\_25 proposal for pass3

- 2024 filter scheme removes the LLP signal
  - No current data sample suitable for this analysis
- Need to develop a new filter for pass3
  - Boosted Decision Tree + Convolutional Neural Net (CNN) (not finished in time)



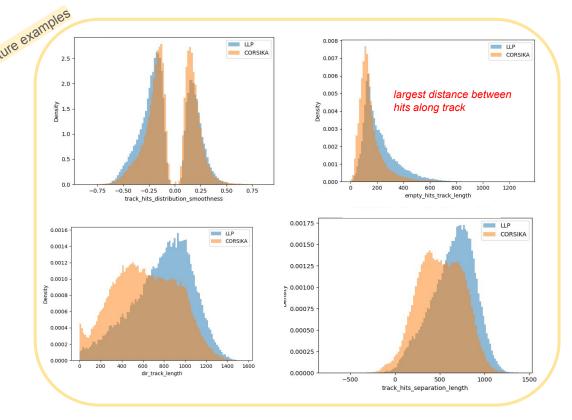


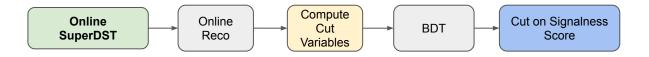
Can't run deep neural nets on full online rate, reduce rate with Boosted Decision Tree (BDT)



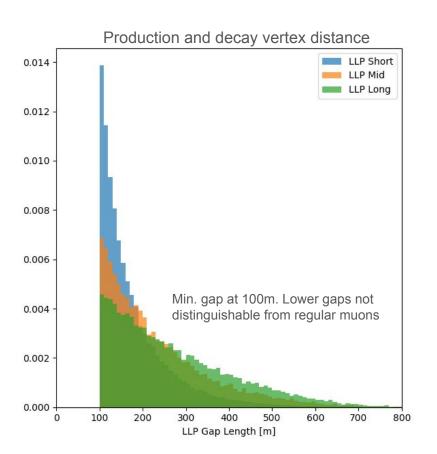
#### **Boosted Decision Tree (BDT)**

- LLP MC vs CORSIKA classifier
- XGBoost <a href="https://xgboost.readthedocs.io/en/stable/#">https://xgboost.readthedocs.io/en/stable/#</a>
- Input Features
  - PoleMuonLlhFit
  - PoleMuonLLhFitMuE
  - PoleMuonLlhFitDirectHitsBaseC
  - CommonVariables
    - HitStatistics
    - HitMultiplicity
    - TrackCharacteristics
    - TimeCharacteristics
    - All computed with SplitRTCleanedInIcePulses + PoleMuonLlhFit

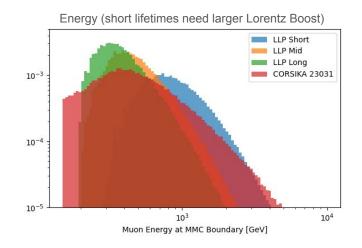




# Three benchmark LLP Samples

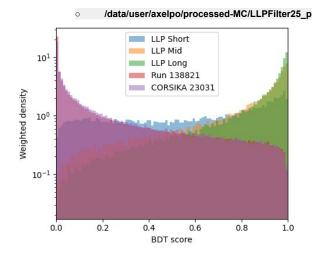


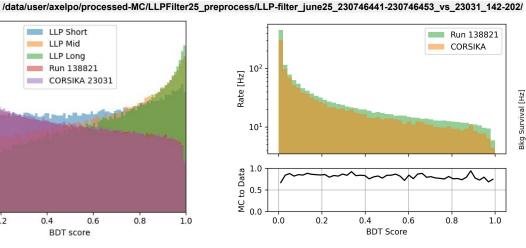
Sample	LLP Short	LLP Mid	LLP Long
Mass	110 MeV	110 MeV	108 MeV
Coupling	3e-5	1e-5	8e-6
Lifetime	5.62e-11 s	5.06e-10 s	2.67e-9 s
Decay length @1TeV	153 m	1380 m	7416 m

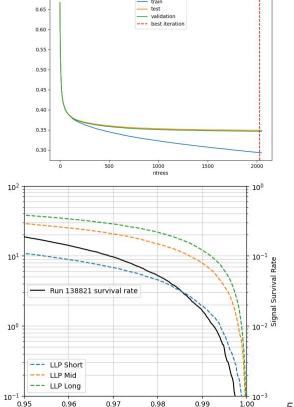


### NEW LLPFilter 25: BDT Trained on LLP Long sample vs. CORSIKA 23031

- Cut on BDT Score >= 0.988
- 2.16 Hz data rate (2.10 Hz exclusive) on one subrun of 138821
  - /data/exp/lceCube/2024/filtered/PFFilt/0105/PFFilt\_PhysicsFiltering\_Run00138821\_Subrun0000000\_0000000.tar.bz2
- Signal efficiency depend on sample (and min. LLP gap cut)
  - LLP Long ~15%, LLP Mid ~10%, LLP Short ~2.5%
  - (total efficiency not as interesting as binned efficiency)
- Good Data/MC agreement besides total rate
- Train/Test/Val samples found in:







BDT Score Cut

logloss

### Binned Signal Efficiency: Muon Energy@MMC + Gap Length

BDT trained on LLP Long, which is lower in energy than the rest, due to Lorenz boost needed for a gap of sufficient size

