Status of the SoLid experiment

EOS be.h Winter Solstice meeting

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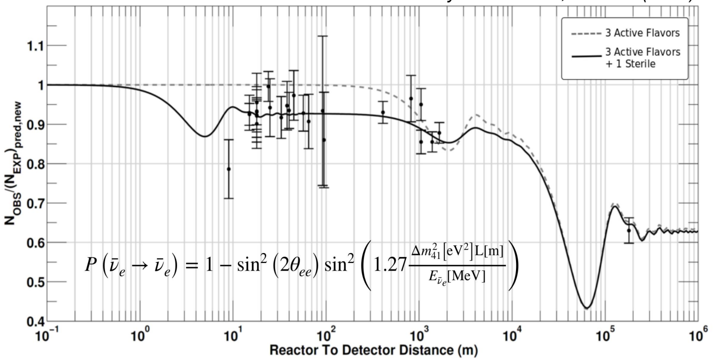
Overview

- Introducing the SoLid experiment
- Background description
- Signal selection
- Alternative analysis: Heavy Neutral Leptons
- Upgrade to the Phase 2 detector

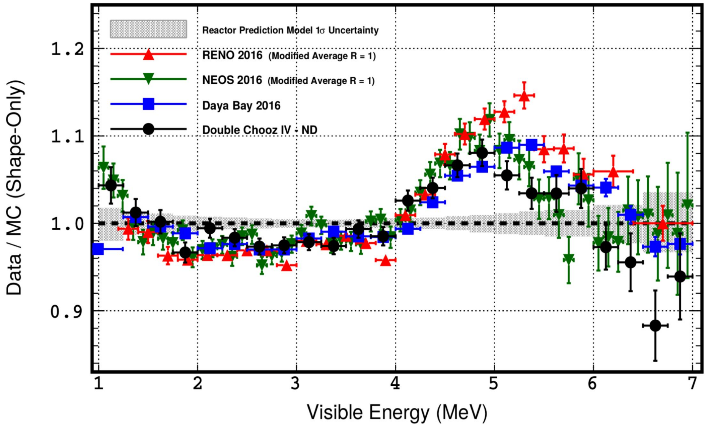
Introducing the SoLid experiment

Physics motivation

Phys. Rev. D 83, 073006 (2011)

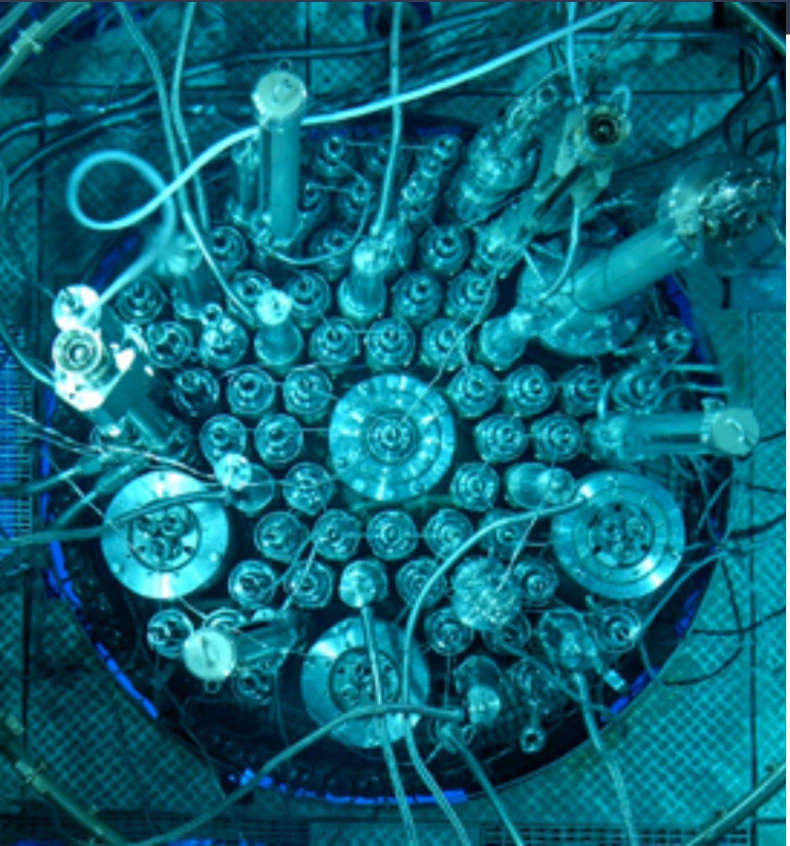


Nature Phys. 16, 558 (2020)



- Reactor antineutrino anomaly
  - Consistent deficit observed at short (< 1 km) baselines compared to predictions
  - Deficit could be explained by an additional (sterile) neutrino of $\Delta m^2 \cong$ 1-10 eV^2
  - Sterile neutrino hypothesis given more weight by unrelated anomalies (Gallium, LSND)
- Reactor antineutrino spectrum distortion (a.k.a. the 5 MeV bump)
  - Excess observed at 5 MeV by most large reactor experiments
  - Among the fissile isotopes in commercial reactors, ^{235}U is considered most likely
- Also an anti-proliferation component

The BR2 reactor



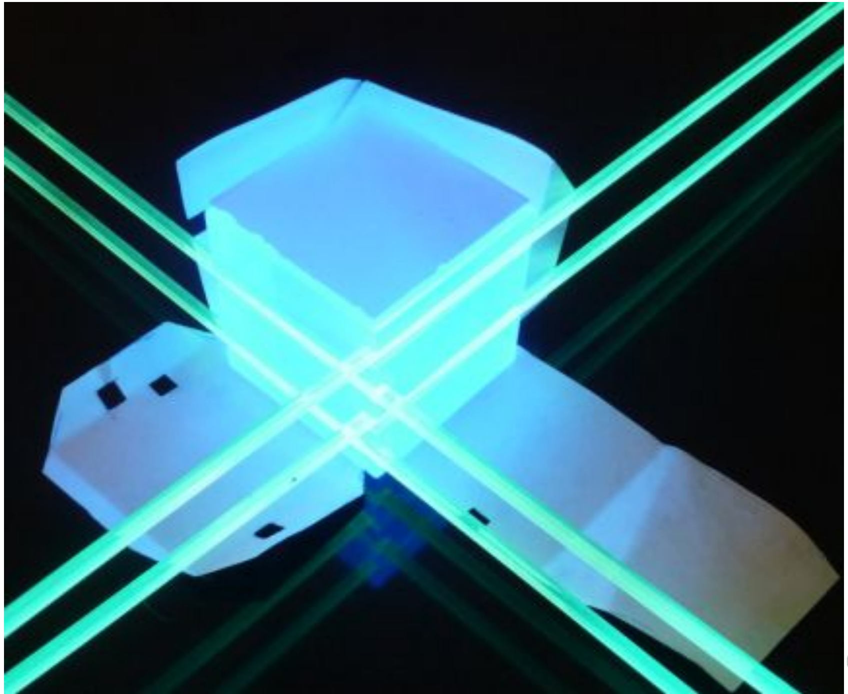
- Belgian Research reactor 2
- Located on the SCK-CEN site in Mol, Belgium
- Rated for 50 - 100 MW_{Th}
  - Typically 60 MW_{Th}
  - 5 or 6 month-long reactor cycles per year
- Highly enriched ^{235}U
- Compact conical core
  - ∅ ~ 0.5 m
  - h ~ 1 m
  - Experimental hall starts as close as 5.5 m from the core
- Low neutron and gamma backgrounds in experimental hall
- 37 m above sea level, 6-8 m MWE overburden

The SoLid detector

A highly segmented modular antineutrino detector using dual solid scintillators and multiplexed readout

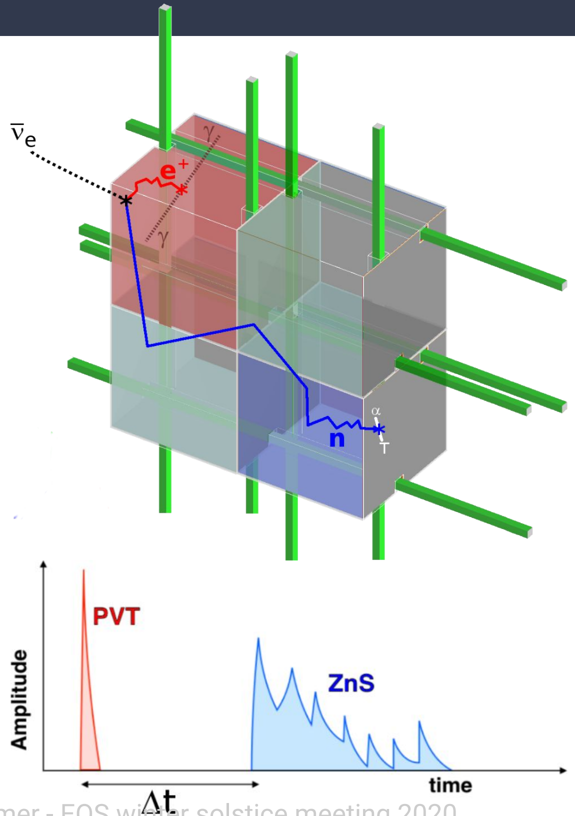
- Highly segmented
  - Built from 12.800 optically isolated cells
  - Each cell measures 5 x 5 x 5 cm^3
- Modular
  - 16 x 16 cells make a plane
  - 10 planes make a module
  - Detector consists of 5 modules
- Dual solid scintillators
  - PVT cube as neutrino target and for positron and gamma detection
  - $^{6}LiF:ZnS(Ag)$ layers for neutron capture and detection
- Multiplexed readout
  - 64 WLS fibres bring light from the cells to the edge of the detector
  - Each fibre is read out by a SiPM
  - 3200 fibre-SiPMs pairs service 12800 cells

Antineutrino detector



The SoLid detector

A highly segmented modular antineutrino detector using dual solid scintillators and multiplexed readout



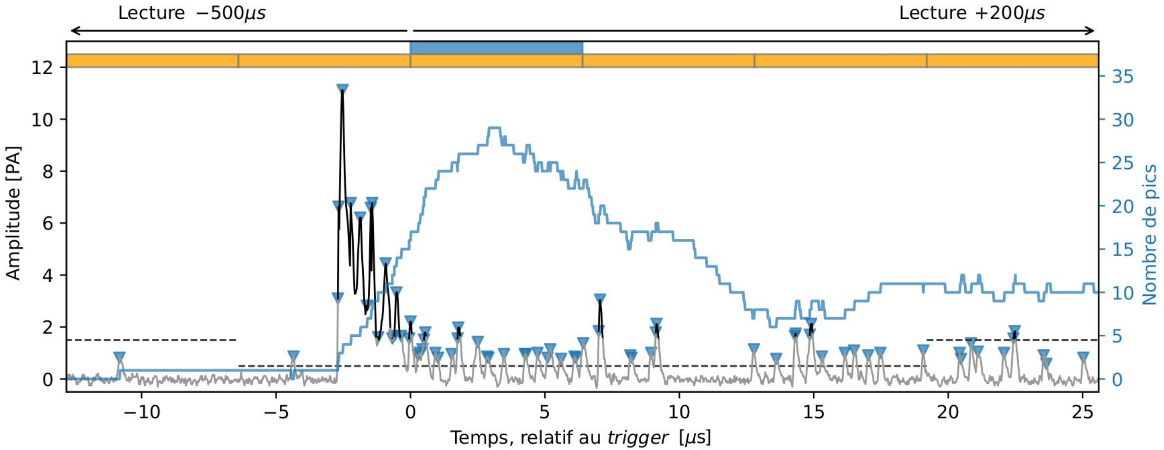
Antineutrino detector

- Inverse beta decay reaction: $\nu + p \rightarrow n + e^+$
- Prompt signal from e^+ scintillation and annihilation gammas in PVT
    - Fast scintillator, very brief pulse (few ns)
    - Provides ν interaction cube
- Delayed signal from capture of thermalised neutron on ^{6}Li
    - $n + {}^6Li \rightarrow \alpha + {}^3H$
    - α and ^{3}H scintillate in ZnS(Ag)
    - Slow scintillator, extended pulse (10s μs)
    - Neutron cube close to ν cube
    - Neutron capture time: τ = 68 μs

Trigger system

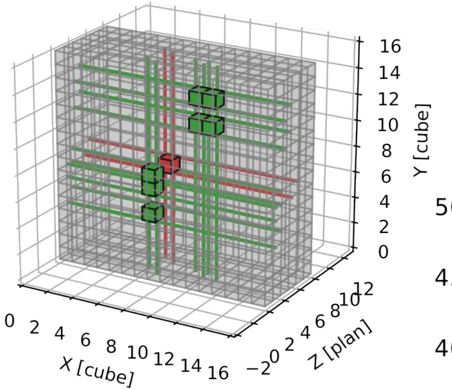
- Random trigger
  - Operates at 1 Hz
- Threshold trigger
  - Triggers signal above 2 MeV threshold
  - Coincidence required between horizontal and vertical fibre, within 75 ns

- Neutron trigger
  - Targets neutron scintillation in ZnS(Ag)
  - Counts peaks over threshold in rolling time window

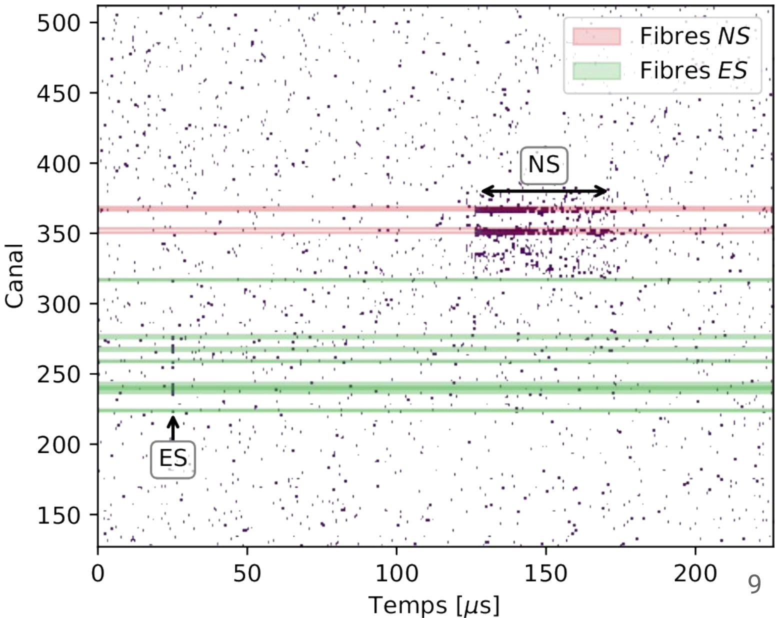


Data collection

- Random trigger
  - Reads full detector for 13.6 μs
  - Saves Raw waveform
- Threshold trigger
  - Reads triggering plane for 13.6 μs
  - Suppresses signal below ~100 keV

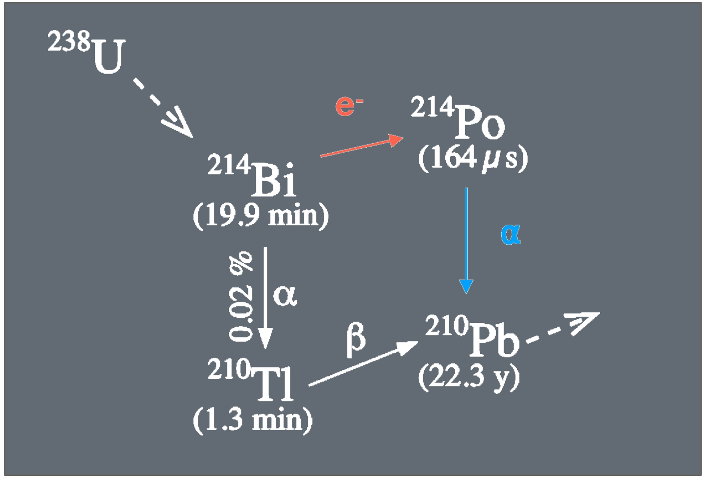


- Neutron trigger
  - Reads triggering plane and 3 or 4 neighbouring planes
  - Reads 500 μs before and 200 μs after trigger
  - Suppresses signal below ~100 keV



Background description

Backgrounds: BiPo

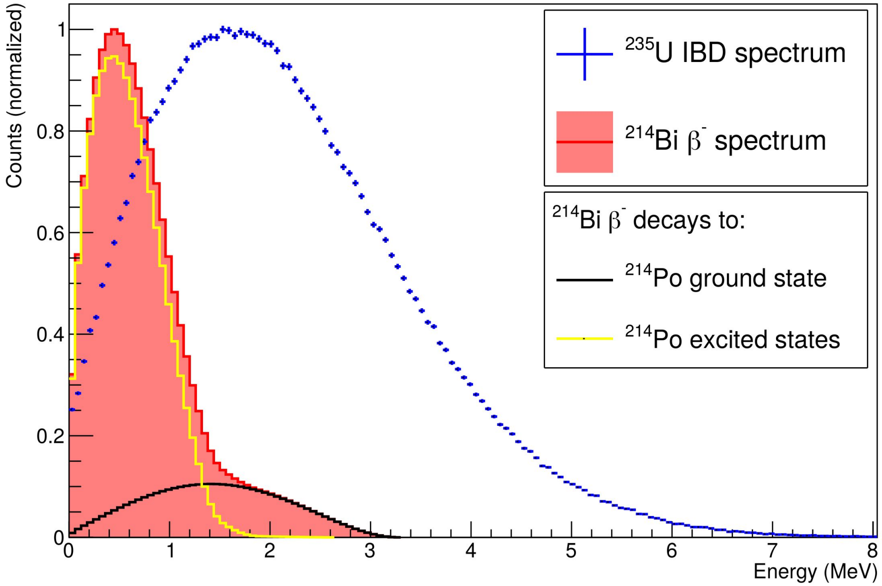


Radioactive decay sequence in the Uranium series:

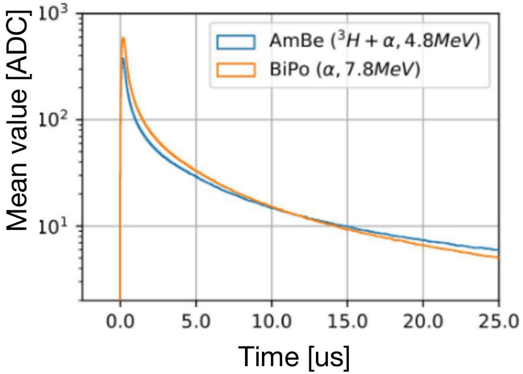
1. $^{214}Bi \rightarrow {}^{214}Po + e^-$ Q = 3.27 MeV
   e^- mimics prompt signal
2. $^{214}Po \rightarrow {}^{210}Pb + \alpha$ $t_{1/2} = 168\ \mu s$
   α mimics delayed signal when in ZnS

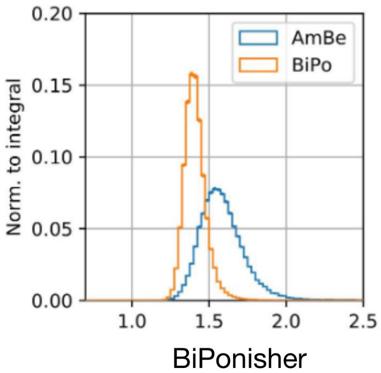
- Internal constant contamination in ZnS layers
- External variable source: ^{222}Rn release from concrete

Backgrounds: BiPo



- Exploit difference between IBD's α + ^{3}H and BiPo's single α
    - Different energies (4.8 MeV vs 7.8 MeV)
    - 2 particles vs only 1
    - ➢ Slightly different scintillation pattern: 'BiPonisher'
- Lack of annihilation gammas
- Limited energy range
- Differences in ΔT and topology



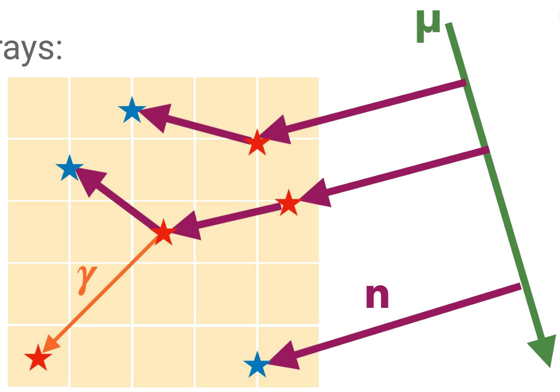


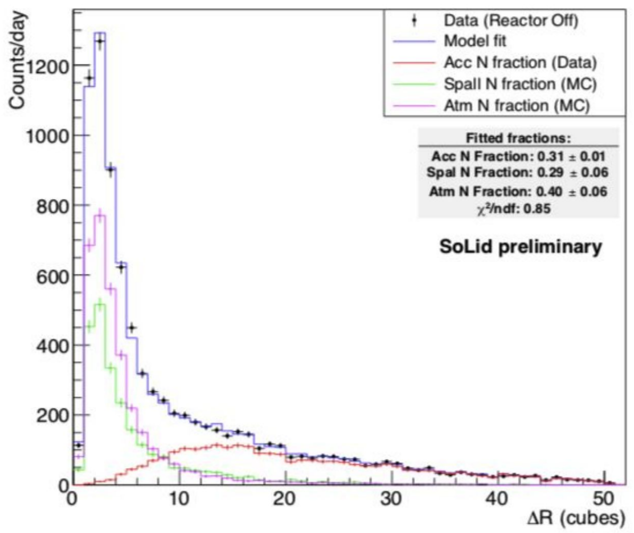
Backgrounds: cosmic neutrons

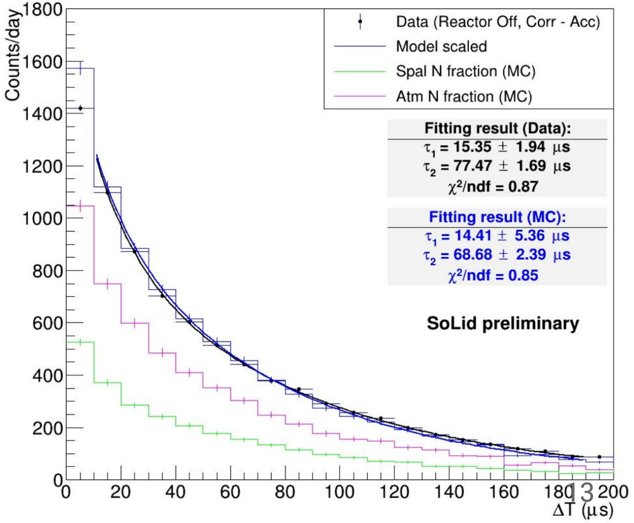
High energy neutrons created by cosmic rays:

1. Recoil on nuclei in the detector
   Recoil mimics prompt
2. Neutron thermalises and captures
   Identical to IBD neutron capture

- High rate due to low overburden
- Pressure dependent rate
- Main source of background
    - Low overburden
    - Exponentially decreasing energy spectrum over IBD energy range (and beyond)
    - High variety of topologies
    - Virtually identical ΔT to IBD

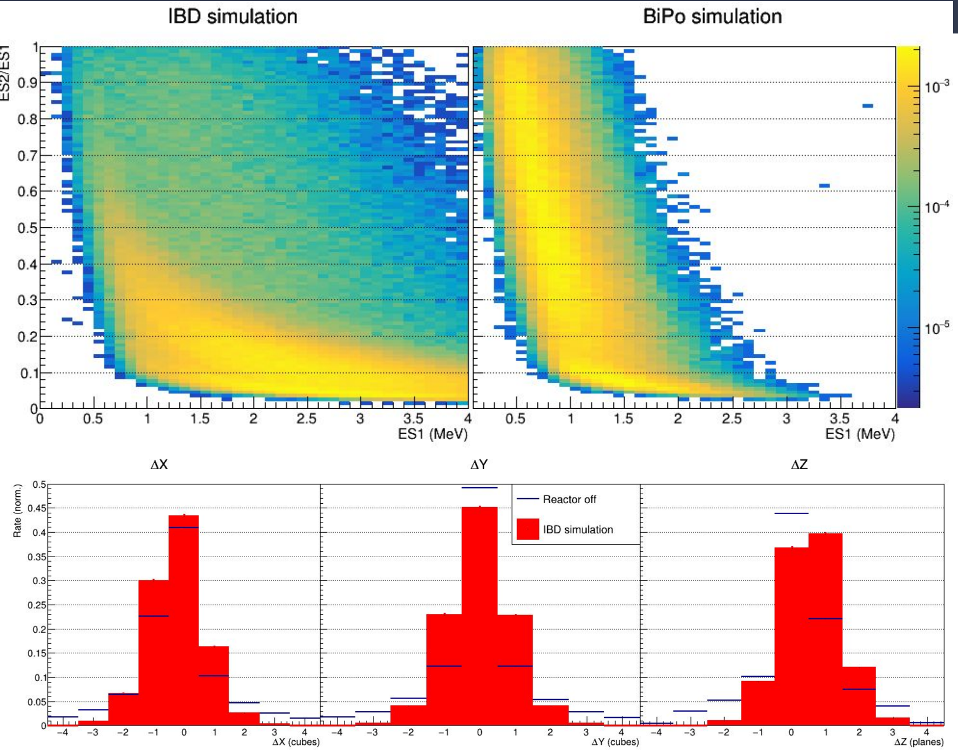






Signal selection

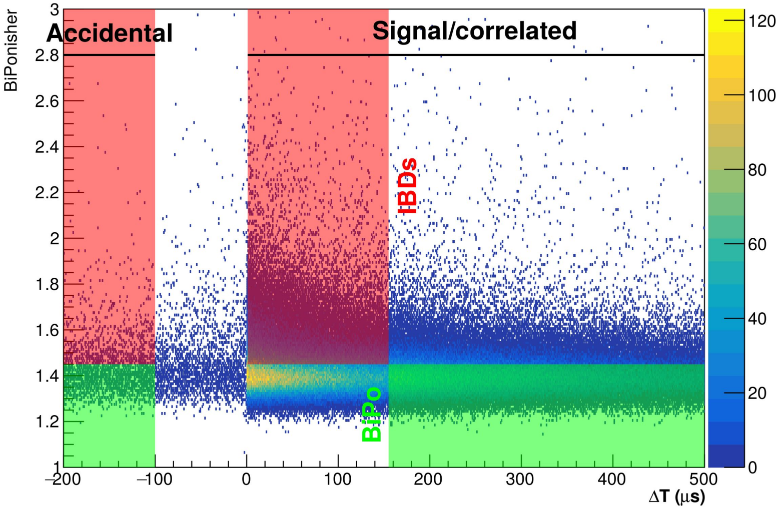
Basic sequential selections



- Prompt requirements
  - Energy
  - Energy balance
  - Spatial spread
- Delayed requirements
  - BiPonisher
- Coincidence requirements
  - ΔT
  - ΔX, ΔY, ΔZ, ΔR

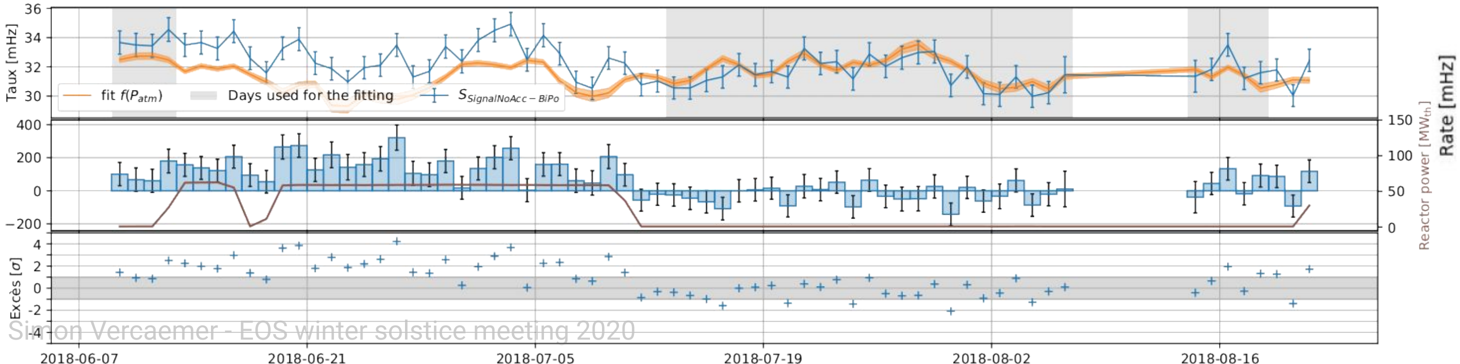
➔ ~ 10% IBD efficiency, S/B ≅ 0.06

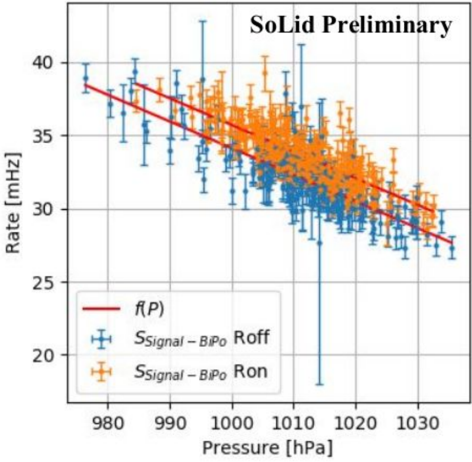
Neutrino signal in data



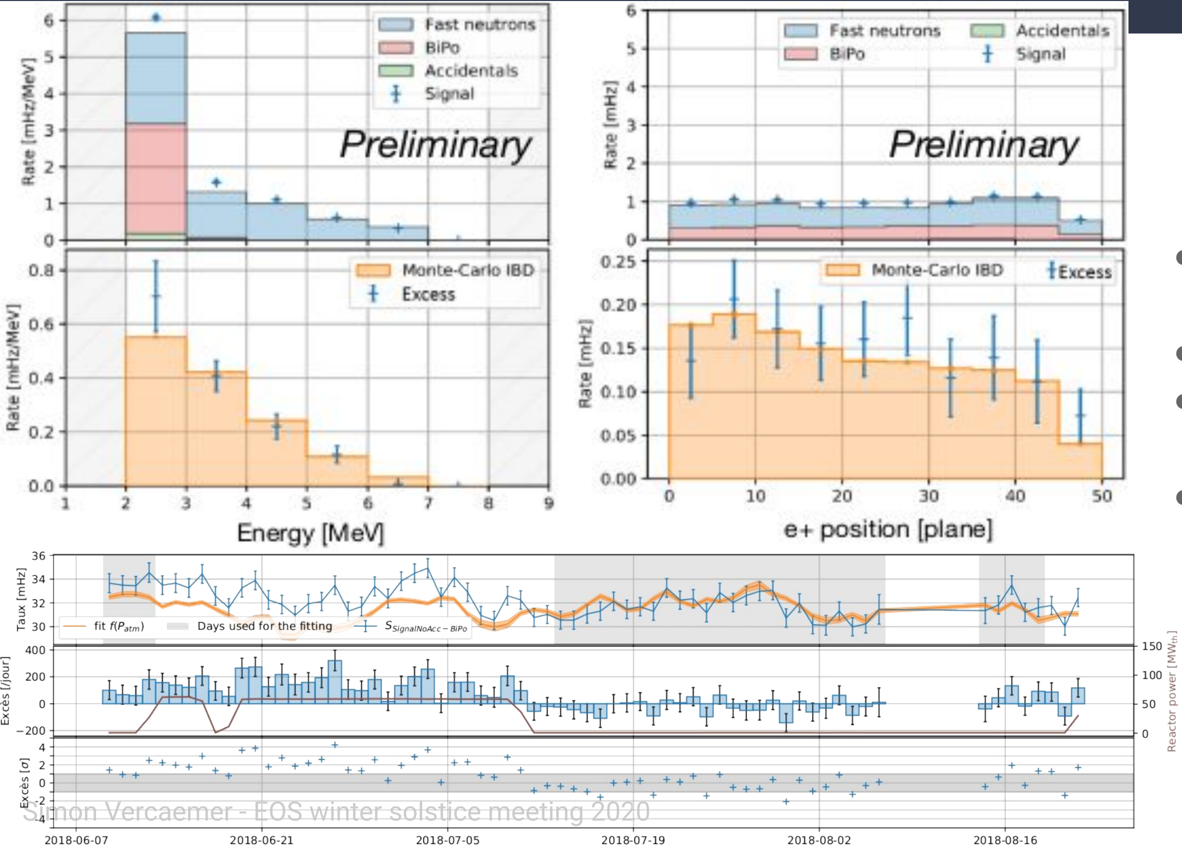
- BiPo varies with Rn releases
  - Can be determined in situ from high ΔT and low BiPonisher coincidence data

- Cosmic neutron rate varies with atmospheric pressure
  - Pressure dependence established during reactor off period
  - Extrapolated rate subtracted from reactor on period





Neutrino excess



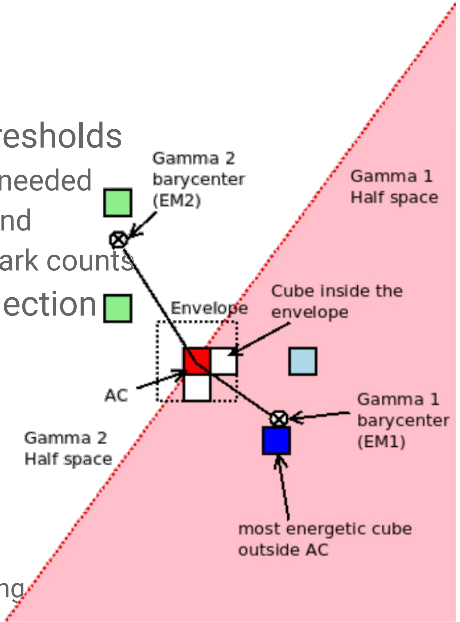
- Observed excess consistent with IBD simulation
- We are sitting on a lot more data
- Improvements to the reconstruction in the pipeline (next slide)
- A major detector upgrade took place over summer (last slide)

Moving forwards

Annihilation gammas (Topology):

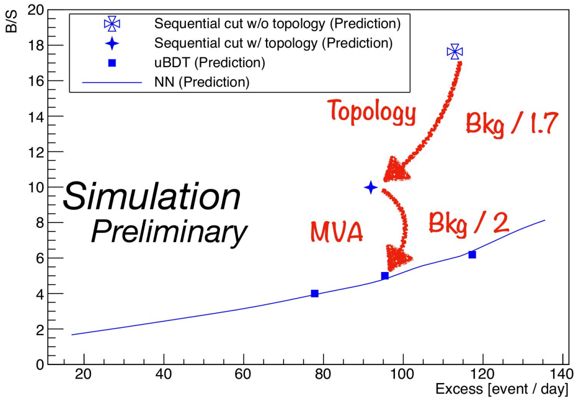
- Brings new variables
  - Number of gammas reconstructed
  - Energy
  - Opening angle
  - Distances
- Requires lower offline thresholds
  - Better understanding needed
  - Balancing efficiency and contamination from dark counts

➔ Improved background rejection



Machine learning:

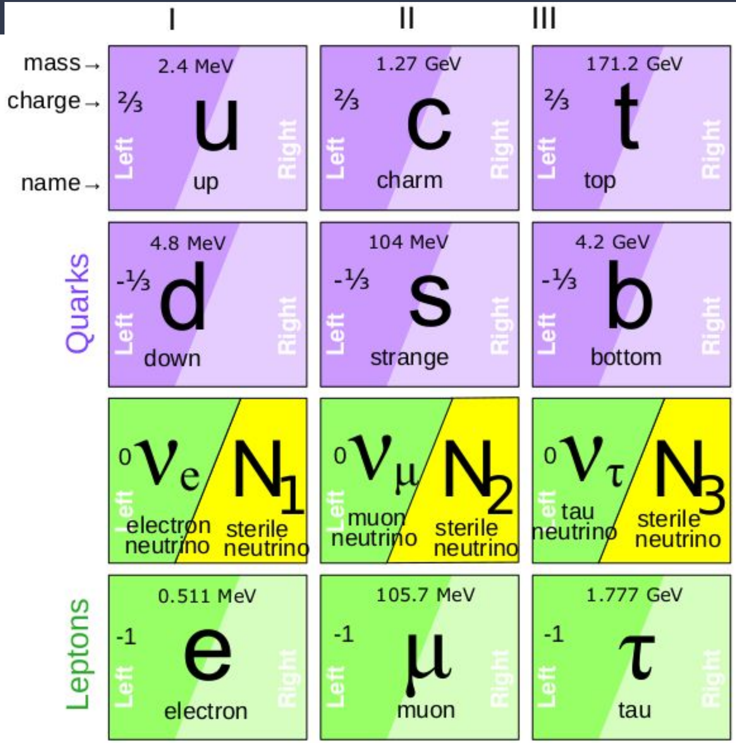
- Improved background rejection dual approach (no cutting edge)
  - uBDT
  - TMVA Neural Network
- Improve BiPonisher to BiPonator
  - Simple ratio to CNN
  - Expected 2-3 x improvement in alpha tagging



Alternative analysis:
Heavy Neutral Leptons

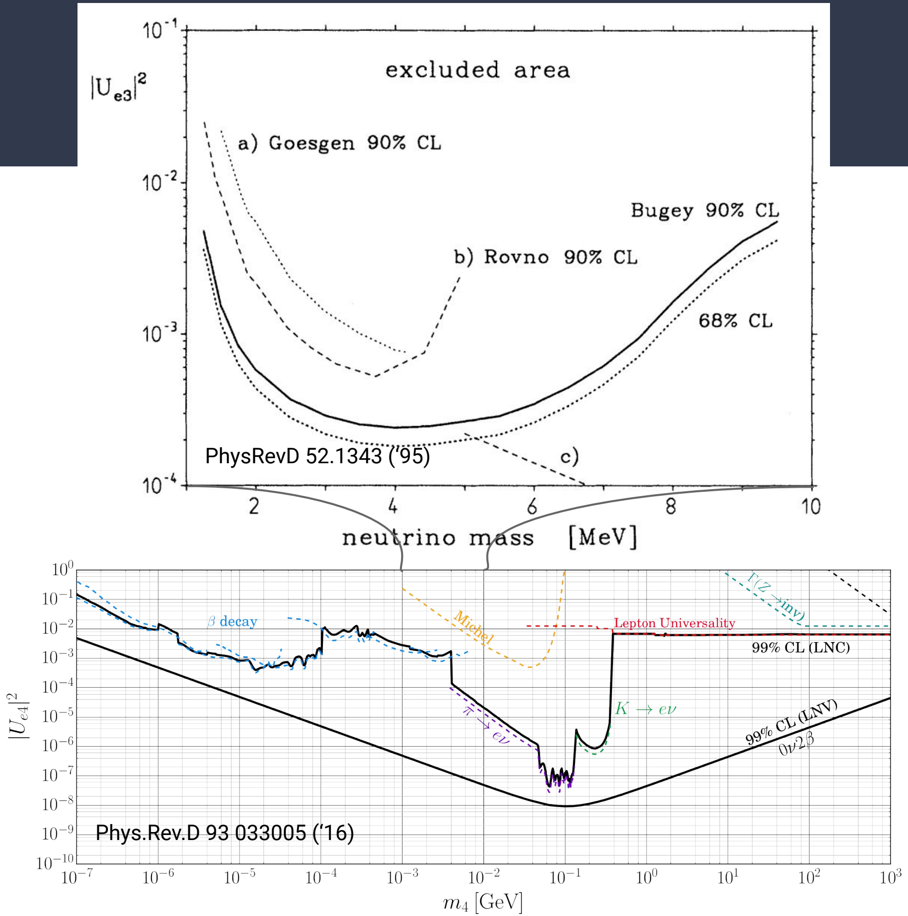
Heavy neutral leptons

- nuMSM introduces 3 right handed neutrinos
- Virtually no mass limit HNLs
- Resolves significant issues
  - Neutrino masses (seesaw)
  - Universe's baryon asymmetry
  - Dark matter candidates
- Sterile, only produced via mixing
- Small mixing angle, low production rate
- Unstable, detect decay products
  - Radiative $N_i \rightarrow \nu_j + \gamma$
    $N_i \rightarrow \nu_j + \gamma + \gamma$ *if m(N_i) > m(ν_j)*
  - Invisible $N_i \rightarrow \nu_j + \nu_k + \overline{\nu}_k$
  - e^+e^- mode $N_i \rightarrow \nu_j + e^+ + e^-$ *if m(N) > $2m_e$ = 1.022 MeV*



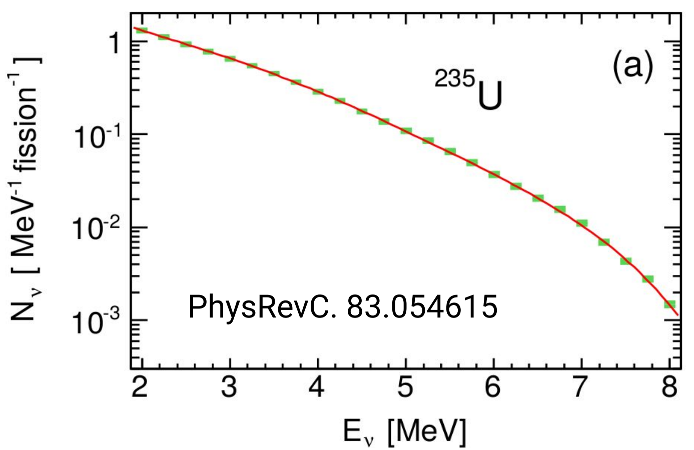
SoLid as HNL detector

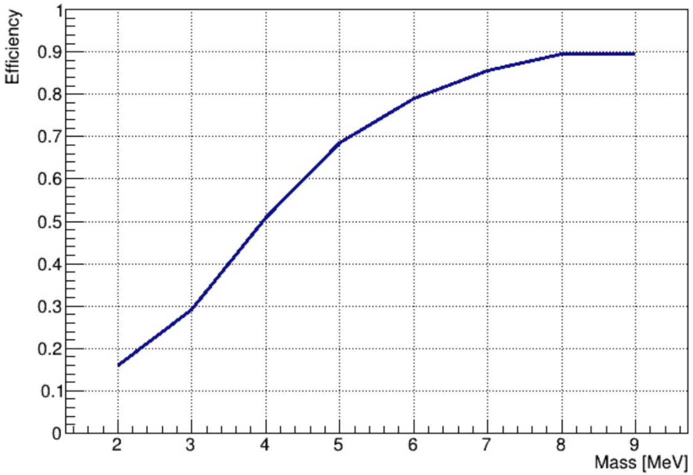
- BR2 as neutrino source
  - ~ 60 MW_{Th} → $12x10^{18}$ ν/s (12 EBq)
  - 12 EBq is isotropic, need to apply geometric efficiency (~ 0.13 %) → 16 PBq
  - Small mixing angle → Less Bq
  - Long decay time → O(10^{-4} Bq)
- Mass range limited by ^{235}U ν spectrum and e^+e^- decay mode requirement
  - 1.022 MeV < m(N) ≲ 9 MeV
- No neutron in e^+e^- decay → rely on threshold trigger
  - Minimum 2 MeV visible energy
  - Single plane only



Simulation work

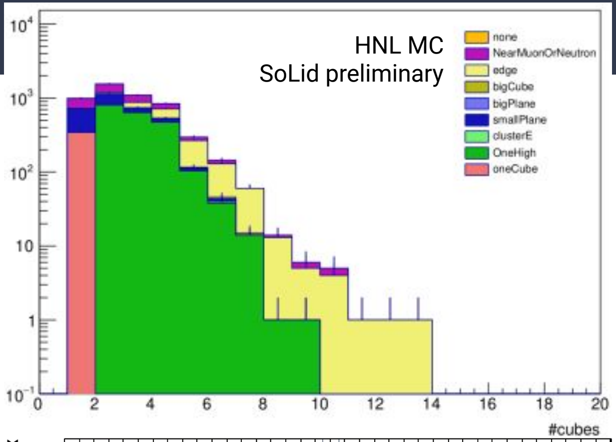
- Background simulations from the IBD analysis can be recycled
  - Cosmic background most challenging
- Signal simulation using Pythia
  - Samples with several HNL masses have been created
  - Energy spectrum from reactor simulation
- Trigger studies have been performed
  - Near perfect trigger efficiency for higher masses, also lowest statistics
  - Reduces a bit when reconstruction is taken into account
  - ν energy more important than HNL mass

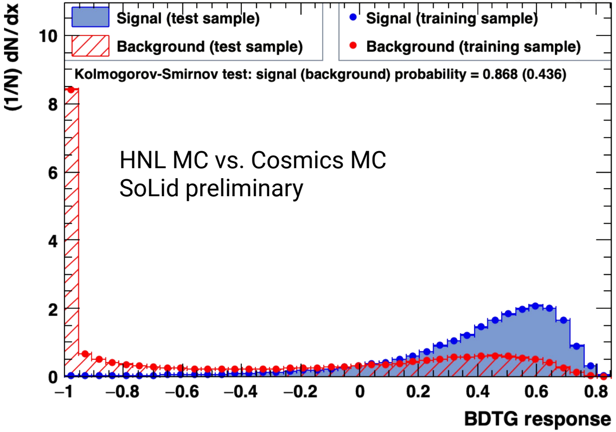




Signal selection

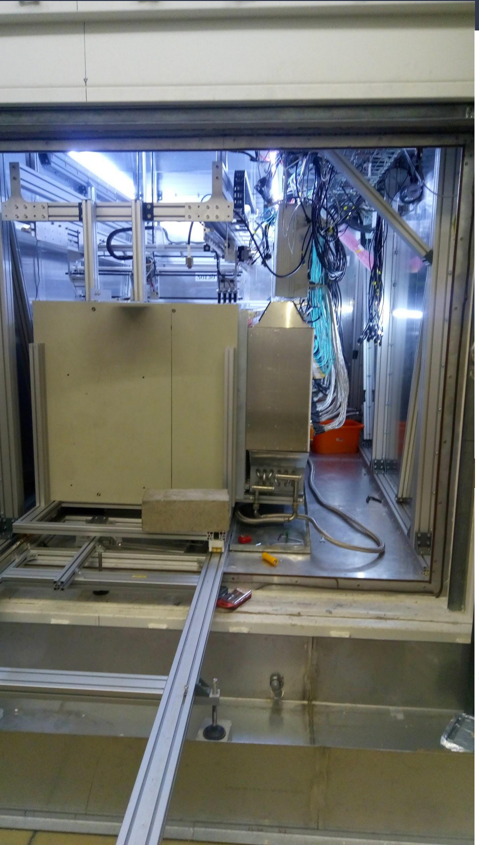
- Preliminary list of variables composed
  - Neutron/muon/alpha veto
  - Fiducialization
  - ES energy
  - ES spatial spread
  - Still being refined/expanded
- Manual and TMVA optimizations under way
- Hypothesis testing scripts are being set up

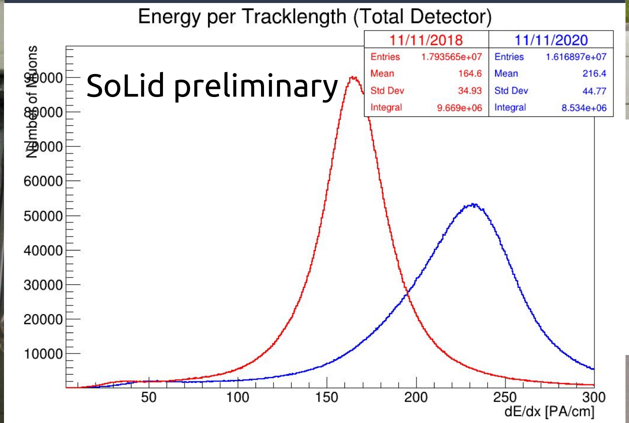


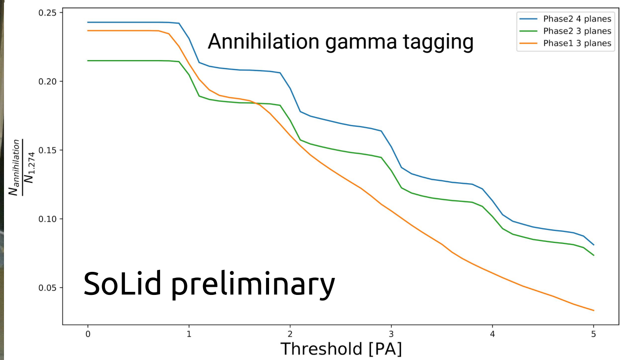


Upgrade to the Phase 2 detector

Detector upgrade







- July: brought Phase 1 to Antwerp
- Replaced all SiPMs by latest generation devices over summer, modified electronics
- October: commissioning of Phase 2 at BR2
- November: start of datataking