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SLAC T-510: Radio emission from particle cascades in the presence of a magnetic field

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Geomagnetic radiation from air showers is an attractive technique for detecting ultra-high energy cosmic rays. Macroscopic and microscopic models have been developed which qualitatively agree with field observations. A controlled laboratory experiment at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) was designed to test these models. The experiment measures the radio frequency emission from cascades of secondary particles in a dense dielectric medium in the presence of a magnetic field. The cascades were induced by a ~4.5 GeV electron beam in a polyethylene target placed in magnetic fields up to +/-1000 G. The radio emission beam pattern was sampled in horizontal and vertical polarizations by multiple antennas with a total frequency band of 30-3000MHz. The emission was found to be in good agreement with model predictions, including a Cerenkov-like beam pattern and linear scaling with magnetic field.

Primary authors: Dr ROMERO-WOLF, Andrew (JPL); MULREY, Katharine (University of Delaware); Dr BELOV, Konstantin (University of California, Los Angeles); Dr WISSEL, Stephanie (University of California, Los Angeles)

Co-author: SLAC T-510, Collaboration (University of California, Los Angeles)

Presenter: MULREY, Katharine (University of Delaware)

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