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Study of a large NaI(Tl) crystal

A. Aguilar-Arevalo^a, M. Aoki^b, M. Blecher^c, D.A. Bryman^d, L. Doria^{a,*}, P. Gumplinger^a, A. Hussein^e, N. Ito^b, S. Kettell^f, L. Kurchaninov^a, L. Littenberg^f, C. Malbrunot^d, G.M. Marshall^a, T. Numao^{a,*}, R. Poutissou^a, A. Sher^a, K. Yamada^b

^a TRIUMF, 4004 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 2A3

^b Physics Department, Osaka University, Toyonaka, Osaka 560-0043, Japan

^c Physics Department, Virginia Tech., Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA

^d Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z1

^e University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, B.C., Canada V2N 4Z9

^f Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, NY 11973-5000, USA

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ABSTRACT

Using a narrow band positron beam, the response of a large high-resolution NaI(Tl) crystal to an incident positron beam was measured. It was found that nuclear interactions cause the appearance of additional peaks in the low energy tail of the deposited energy spectrum.

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1. Motivation

The PIENU experiment at TRIUMF [1] is aiming at a measurement of the branching ratio $R = \Gamma(\pi \rightarrow e\nu + \pi \rightarrow e\nu\gamma) / \Gamma(\pi \rightarrow \mu\nu + \pi \rightarrow \mu\nu\gamma)$ with precision $< 0.1\%$. The principal instrument used to measure positron energies from $\pi^+ \rightarrow e^+\nu$ decays ($E_{e^+} = 70$ MeV) and $\pi^+ \rightarrow \mu^+\nu$ followed by $\mu^+ \rightarrow e^+\nu\bar{\nu}$ decays ($E_{e^+} = 0-53$ MeV) is a large single crystal NaI(Tl) detector [2]. Detailed knowledge of the crystal response is essential to reaching high precision, especially for determining the low energy tail response below 60 MeV [3]. In the following, results of measurements of the response of the NaI(Tl) crystal to mono-energetic positron beams are presented along with Monte Carlo (MC) simulations including photonuclear reactions.

2. Experiment setup

The 48 cm diameter, 48 cm long NaI(Tl) crystal [2] under study was surrounded by two adjacent rings of 97 pure CsI crystals [4]. Each ring was comprised of two layers of 8.5 cm thick, 25 cm long crystals. Positrons from the M13 beamline at TRIUMF [5] were

injected into the NaI(Tl) crystal to study its response. The positrons were produced by 500 MeV protons from the TRIUMF cyclotron striking a 1 cm thick beryllium target. After defining the beam momentum at the first focus, the M13 beam line is equipped with two more dipole magnets and two foci with slits before the final focus at the detector. The vacuum window was a 0.13 mm thick, 15 cm diameter Mylar foil. With this geometry, slit scattering and the effect of the vacuum window were expected to have negligible effect on the low energy tail. The incoming beam was measured with a telescope (see Fig. 1) consisting of 6 planes of wire chambers arranged in the orientation of X–U–V–X–U–V, where U(V) was at 60° (-60°) to the vertical direction, a plastic scintillator (5×5 cm² area, 3.2 mm thickness), and the NaI(Tl) calorimeter. The beam momentum width and horizontal (vertical) size and divergence were 1.5% in FWHM, 2 cm (1 cm) and ± 50 mrad (± 90 mrad), respectively. The beam composition was 63% π^+ , 11% μ^+ and 26% e^+ .

3. Measurement and results

A 70 MeV/c positron beam was injected into the center of the NaI(Tl) crystal. The beam timing with respect to the 23 MHz cyclotron radio frequency provided particle identification based on time-of-flight (TOF) together with the energy loss in the beam scintillator, allowing selection of positrons for studying the crystal

* Corresponding authors.

E-mail addresses: luca@triumf.ca (L. Doria), toshio@triumf.ca (T. Numao).

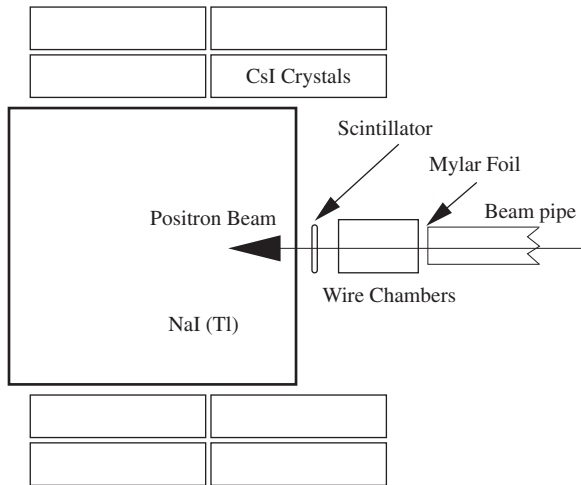


Fig. 1. Schematic description of the experimental setup (not to scale). The beam comes from the right and impinges on the NaI(Tl) crystal surrounded by two rings of 97 CsI crystals. In front of the NaI(Tl), there are 6 planes of wire chambers and a plastic scintillator.

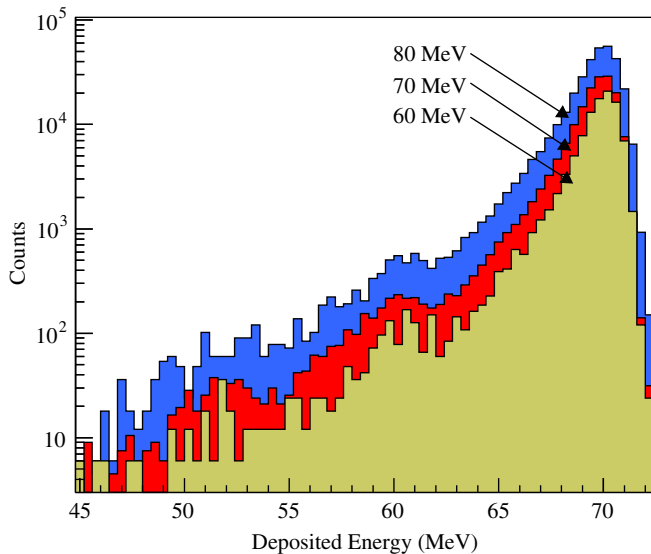


Fig. 2. Normalized NaI(Tl) energy spectra for incident positron beam momenta 60, 70, and 80 MeV/c. The spectra were shifted and aligned to the peak at 70 MeV/c. Histograms are scaled differently for easier comparison.

response function. Events due to positrons from decays of muons previously stopped in the NaI(Tl) crystal were suppressed by requiring wire chamber hits, and using TOF and pileup cuts. Pion and muon contamination was reduced in the data to the 0.08% level.

The CsI crystals were used in veto mode to select events without shower leakage from the NaI(Tl) as well as for tagging events with delayed particle emission. Leakage from the NaI(Tl)'s downstream face was not detected but minimized by the 19 radiation length thickness of the crystal.

The resulting positron energy spectrum is shown in Fig. 2 (dark shaded histogram). The main peak at 70 MeV has an asymmetrical shape primarily due to shower leakage with a width of 2.7% (FWHM). Subtracting the calculated beam momentum width in quadrature gave a NaI(Tl) crystal resolution of approximately 2.2% (FWHM). Besides the main peak at 70 MeV, there are two additional structures at 61 and 53 MeV.

Studies were made to determine whether the additional peaks had either instrumental or physical origin. Using different settings of the momentum-defining and collimating slits, which enhanced or suppressed slit scattering, no effect on the positron energy spectrum was found including the relative intensity of the peaks. Also, different tunes of the beamline (e.g. different focusing) did not change the measured energy spectrum. The beam momentum was varied in order to observe the corresponding position of the peaks. Fig. 2 shows the spectra for 60 and 80 MeV/c beam momenta shifted and plotted on top of the reference histogram at the nominal momentum of 70 MeV/c. Signals from the CsI crystals were used to suppress the low energy tail due to shower leakage to enhance the second and third peaks. For all three beam momenta, the relative positions of the low energy peaks remained unchanged. The beam position dependence of the NaI(Tl) spectrum was also tested using wire chamber information, without finding any effect. Based on these tests, it is unlikely that there is an influence of the beam settings in the appearance of the additional structures in the energy spectrum.

In Fig. 3 (top), the deposited energy in the NaI(Tl) crystal is shown as a function of the CsI hit time. The horizontal band at the beam energy corresponds to accidental events, while the coincident ones from shower leakage are concentrated around 0 ns. There are delayed events in the low energy region that correspond to the second and third peaks. If delayed events between the vertical lines are selected, the shaded spectrum in Fig. 3 (bottom) is obtained. The first peak (at approximately 70 MeV) is consistent with accidental coincidences. The second and the third peaks were enhanced after the delayed coincidence requirement. These results are consistent with the hypothesis of neutrons escaping the NaI(Tl) and giving a delayed signal in the CsI. Moreover, the energy deficits of the second and third peaks

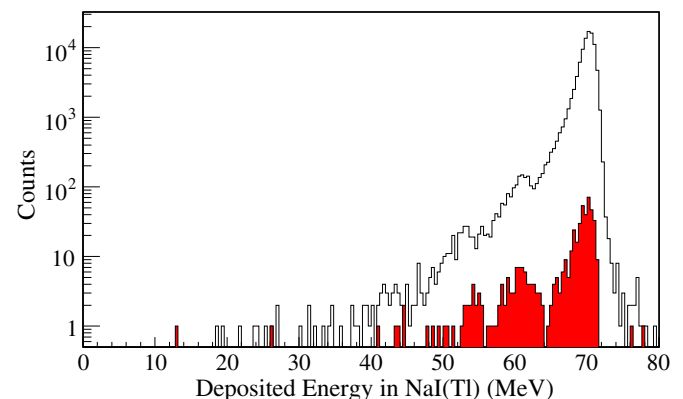
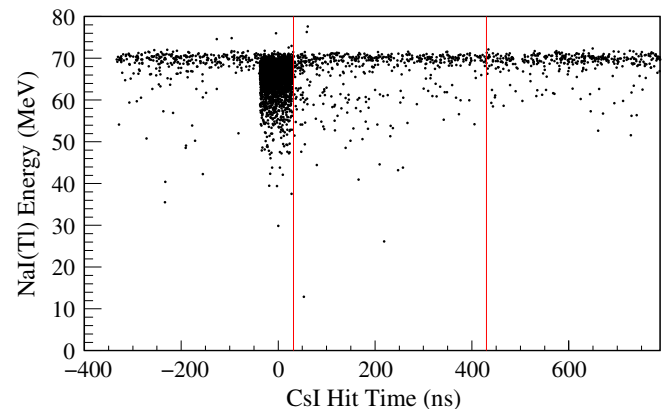


Fig. 3. (Top) Deposited energy versus CsI hit timing. (Bottom) The shaded histogram represents events selected by the timing cut (between the lines) shown on the top figure.

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