arXiv:1201.4964v1 [astro-ph.IM] 24 Jan 2012

The surface detector array of the Telescope Array experiment

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Abstract

The Telescope Array (TA) experiment, located in the western desert of Utah, USA, is designed for observation of extensive air showers from extremely high energy cosmic rays. The experiment has a surface detector array surrounded by three fluorescence detectors to enable simultaneous detection of shower particles at ground level and fluorescence photons along the shower track. The TA surface detectors and fluorescence detectors started full hybrid observation in March, 2008. In this article we describe the design and technical

features of the TA surface detector.

Keywords: Ultra-high energy cosmic rays; Telescope Array experiment; Extensive air shower array

1. Introduction

The main aim of the Telescope Array (TA) experiment [1] is to explore the origin of ultra high energy cosmic rays (UHECR) using their energy spectrum, composition and anisotropy. There are two major methods of observation for detecting cosmic rays in the energy region (above $10^{17.5}$ eV). One method which was used at the High Resolution Fly's Eye (HiRes) experiment is to detect air fluorescence light along air shower track using fluorescence detectors. The other method, adopted by the AGASA experiment, is to detect air shower particles at ground level using surface detectors deployed over a wide area ($\sim$100 km^2).

The AGASA experiment reported that there were 11 events above 10^{20} eV in the energy spectrum [2, 3]. However, the existence of the GZK cutoff [4, 5] was reported by the HiRes experiment [6]. The Pierre Auger experiment confirmed the suppression on the cosmic ray flux at energy above 4×10^{19} eV [7] using an energy scale obtained by fluoresence light telescope (FD). The contradiction between results from fluoescence detectors and those from surface detector arrays (SD) remains to be investigated by having independent energy scales using both techniques. Hybrid observations with SD and FD enable us to compare both energy scales. Information about core location and impact timing from SD observation improves accuracy of reconstruction of FD observations. Observations with surface detectors have a nearly 100%

duty cycle, which is an advantage especially for studies of anisotropy. Correlations between arrival directions of cosmic rays and astronomical objects in this energy region should give a key to exploring the origin of UHECR [8] and their propagation in the galactic magnetic field.

2. Telescope Array experiment

The TA site is located in the desert about 1400 m above sea level centered at 39.3°N and 112.9°W in Millard County, Utah, USA, about 200 km southwest of Salt Lake City. A control center to support construction and operation of the TA instruments is in the city of Delta located near the northeast side of the array. The experiment is aimed at observing cascade showers induced by cosmic rays above 10^{19} eV. The altitude of the experimental site is optimal for observing particle showers at nearly maximum development of the cascade. For hybrid observation the site also needed to be located in a semi-desert area with less light pollution from the town. The dry climate allows us to have a high duty cycle for FD-SD hybrid exposure; about 10% of real time.

Below we describe the major advantages of the TA experiment:
1) The TA experiment utilizes plastic scintillators similar to AGASA experiment. For energies about 10^{20} eV, more than 90% of the primary energy is absorbed as the electromagnetic component (e^+,e^- and γ) in the air. Plastic scintillators are sensitive to all charged particles, and the energy measurement is less affected by the difference of the details of unknown hadron interactions and the primary composition than the water tanks used in the Pierre Auger experiment which are more sensitive to the muon component.

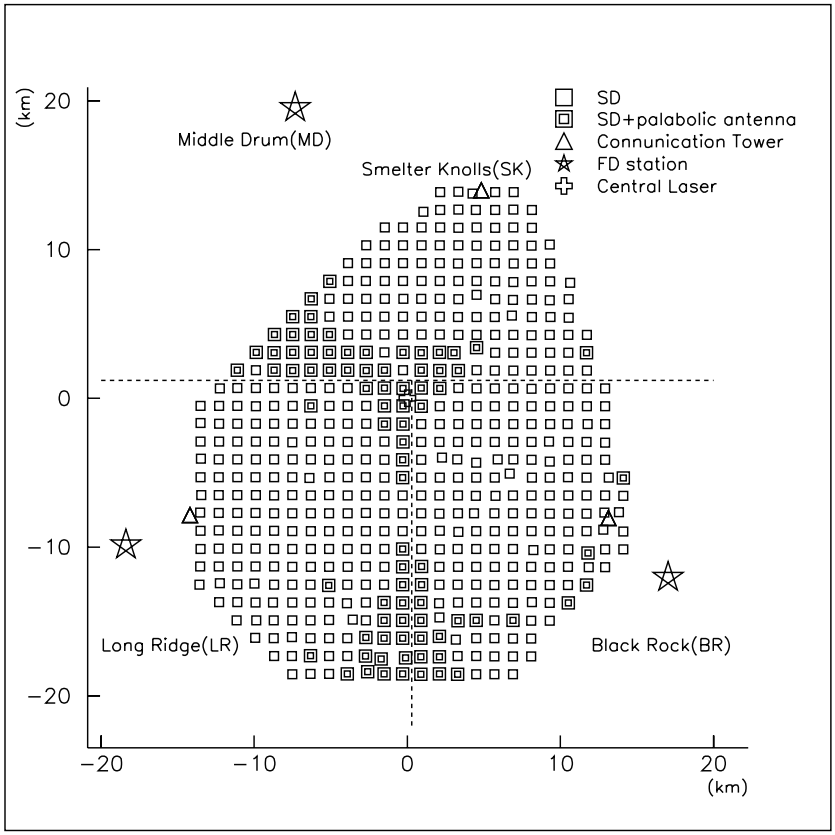


Figure 1: Layout of the Telescope Array in Utah, USA. Squares denote 507 SDs. There are three subarrays controlled by three communication towers denoted by triangles. The three star symbols denote the FD stations.

2) The HiRes-I telescope system was partially moved to the Middle Drum (MD) hill in TA site and installed as one of the three FD stations after the HiRes experiment was shut down in 2006 [11]. Using an energy spectrum obtained with MD station data, it is possible to cross-check the new TA FD data and analysis method. The surface detector observes lateral distribution of the shower particle to estimate energy of primary particle. It is also possible to compare the energy estimation methods which estimate energy of primary particle with longitudinal shower development used at FD data analysis.

3) In addition to the conventional calibration and monitor system, we plan to perform absolute end-to-end calibration of a fluorescence telescope by using pseudo air shower events that are induced by electron beams with known total energy from a compact electron linear accelerator at the TA site [12, 13]. As described above, the TA experiment is well-balanced to determine the energy of air shower events.

4) The anisotropy of arrival directions of ultra-high energy cosmic rays is being studied in the northern hemisphere where the effect of the galactic magnetic field is smaller than that in the southern hemisphere where the Pierre Auger experiment is located.

3. Surface detector array

The SD array consists of 507 detector units, which were deployed in a square grid with 1.2 km spacing to cover a total area of approximately 700 km^2. Fig. 1 shows a layout of the surface array of the TA experiment. Each surface detector has a plastic scintillation counter of 3 m^2 in size, and trans-

mits hit information via a wireless LAN modem. As shown in Fig. 1, the SD array is divided into three subarrays each controlled by its trigger-decision electronics at the communication tower. The Long Ridge (LR), Black Rock (BR), and Smelter Knolls (SK) subarrays have 189, 170 and 148 SDs respectively. (The numbers of SDs in LR , BR and SK from March 2008 to November 2009 were 207, 190 and 110 respectively.) The entire system is powered by a solar panel and battery [23]. For events with energies beyond 10^{19} eV and with zenith angles below 45 degrees, the trigger efficiency reaches 100% and the aperture is 1100 km^2·sr. The observed energy region for the TA experiment has sufficient overlap with those for the previous experiments of UHECR.

3.1. Surface detector

The TA detector will operate for more than 10 years and must be designed to survive the expected conditions at the site. The detector must be robust and durable for long-term exposure to the desert environment where the detector temperature ranges from -20°C to $+50^{\circ}$C with large diurnal variation. And the system requires detailed monitoring and periodic calibrations to track variation of detector response along time.

Fig. 2 shows one of the deployed SDs that communicate with the communication tower placed at Smelter Knolls (SK), a nearby hill. A communication antenna (ADAF2414; ADTEC Co.) with adjustable height is mounted on a 3-m long iron pole. A square solar panel 1 m on one side is mounted on the platform to supply power to the electronics. Front-end electronics and a battery are contained in a box made with 1.2 mm thick stainless steel. The box is mounted under the solar panel. The box that contains the scintillators

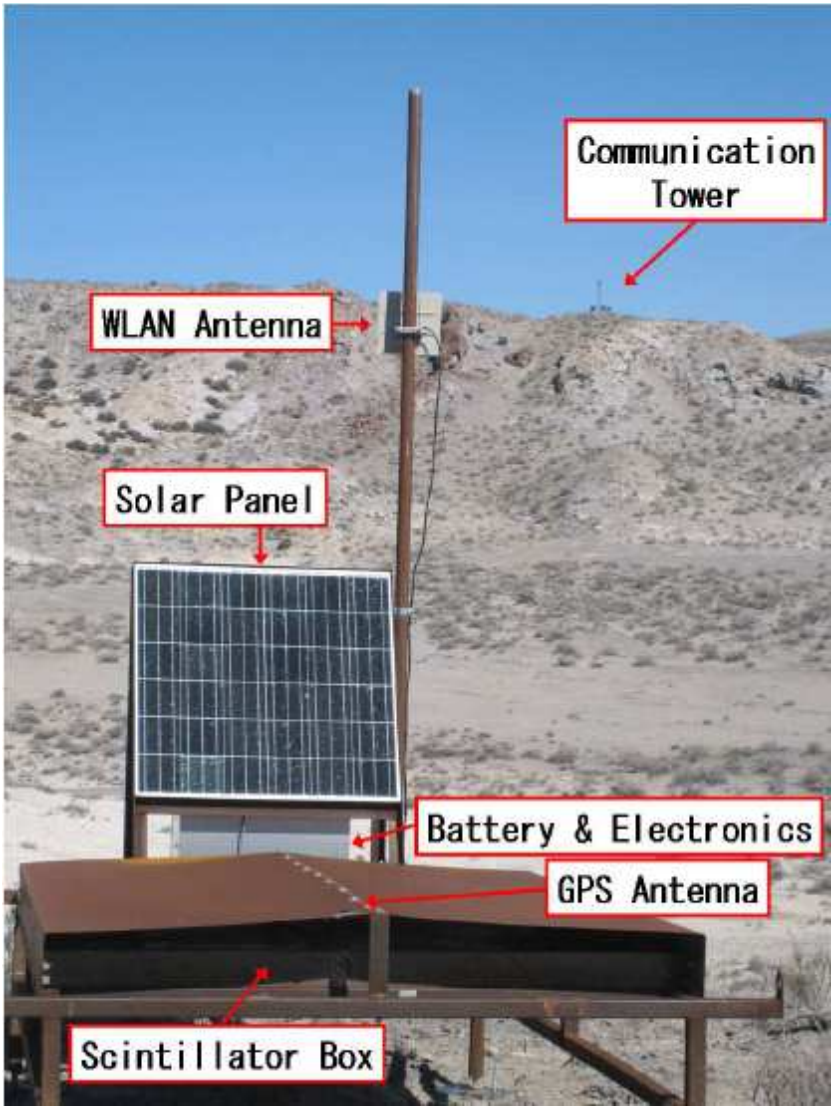


Figure 2: A deployed SD in the field. The electronics box and scintillator box are on the iron frame. An electronics unit is installed under the solar panel, and the scintillator box is mounted on the platform under the roof.

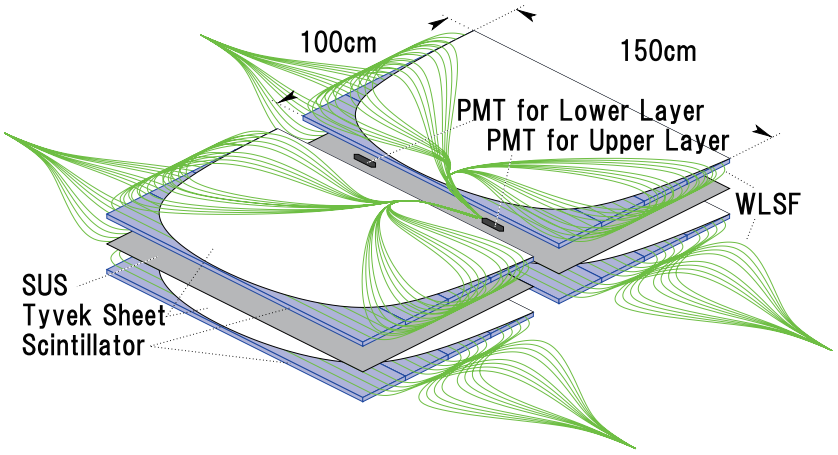


Figure 3: Inside of a scintillator box with scintillator plates, WLS fibers and PMTs. A total of 104 WLS fibers are laid on each layer to collect and transmit scintillation light to a PMT [15].

and photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) is mounted under the 1.2-mm thick iron roof to protect the detector from large temperature variations.

Fig. 3 shows schematic of the inside of a scintillator box. Each surface detector consists of two layers of plastic scintillator. Each layer of scintillator has an area of 3 m^2 and a thickness of 1.2 cm. A Stainless-steel plate has 1 mm in thickness and is inserted in between layers. As shown in Fig. 3, each scintillator layer consists of 2 segments, and each segment consists of 4 slabs. The size of one segment is 1.5 m $\times$ 1.0 m. The size of each slab is 1.5 m $\times$ 0.25 m and thickness is 1.2 cm. Scintillation light is collected through 104 wavelength-shifting (WLS) fibers that are 5 m long (Y-11; Kuraray Co. Ltd.) and laid on each layer. On top side of scintillator slab, there are grooves in pallarel with long side of the slab. The span of grooves is 2.0 cm and the depth is 1.2 mm. The fibers are laid along the grooves. Both ends of the

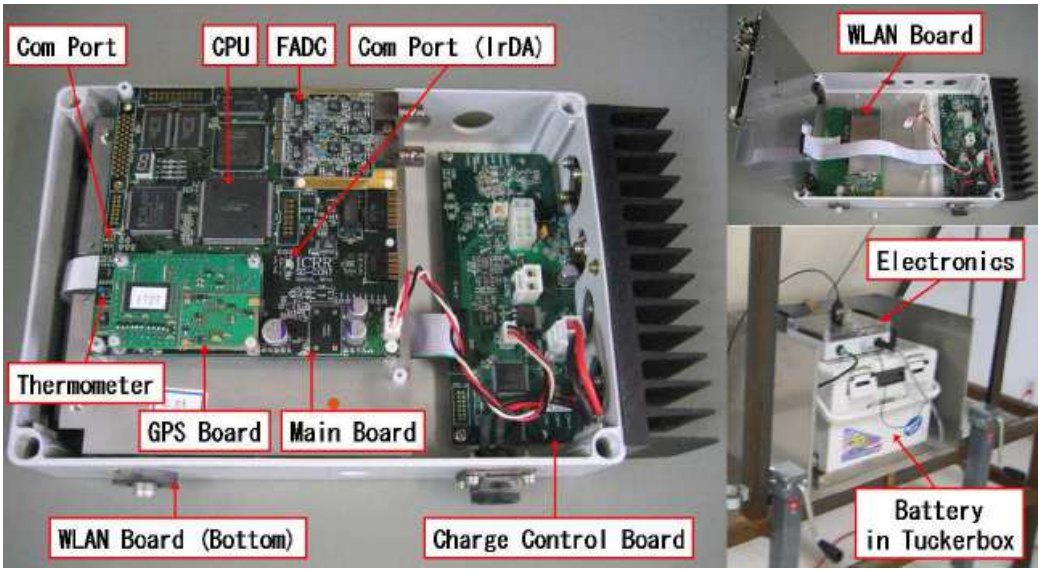


Figure 4: Detector electronics of the TA surface detector. The wireless LAN board is mounted under the main CPU board.

fibers from a layer are bundled and connected to a PMT (9124SA; Electron Tubes Ltd.).

Each PMT is calibrated to obtain the relation between high voltage and gain, and a linearity curve of input light amount and output charge [14]. Two LEDs (NSPB320BS; Nichia Corp.) are also installed on the side of each layer to calibrate linearity of output for input light. Scintillator plates and PMTs are contained in a 1.5 mm thick box made of stainless steel (top cover is 1.5 mm thick, with a 1.2 mm thick bottom) (TAITO Co.Ltd.).

3.2. Detector Electronics

Fig. 4 shows the detector electronics for a scintillator counter installed in a stainless-steel box under the solar panel. The output signals from PMTs

are digitized by a 12bit FADC (AD9235RU- 65; Analog Devices Co.) with a 50 MHz sampling rate on the CPU board (SH4; Renesas Electronics Co.). Signals greater than approximately 0.3 minimum ionizing particles (MIP) are stored in a memory buffer on CPU board as Level-0 trigger data. The stored wave form is 2.56 μsec long (128 FADC bins). Signals greater than 3.0 MIP are stored as a Level-1 trigger event which are sent to the trigger-decision electronics at the communication tower for the subarray via a wireless LAN modem (ADLINK540F; ADTEC. Co) using a custom-made communication protocol [19]. The local trigger rates are $\sim$750 Hz for Level-0 trigger and $\sim$30 Hz for Level-1 trigger. In the FPGA, the FADC pedestals are monitored every second to keep threshold values for the trigger. The pedestal value is defined as the average of FADC values within 160 nsec (8 FADC bins). The threshold value for Level-0 trigger is fixed to 15 counts above the average of pedestal. Triggered wave forms mostly from atmospheric particles are counted into histograms based on integrated count and maximum count of the wave form. For the monitoring of detector gain, the signal part of the wave form is integrated for 240 nsec (-80 nsec from trigger timing and up to +160 nsec after) and the value are accumulated into histograms for each layer of scintillater. The integrated FADC value and the maximum value of the signal wave form within 2.56 μsec are also accumulated in histograms. These are used for detector linearity monitoring. The synchronization of electronics of the surface detectors is done by PPS signals received by GPS units (Motorola M12+ oncore module). A time stamp with a precision of about 20 nsec is created by the 50 MHz sub-clock on the main board. The total counts of the sub-clock between PPS signals are also sent to the trigger-



Figure 5: The Smelter Knolls communication tower, one of three in the array. There are three stands each with four solar panels. Those stands contain batteries, data aquisition PC and network instrulments for long distance link.

decision electronics along with a Level-1 event list to correct the time stamp of the wave form in later analysis. The power bases (PS1806; Electrontube Co. Ltd.) for PMTs are powered and controlled through DAC on the detector electronics. Each SD unit described above is powered by one solar panel (KC125J; KYOCERA Corp.) and one deep cycle battery (DCS100; C&D technologies, Inc.). The charging of the battery is controlled by home made charge control board that works with main CPU board. The solar panel system provides sufficient power required from the electronics ($\sim$5 W).

3.3. Long-distance network for remote operation

Fig. 5 shows one of the communication towers, which is located at Smelter Knolls (SK) near the north edge of the SD array. The other two towers also have the same size and are located on hills (Black Rock and Long Ridge) near the western and eastern edges of the SD array, respectively. The communication towers have the role of collecting trigger information from the SDs and providing communications for the FD stations and CLF (Central Laser Facility)[18] site for general purposes.

Fig. 6 shows the long-distance links for all the facilities and air fluorescence detectors in the entire TA site. The open triangles in Fig. 6 represent the locations of the communication towers. The data collected from the SDs are temporarily stored at the communication tower and regularly transferred to Delta City through this network every 12 hours. There are two types of antenna units (Canopy P2P100; Motorola Co. Ltd.) which are operated in different frequency ranges. The tower-to-tower and tower-to-FD links are operated at 5.7 GHz and the tower-to-SD links are operated at 2.4 GHz range. The line between the SK and BR towers and the line between the SK and LR towers are used for SD data acquisition. No access to FD stations and CLF for general purposes interferes with the SD data acquisition lines. The long distance networks are currently operated at 3 Mbps throughput, which is sufficient for SD data acquisitions, data transfer and operation of FD stations.

Fig. 7 shows the daily average values of packet loss rate in the lines monitored in the current system. The network is stable enough, except for some periods of major maintenances. More details of long distance network

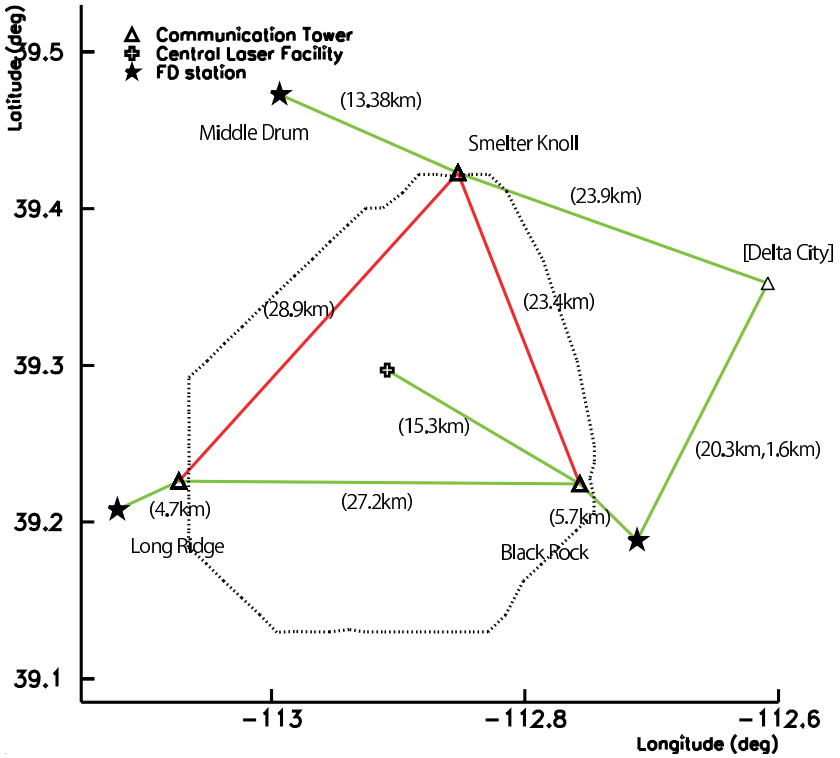


Figure 6: The long-distance links for all the facilities and three FD stations in the entire TA site. The open triangles represent the communication towers where the trigger-decision electronics for subarrays are installed. The lines that connect the towers and facilities represent the links between antennas. The red lines are used for trigger decision. The dotted line represents the border of the entire surface detector array.

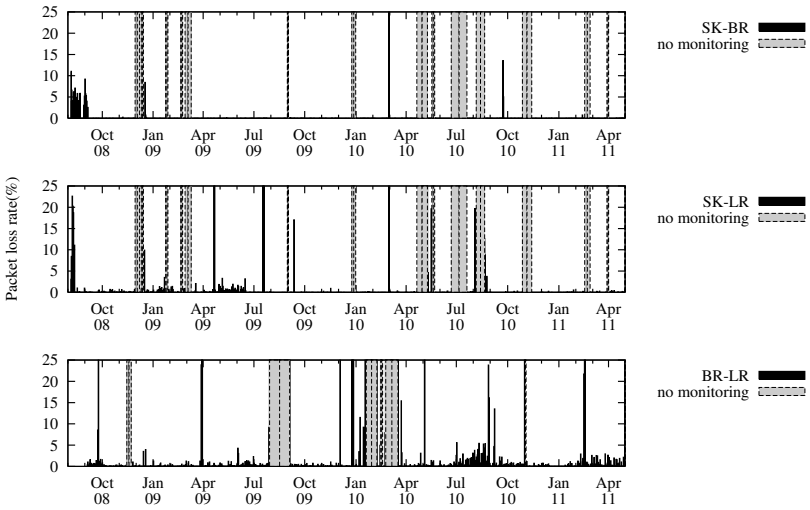


Figure 7: Long-term stability of the network from August 2008. Red histograms in the top two panels show daily packet loss rate in the line between the SK to BR towers and in the line between the SK to LR towers, respectively. The bottom panel shows the same in the line between the BR and LR FD stations. Green regions do not have the data monitored for daily paket loss rate.

in the TA experiment are described in paper [22, 28].

3.4. Assembly and deployment

Detector assembly is divided into two parts. First, layers of plastic scintillator are installed in the stainless-steel box and WLS fibers are laid on the scintillator plate. To increase the light intensity, each layer of scintillator is wrapped with two layers of Dupon Tyvek sheeting. Both ends of a bundle of WLS fibers from a layer are glued together with epoxy inserted into an acrylic sheath. The sheath is sized to fit the PMT surface. The ends of the WLS fibers are smoothed with a grinder and polished after making a bundle in the sheath. To ensure good optical contact, optical grease (Optseal; Shin-Etsu Chemical Co. Ltd.) is also applied on the surface of the PMT. The production rate of scintillator boxes was three boxes per day. In total 512 SD boxes were assembled in Japan and those boxes were shipped to Utah, USA. The final assembly of other components such as solar panels, batteries, and electronics along with mounting these on to iron frames(T&D Co.Ltd.) was performed at the control center in Delta. Each SD unit was deployed to its location by using helicopter after transporting the units by trucks with a flatbed trailer to staging areas accessible from existing roads inside the TA site. From October 2006 to the end of February 2007, 485 surface detectors were deployed. A total of 503 SDs were deployed by the end of December 2007. Additional 4 SDs were deployed in December 2008.

4. Data communication and air shower trigger

There is a trigger-decision module at each tower. The electronics is the same as shown in Fig. 4, running a different firmware program. The data

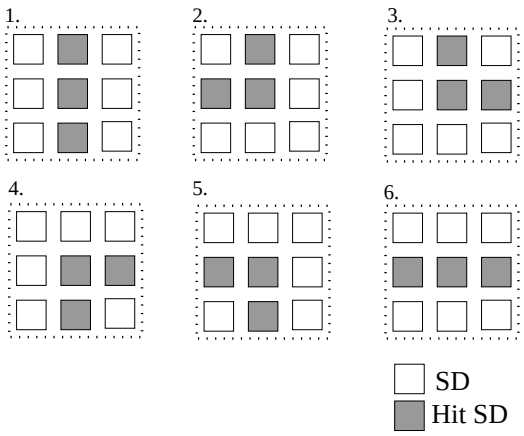


Figure 8: Trigger pattern taken at the TA surface array. If any three adjecent SDs have timing difference within 8 μsec the trigger will be generated.

communication between the trigger-decision electronics at communication tower and SDs is done by 2.4 GHz wireless LAN using a custom-made communication protocol. The baud rate of the data aquisition is $\sim$1 Mbps. Every second, the trigger-decision electronics at the communication tower requests each surface detector to send its Level-1 trigger event list and the total counts of the sub-clock between PPS signals. From the event lists, an air shower trigger is generated when three adjacent SDs are coincident within 8 μsec.

Fig. 8 shows the current trigger pattern of three adjacent SDs that are hit. We call this trigger the Level-2 trigger. With this trigger, collection of wave forms from SDs starts. The trigger-decision electronics collects wave forms coincident within $\pm$32 μsec from the trigger timing.

When the Level-2 trigger is generated within one subarray, the trigger time information is transmitted to the central trigger decision process running at the data acquisition PC (TS7800; Technologic systems, Co. Ltd.) in

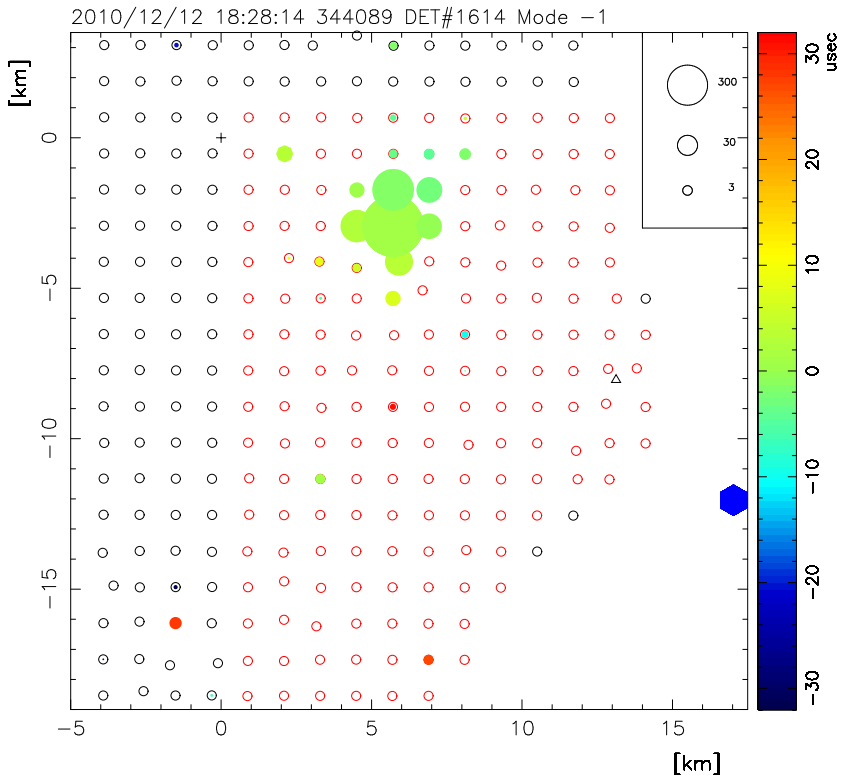


Figure 9: An example of triggered event at BR array. Red open circles represent SDs in BR subarray. The triggered SDs are shown with color code, which corresponds to the arrival time. The radious of circle is propotional to the logalismic of integrated signal amount in the unit of MIP.

the SK tower. From the SK tower, the trigger signal is distributed to trigger-decision electronics at each tower. A shower event that impacts multiple subarrays is collected by this broadcasting of trigger. Fig. 9 and Fig. 10 show an event triggered at BR subarray and a sample of wave forms respectively.

The Level-1 trigger event lists from the SDs in the regions of the bound-

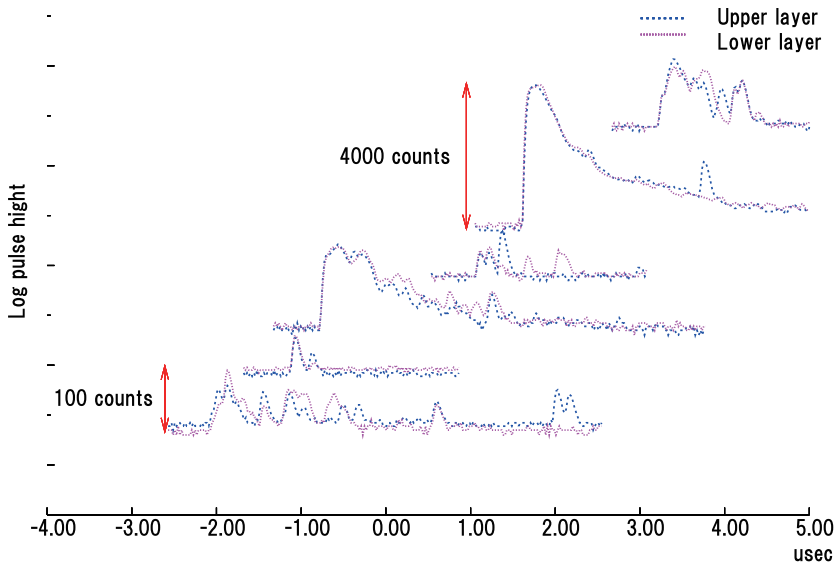


Figure 10: Wave forms obtained from the event shown in Fig. 9

aries between the two subarrays are also sent to the central trigger process in SK tower. The central trigger process combines Level-1 trigger information collected from SDs at the border of a subarray by its tower and verifies whether the same trigger condition was satisfied only by the edge detectors of more than one subarray. As shown in Fig. 8, the hit pattern that spans two subarrays that satisfy the trigger condition can be more two detectors from the border in case of pattern 1 or 6. To trigger such a case, the central trigger process sends time of the coincidence and position information to the trigger-decision electronics at the tower and trigger condition is verified. A shower event of relatively small size that falls near the boundary of subarrays is collected by this trigger scheme.

With the above trigger conditions, trigger efficiency reaches 100% for

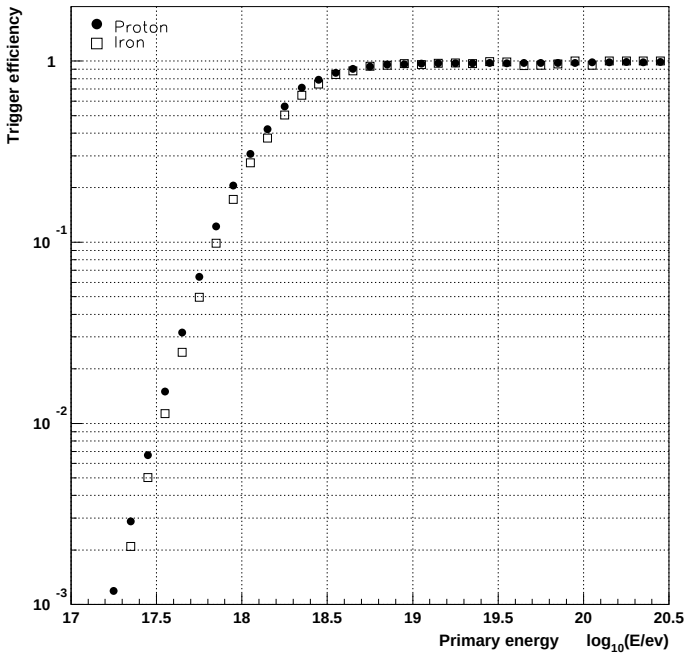


Figure 11: Trigger efficiency as a function of energy for primary proton and iron calculated using CORSIKA air shower Monte Carlo simulation and GEANT4 detector Monte Carlo simulation.

primary particle with energy of $10^{18.7}$ eV [16, 19, 21].

Fig. 11 shows trigger efficiency as a function of energy of primary particle obtained using CORSIKA [24] air shower Monte Carlo simulation and GEANT4 [25] detector Monte Carlo simulation [26].

To improve the efficiency of detecting FD-SD hybrid events at lower energies ($< 10^{18.7}$ eV), an external trigger called Hybrid Trigger was installed to collect wave forms associated with air showers detected by FD. From nearest

FD, SD data acquisition system at a tower receives trigger timing and time window for requesting wave forms stored at each SDs in the subarray. The efficiency of the wave form collection is greater than 97% for the primary particle with energy of $10^{17.5}$ eV triggered FD [27]. The extended hybrid trigger observations started in October 2010.

5. Detector Calibration and Monitoring

For stable observation, the status and environment of the batteries need to be monitored continuously. For calibration in later analysis, it is very important to monitor the detector response. For this purpose, a monitoring process runs on each SD in a 10 min cycle. The monitored items are summarized in Table 1. The size of monitoring data for 10 min is 9600 bytes. The data is divided into 600 of subsets. All the subsets are sent along with the Level-1 trigger tables within 10 min.

Table 1: Items and resolutions of TA Surface Detector monitor.

Item	Data	Resolution
1MIP histogram	12bin sum of FADC	1 FADC count 10min
Pedestal histogram	8bin sum of FADC	1 FADC count 10min
Pulse height histogram	Maximum FADC	32 FADC count 10min
Total charge histogram	128bin sum of FADC	$\Delta \log_2$(FADC sum)=0.2
Power cycle data	Battery (voltage, current)	1min
Environmental data	Temperature, humidity	1 min
Trigger rate	Level-0, Level-1 trigger rate	1min
GPS status	Number of satellites, status	10min

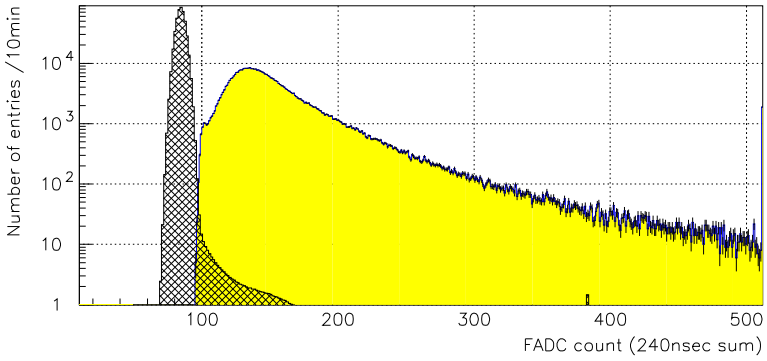


Figure 12: Example of FADC count distribution from an Level-0 trigger event obtained as 1-MIP monitor data. The hatched histogram is a pedestal distribution collected as monitor data.The pedestal distribution is scaled to have same entry with Level-0 trigger data. The same distribution is collected from every PMT at 10 min intervals.

5.1. The 1-MIP monitor

The charge output by atmospheric muons is used to estimate the total energy deposited by shower particles. The integrated FADC value recorded by the Level-0 trigger from each surface detector is collected as monitoring data. Here the time window for the integration is 240 nsec (12 bins). Fig. 12 shows examples of the charge output distribution. The temperature coefficient of gain of the surface detectors is typically -0.8%/°C [17] for a diurnal variation of temperature that reaches up to 25°C. Fig. 13 shows examples of the monitored time variations of temperature and relative humidity inside the scintillator box, and 1-MIP peak value. Change of detector response caused by the variation of the outside environment is monitored by this distribution continuously to the nearest ten minutes.

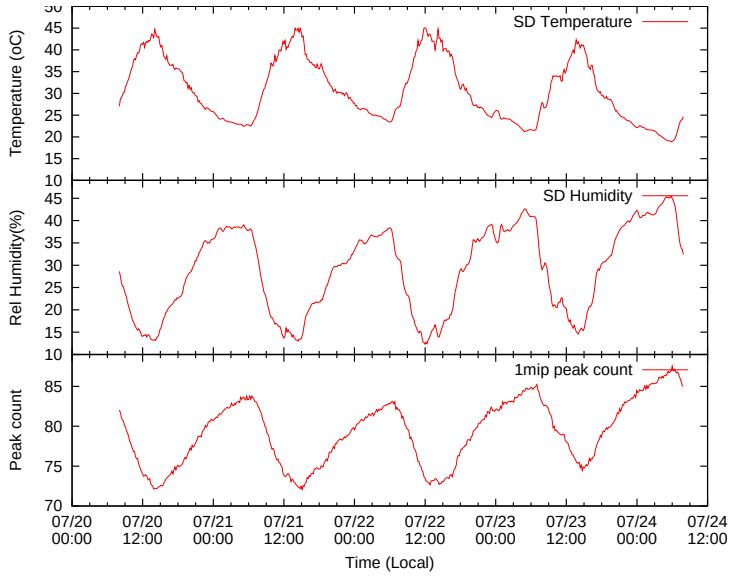


Figure 13: Examples of time variations of temperature (top) and relative humidity (middle) inside the scintillator box, and the 1-MIP peak value (bottom).

5.2. Linearity monitor

A check on the linearity of charge output was performed by using two LEDs attached at each layer of scintillator. This was done for all the detectors before deployment. Two LEDs were flashed with 400 nsec wide square pulses alternately and simultaneously. The amount of light from each LED is changed by changing the pulse height of the square pulse. By measuring the ratio to the expected output, the linearity curves were measured. Here we descrive the light amount as x and PMT output pulse's peak FADC count due to the LED light as $F(x)$. The PMT output while driving LED 1 and 2 simultaneously is represented as $F(x_1 + x_2)$. The linearity was checked by comparing $F(x_1 + x_2)$ and $F(x_1) + F(x_2)$ while changing x_1 and x_2. Fig. 14 shows a typical example of observed relation between $F(x_1 + x_2)$ and

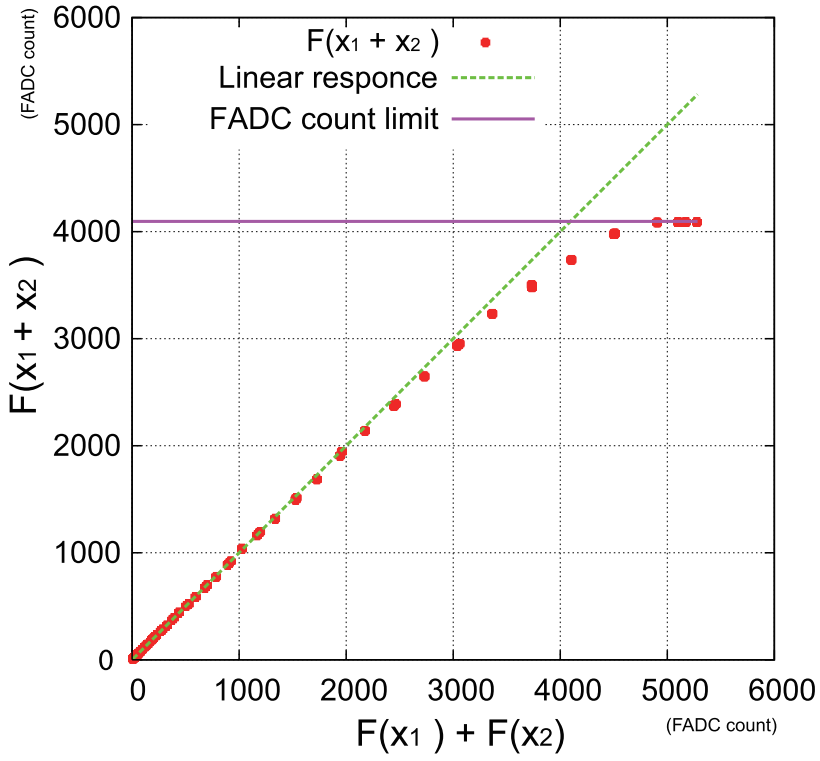


Figure 14: An example of observed relation between $F(x_1 + x_2)$ and $F(x_1) + F(x_2)$.

$F(x_1) + F(x_2)$.

To check on a break from the linearity and its variation in the long term of operation, pulse-height (FADC peak) histograms are also taken as monitoring data. Fig. 15 shows an example of comparison between pulse-height linearity obtained from LED calibration and the one estimated using the pulse-height monitor. It shows fairly good agreement and it was confirmed that the histogram can be used for monitoring the stability of linearity.

5.3. Power monitor, GPS and environmental parameters

Since each SD is locally powered by a solar panel and a battery, it is very important to monitor the status of the output voltage and current from the battery. The 1PPS signals are generated by GPS modules using the signals from the satellites that are visible through the GPS antennas. To understand the status of the GPS module, the number of satellites visible through the GPS module and conductivity of the antenna are read out every 600 sec. Each surface detector is equipped with five temperature sensors and two humidity sensors to record the environment of the detector and electronics box.

Fig. 16 gives an example of the time variations in the number of detected GPS satellites, the battery voltage and charging current, the Level-0 and Level-1 trigger rates for one detector, and the barometric pressure and atmospheric temperature measured at the CLF [18] site.

6. Summary

The SD array of the TA experiment consists of 507 plastic scintillation detectors of 3 m^2 in size. The array has the largest total area in the northern

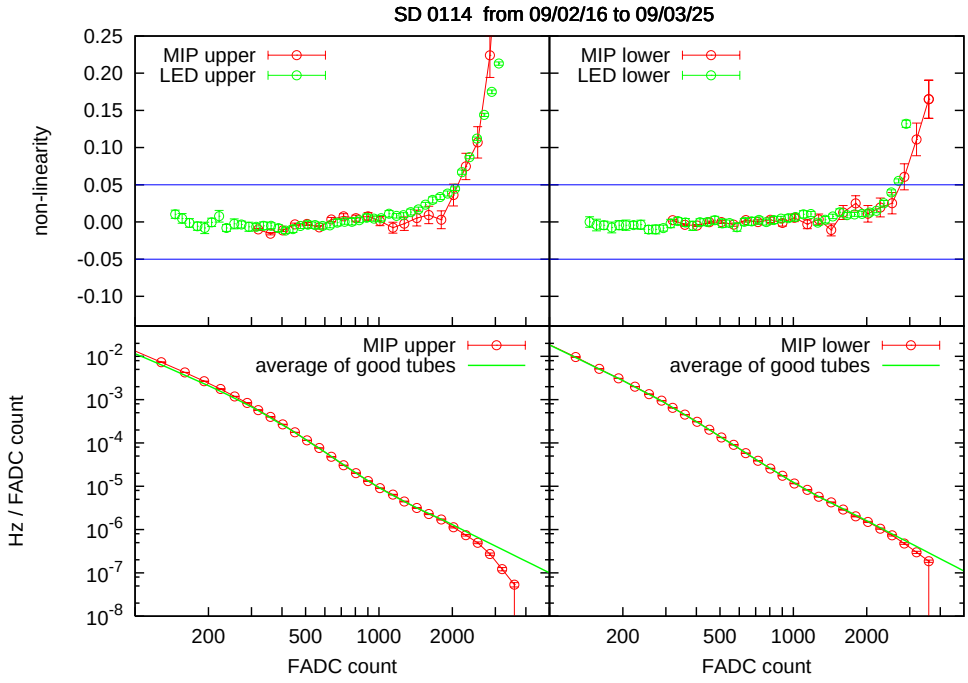


Figure 15: Analyzed linearity of pulse hight from monitor data [19]. In the top left panel, the green open circles denote the relative deviation from the estimated linear response by LED calibration, and the red open circles denote the relative deviation by pulse-height monitor for the upper layer of one SD (SD #0114). The top right panel shows the same for the lower layer. In the bottom left panel, the red open circles denote the scaled pulse height distribution observed for the upper layer and the average from good tubes. The bottom right panel shows the same for the lower layer.

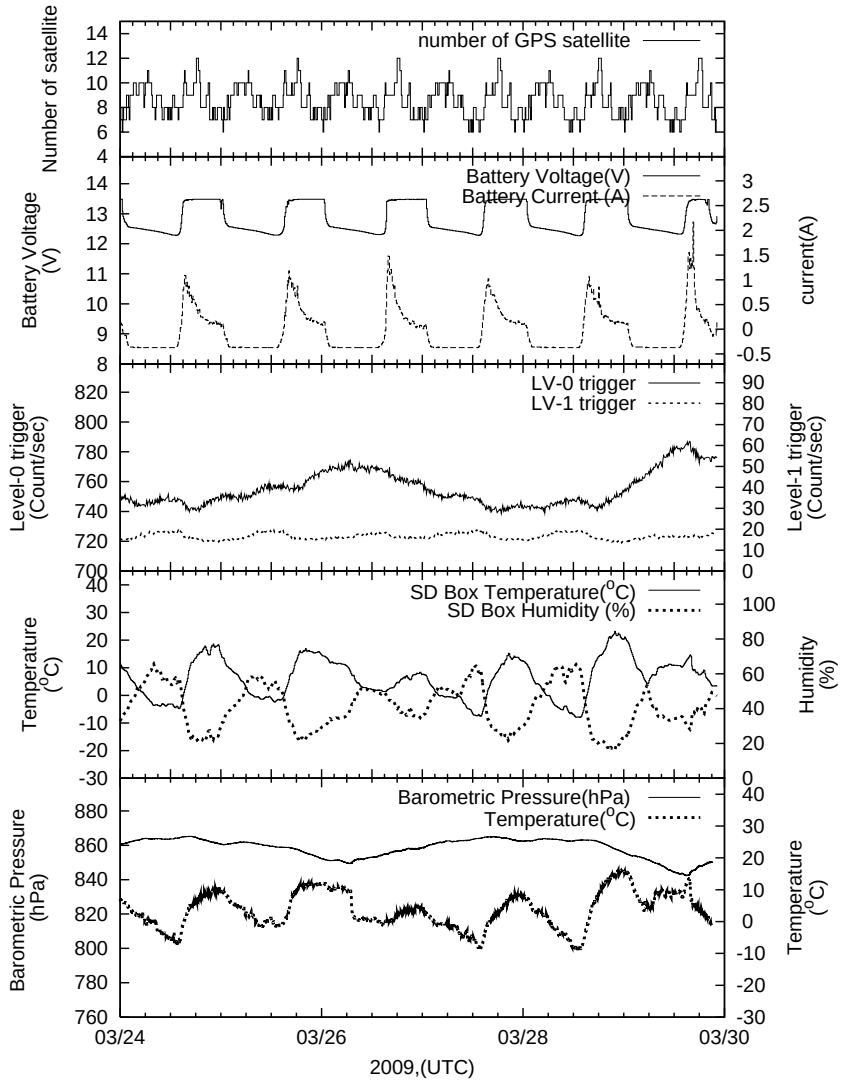


Figure 16: An example of time variations in the number of GPS satellites (top panel), battery voltage and charging current (second panel) , local Level-0 and Level-1 trigger rates (third panel) for one surface detector, and the barometric pressure and atmospheric temperature measured at the CLF site using a weather transmitter (WXT510; VAISALA Inc.)(bottom panel).

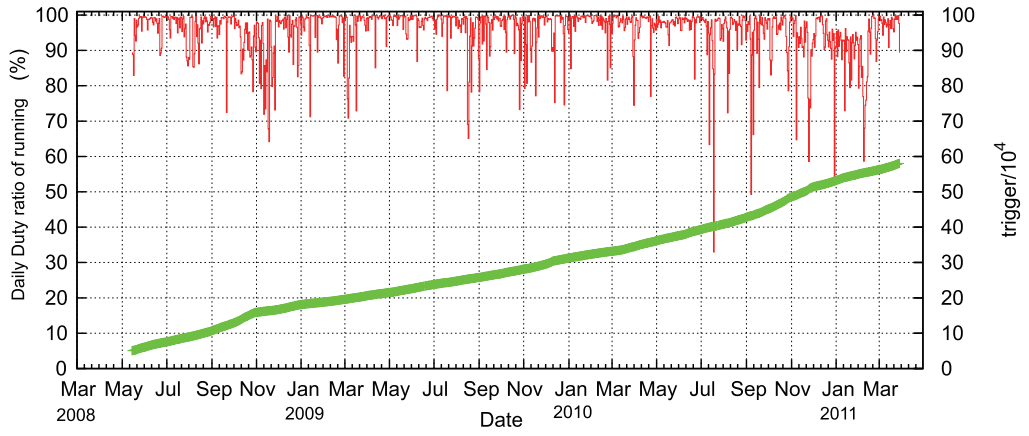


Figure 17: Running status of the SD array. Daily duty ratio of running. Evolution of the number of triggerd event is also shown using right vertical axis.

hemisphere. The detector enables us to compare estimated energy of primary particle using longitudinal shower development observed at FD and lateral distribution of shower particles detected at SD array. The observation with SD array is continuious to have ∼100% of duty cycle. This feature enables us to explore the anisotropy of arrival directions of highest energy cosmic rays with larger exposure.

Major deployment of the surface detectors started in October 2006, and we deployed a total of 507 surface detectors by November 2008. The deployed detectors have been calibrated and tuned. The air shower array began operation in March 2008. For more than three years, air shower events from UHECR have been collected along with detailed monitoring data. The monitoring data enables us to calibrate the variation of detector responses with enough accuracy. We showed the running status after three years of SD op-

eration. A major upgrade of the DAQ system was performed and additional deployment was made in November 2008. Including maintenance periods, the array has been operating with a 95% of duty cycle on average. The variations of detector response and status are recorded in 10 min resolution and are well understood. The number of triggers collected as of March 2011 has reached 5×10^5.

Acknowledgments

The Telescope Array experiment is supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science through Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Specially Promoted Research (21000002) "Extreme Phenomena in the Universe Explored by Highest Energy Cosmic Rays", and the Inter-University Research Program of the Institute for Cosmic Ray Research; by the U.S. National Science Foundation awards PHY-0307098, PHY-0601915, PHY-0703893, PHY-0758342, and PHY-0848320 (Utah) and PHY-0649681 (Rutgers); by the National Research Foundation of Korea (2006-0050031, 2007-0056005, 2007-0093860, 2010-0011378, 2010-0028071, R32-10130, 2011-0002617); by the Russian Academy of Sciences, RFBR grants 10-02-01406a and 11-02-01528a (INR), IISN project No. 4.4509.10 and Belgian Science Policy under IUAP VI/11 (ULB). The foundations of Dr. Ezekiel R. and Edna Wattis Dumke, Willard L. Eccles and the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles all helped with generous donations. The State of Utah supported the project through its Economic Development Board, and the University of Utah through the Office of the Vice President for Research. The experimental site became available through the cooperation of the Utah School

and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Air Force. We also wish to thank the people and the officials of Millard County, Utah, for their steadfast and warm support. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions from the technical staffs of our home institutions and the University of Utah Center for High Performance Computing (CHPC).

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