Identifying Short, Extreme Blazar Flares with the HAWC Real-Time Flare Monitor

Thomas Weisgarber
TeV Particle Astrophysics 2017
10 August 2017
Motivation for short, extreme flares

- Short time scale flares give us a window into the dynamics of the blazar central engine
- Multiwavelength picture important for constraining flare models
- Increased event counts enable probes of intergalactic space, Lorentz invariance violation
- TeV flares not always predicted by X-ray or GeV flares

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Graph showing time vs. intensity with a note about 1 hour.
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[Graph showing time series data with annotations about 1 hour and about 10 Crab]
The HAWC observatory

- High Altitude Water Cherenkov
- 4,100 m above sea level at 19° N latitude in the state of Puebla, Mexico
- 300 optically isolated water Cherenkov detectors
- Wide-field (~2 sr) detector for TeV-scale gamma rays and cosmic rays: complementarity with pointed instruments
- Reconstruct particle properties based on deposition of charge at ground level from secondary air showers
HAWC transient searches

- Daily flare monitor
  - Observes entire sky with an integration time of 1 source transit (about 6 hours)
  - Public alerts from the Mrk 421 and Mrk 501, all-sky effort still in progress
  - Example alert ATEL #8922
  - Integration times of 1/2 source transit currently running, will become available
- All-sky GRB monitor
  - Dedicated low-energy search (talk to Josh Wood for details)
HAWC transient searches

• Real-time flare monitor
  • Searches for ~1 hour time scale variability with a resolution of 2 minutes
  • Monitors a dedicated list of 187 sources: extragalactic TeVCat and 2FHL within HAWC sky coverage
• Alerts sent under MoU, with general public alerts under development
• Automatic alerts
Flare monitor sensitivity

- Real-time flare monitor performs a likelihood ratio test on each monitored source:
  - $H_0$: the data for the previous 10 hours is modeled by steady or no flux
  - $H_1$: the data for the previous 10 hours has an increase in flux at one point
- Test whether $\Delta \ln L > -\ln \gamma$, with $\gamma$ a threshold parameter input
- Sensitivity for 1-hour flares at around 4 or 5 Crab units

Detection of Mrk 501 flare in offline data

- Search run over 18 months of HAWC data, from 26 Nov 2014 to 1 June 2016
- HAWC analysis bins are energy proxy bins that correspond to fraction of PMTs participating in an event
- Most significant flare from Mrk 501 on 18 August 2015, lasting ~74 minutes
- Equivalent false alarm rate of 0.007 events per year

Detection of Mrk 501 flare in offline data

- Detected flare consistent with sensitivity of flare monitor
- Flare was also detected in standard single-transit offline analysis
  - Further spectral and light curve details presented by D. Dorner and R. Lauer in “Joint blazar analysis with FACT and HAWC” (ICRC 2017)
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Extending to sub-threshold flares

- For a higher false alarm rate, we may detect transient activity statistically
- Increased probability in the region below the real-time flare monitor usual threshold yields sensitivity to weaker flares, but not on a flare-by-flare basis
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Sub-threshold Markarian flares

- Markarian 421 and 501
- 2 targets, 100 off-source regions per target

HAWC-300 1-year sensitivity \(F(>2 \text{ TeV}) \text{ [cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}]\)
Sub-threshold flares

- No significant detections in other flare monitor targets
- Further analysis will search for above-threshold and sub-threshold flares in individual targets
Moving forward

- HAWC flare monitor continues to operate in triggered mode, sending MoU alerts and soon to the general community
- Clear detection of both sub-threshold and above-threshold activity in the nearby TeV sources Mrk 421 and Mrk 501
- Initial search for sub-threshold activity in other likely targets so far shows no conclusive detection
- Above-threshold search and more detailed sub-threshold searches currently in progress
Supporting Material
Duration dependence

Flare duration [hours]

Detection probability

Time to detection [hours]

3-Crab flares
5-Crab flares
7-Crab flares
10-Crab flares
Declination dependence

- False alarm rate 1 year\(^{-1}\)
- False alarm rate 0.01 year\(^{-1}\)

Threshold parameter $\gamma$

Ratio

Detection probability

- 5-Crab flares
- 7-Crab flares
- 10-Crab flares

False alarm rate 1 year\(^{-1}\)
False alarm rate 0.01 year\(^{-1}\)
Various corrections

Ratio of false alarm rates vs. Threshold parameter $\gamma$

- Without data quality cuts
- With data quality cuts

Ratio of false alarm rates vs. Threshold parameter $\gamma$

- Without threshold parameter correction
- With threshold parameter correction
Flare monitor sensitivity

- Linear and exponential flare shapes alter the detection probability compared to the fiducial square wave shape.
Search for other sub-threshold flares

- Extragalactic non-Markarian TeVCat sources, within HAWC sky coverage
- 44 targets, 10 off-source regions per target
Search for other sub-threshold flares

- 2FHL non-TeVCat sources with known $z < 0.3$, within HAWC sky coverage
- 22 targets, 10 off-source regions per target

HAWC-300 1-year sensitivity $F(>2\text{ TeV})$ [cm$^{-2}$ s$^{-1}$]
Search for other sub-threshold flares

- Other 2FHL non-TeVCat sources within HAWC sky coverage
- 119 targets, 4 off-source regions per target