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## Electronic Neutron Dosimeter in High-Energy Neutron Fields

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## ABSTRACT

In neutron fields including neutron energies above 20 MeV a conventional neutron dosimeter is not suitable for measurements of neutron personal dose equivalent,  $H_p(10)$ , over the whole energy range. Therefore, for such fields an electronic neutron dosimeter has been developed recently at Helmholtz Zentrum München (HMGU). In general, neutron dose measurements performed with this dosimeter at neutron energies below 2 MeV show an accuracy of about 30% [1]. Here we report the use of this dosimeter at the CERN-EU high-energy Reference Field (CERF) facility in Geneva, Switzerland. At this facility the available neutron fields include neutrons with energies below, but also above 20 MeV. In the present paper, personal dose equivalent ( $H_p(10)$ ) values obtained with the ELectronic neutron DOSimeter (ELDO) are compared to neutron personal dose equivalent ( $H_p(10)$ ) values obtained with the HMGU extended-range Bonner Sphere Spectrometer, and to reference values from FLUKA Monte Carlo simulations provided by CERF. It is shown that for continuous neutron spectra as those at CERF behind concrete shielding or secondary neutrons from cosmic rays, the dosimeter results are satisfactory for radiation protection purposes. However, in neutron fields including neutrons above about 7 MeV, where the major neutron dose contribution is from neutrons between 10 keV and several MeV (like those at CERF behind iron shielding), the doses provided by ELDO might be too small and care must be taken in interpreting the results.

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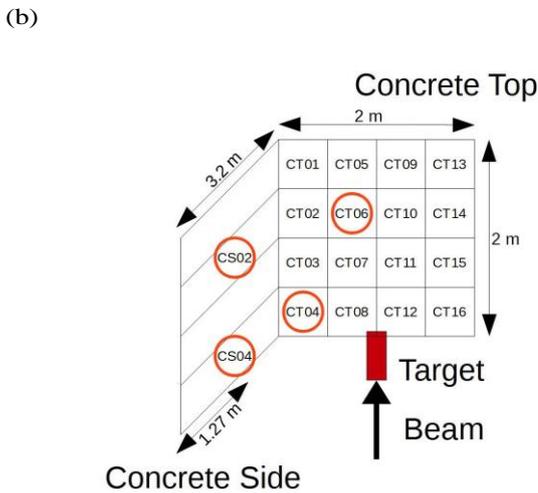
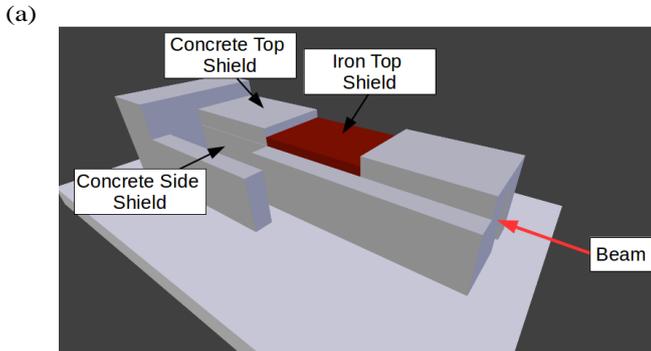
2 High-energy neutrons fields are present in the Earth's atmosphere as  
 3 secondary particles produced by cosmic rays, behind the shielding of  
 4 particle accelerators, and at ion therapy facilities. For example, at  
 5 flight altitudes or behind the shielding of particle accelerators about 50  
 6 % of neutron ambient dose equivalent ( $H^*(10)$ ) originates from  
 7 neutrons with energies above 20 MeV.  
 8 Because of a lack of commercially available high-energy neutron  
 9 individual dosimeters, an in-house electronic neutron individual  
 10 dosimeter was developed at Helmholtz Zentrum München (HMGU),  
 11 which is sensitive to neutrons from thermal energies up to about 200  
 12 MeV.  
 13 To test the electronic dosimeter in a well-known high-energy neutron  
 14 field, a measurement campaign was performed at the CERN EU High  
 15 Energy Reference Field (CERF), in October 2015. This facility  
 16 provides a high-energy neutron field similar to that of secondary  
 17 cosmic ray neutrons (see chapter 2.1). To get spectral information  
 18 about the neutron fields, measurements with an Extended Range  
 19 Bonner Sphere Spectrometer (ERBSS) were also performed. The

20 results obtained with both instruments are compared to reference  
 21 values provided by CERF, based on FLUKA Monte Carlo simulations.

22  
23 **2. Materials and Methods**24 *2.1. CERN-EU High-Energy Reference Field (CERF) – Facility*

25 The CERF facility was established in 1992, as a result of the 1990  
 26 recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological  
 27 Protection [2] to monitor the exposure of aircrew from cosmic  
 28 radiation. The aim was to provide a neutron field similar to that  
 29 present at flight altitudes (10–15 km), for test and calibration of  
 30 radiation detectors and dosimeters developed to study the radiation  
 31 exposure for commercial flight routes. The radiation field at those  
 32 altitudes is characterized by various particles (e.g., neutrons, photons,  
 33 protons, pions, muons, and electrons) with a wide range of energies.  
 34 The neutron radiation is of particular interest, because it dominates  
 35 aircrew exposure in terms of  $H^*(10)$  and personal dose equivalent

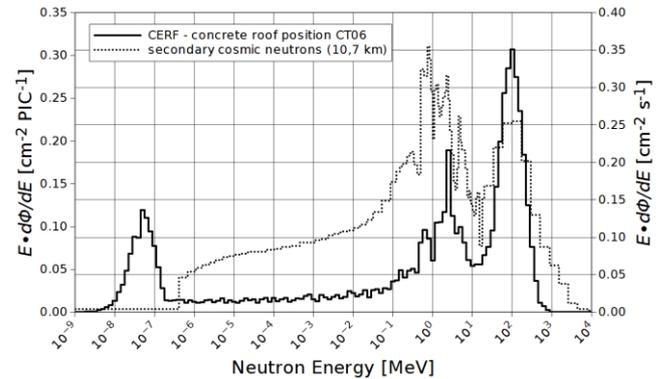
1 ( $H_p(10)$ ). For neutrons at flight altitudes three major energy regions  
 2 can be recognized: an epithermal region from about 1 eV-100 keV, an  
 3 evaporation peak with a maximum at about 1-2 MeV, and a cascade  
 4 peak with a maximum around 100 MeV. The CERF facility provides a  
 5 mixed field of neutrons, photons, muons, electrons, protons and pions  
 6 [3]. The neutron field at CERF is produced by a high energy hadron  
 7 beam (about 35% protons, 61% pions and 4% kaons; with an impulse  
 8 of 120 GeV/c) hitting a copper target. On the concrete (thickness: 80  
 9 cm) or iron (thickness: 40 cm) roof of the shielding, a grid of 2 x 2 m<sup>2</sup>  
 10 with 16 reference positions are marked as measurement positions.  
 11 Some measurements were also performed on the concrete side wall  
 12 (Fig. 1).  
 13



**Fig.1.** Sketch of the CERF-facility (a). The target is placed under the shielding and it is moveable for concrete top (CT) and iron top (IT) measurements. The reference grid (b) includes the measurement positions used in this measurement campaign at the concrete roof (CT) and the concrete side (CS) marked in red.

14 On top of the concrete roof, the neutron energy spectrum is similar to  
 15 that of secondary cosmic neutrons at flight altitudes (Fig. 2), while on  
 16 top of the iron roof the neutron energy spectrum is different (see  
 17 chapter 3.2), being dominated by one broad peak with a maximum at  
 18 about 500 keV, with multiple peaks resulting from resonances in the  
 19 total neutron cross section of the iron. The existence of such  
 20 differences allowed to test the electronic neutron dosimeter in two  
 21 different neutron fields. In the following, iron roof top is named “IT”,

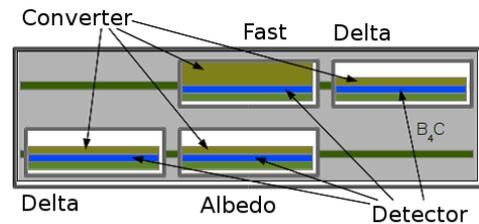
22 while the concrete roof top is named “CT” and the concrete side wall  
 23 “CS”.



**Fig. 2.** Neutron energy spectrum produced at CERF behind concrete roof at position CT06 (measured with ERBSS, this work) compared with that from secondary cosmic radiation at a flight altitude of 10.7 km (35,000 ft) [4]. Note that in [4], for low energy neutrons only one energy bin from 10<sup>-4</sup> eV to 0.4 eV was used.

24 **2.2. Electronic Neutron Dosimeter (ELDO)**

25 The ELDO neutron dosimeter includes three types of sensors (PIN-  
 26 Diodes): an albedo sensor with a LiF converter, a fast sensor with a  
 27 polyethylene (PE) converter, and two delta sensors with LiF converters  
 28 [5] (Fig. 3). The fast sensor is encapsulated in 1 mm lead, while the  
 29 albedo and delta sensors are encapsulated in 1 mm cadmium. Fig. 4  
 30 shows the fluence response functions of the individual sensors as a  
 31 function of neutron energy, and the total fluence response of the  
 32 ELDO. Table 1 gives some technical details. More details on concept  
 33 and dosimeter properties including angular dependence of dosimeter  
 34 response are given elsewhere [1][6][7][8][9].



**Fig. 3.** Schematic view of the 4 silicon PIN-Diodes, encapsulated in the neutron converters (polyethylene for the Fast sensor and LiF for Delta- and Albedo sensors) [7].

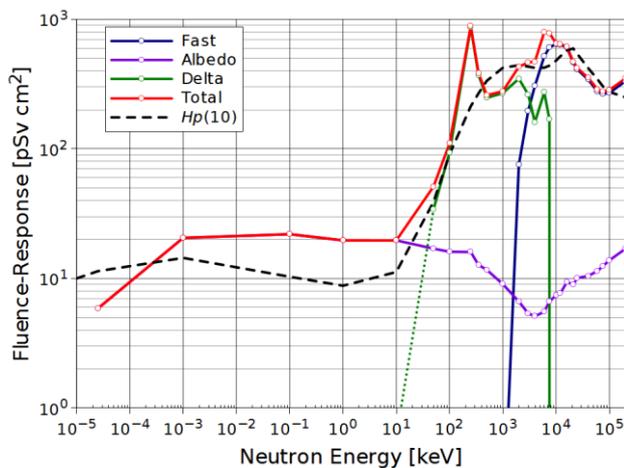
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**Table 1:** ELDO technical data; IRDA – Infrared Data Association

<i>Dimensions</i>	115x60x16 mm <sup>3</sup>
<i>Mass</i>	160 g
<i>Energy consumption</i>	2 mA at 3.6 V
<i>Battery</i>	Li-ion Accumulator 3.6 V; 900 mAh
<i>Operation time</i>	400 h
<i>Data transfer</i>	IRDA-Interface
<i>H<sub>p</sub>(10) dose range</i>	1 μSv – 10 Sv

36 Briefly, the albedo sensor shows a flat response function, from thermal  
 37 neutron energies up to about 200 keV (Fig. 4), while for higher  
 38 energies the response function decreases first and increases beyond 5

1 MeV. The contribution of the Fast sensor to total dosimeter response  
 2 increases above 1 MeV, because a threshold is set at this energy to  
 3 avoid background contributions from photons to sensor signal that are  
 4 present below. Its response function increases up to about 10 MeV,  
 5 decreases thereafter until 100 MeV, followed by a slight increase  
 6 above. For the intermediate neutron energy range (10 keV – 3 MeV)  
 7 the delta sensors are most important.  
 8 Note that in the neutron energy range of 30 keV – 3 MeV most of the  
 9 semi-conductor neutron dosimeters on the market significantly  
 10 underestimate neutron dose, as does also the present personal  
 11 dosimeter if only the Albedo and Fast sensors are used (see Fig. 4).  
 12 Therefore, to compensate for this underestimation, the present  
 13 dosimeter additionally uses the delta sensor. Unfortunately, the  
 14 response of the delta sensor increases significantly at energies greater  
 15 than 7 MeV. Therefore the delta sensor is adjusted in a way that it  
 16 becomes sensitive at a neutron energy of about 10 keV and is ignored  
 17 if neutrons above 7 MeV are present in the neutron spectrum, to avoid  
 18 overestimation of dose from high-energy neutrons.



**Fig. 4.** Calculated fluence-response function contributions of various sensors to total dosimeter response (red line) on PMMA phantom, for mono-energetic neutrons: Fast – blue, Albedo – violet, Delta – green [7]); dashed line –  $H_p(10)$  dose conversion function [10]. Between simulated results, a linear interpolation (on logarithmic scale) is shown. Note: Delta sensor drops at about 7 MeV due to software cut. Note also that the first response simulation for the Delta sensor was performed at 50 keV; it is expected that below 10 keV the Delta response is negligible (green dashed line as a linear interpolation)

19 Figure 4 also includes the fluence-to-dose conversion function for  
 20 personal dose equivalent ( $H_p(10)$ ) [10]. It is evident from the figure  
 21 that – with the detector concept chosen here – the total ELDO response  
 22 follows the  $H_p(10)$  fluence-to-dose conversion function, over a large  
 23 range of neutron energies, from meV – several 100 MeV. In general,  
 24 for single neutron energies agreement between ELDO response and  
 25  $H_p(10)$  is within a factor 2, except for a neutron energy of about 244  
 26 keV, where the resonance in the  ${}^6\text{Li}(n,t){}^4\text{He}$  cross section leads to a  
 27 considerable ELDO dose overestimation [1]. The dosimeter was  
 28 calibrated at the PTB (Braunschweig, Germany) for mono-energetic  
 29 neutron energies in the range of 138 keV and 14.8 MeV. The neutrons  
 30 were produced in various nuclear reactions with tritium deuterium and  
 31  ${}^7\text{Li}$  targets using  ${}^3\text{H}(p,n){}^3\text{He}$ ,  ${}^3\text{H}(d,n){}^4\text{He}$ ,  ${}^2\text{H}(d,n){}^3\text{He}$ ,  ${}^7\text{Li}(p,n){}^7\text{Be}$   
 32 nuclear reactions and using deuterium and proton beams in the energy  
 33 range from 0.215 to 5.124 MeV. The results of this study showed  
 34 good agreement between measured and simulated detector response,  
 35 for the energies chosen in the experiment [6].

36 While the ELDO concept works well for mono-energetic neutrons  
 37 (see above), it was not yet systematically tested in multi-energetic

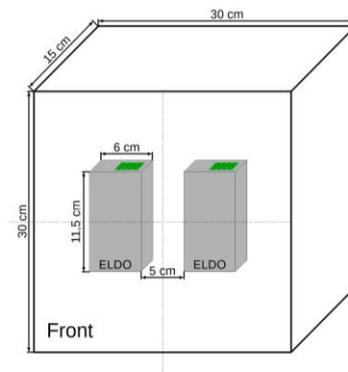
38 neutron fields including neutrons with energies above 7 MeV where  
 39 the delta sensor is ignored. Such neutron fields with energies from  
 40 meV to several 100 MeV are provided by CERF.

### 41 2.3. Extended Range Bonner Sphere Spectrometer (ERBSS)

42 The neutron energy spectrum was measured with the HMGU ERBSS  
 43 based on Bonner sphere neutron spectrometer [11]. This spectrometer  
 44 consists of 15 polyethylene (PE) spheres (diameters: from 2.5” to 15”)  
 45 including spherical  ${}^3\text{He}$  proportional counters (SP9 Centronic Ltd).  
 46 Two 9” PE spheres include an additional Pb shell (0.5” and 1”)  
 47 to enhance the response to high energy neutrons, by (n, xn)-reactions  
 48 [12]. Additionally, one SP9 detector without PE moderator (“bare  
 49 detector”) is used to measure thermal neutrons. Neutron spectrum  
 50 unfolding was done with the MSANDB unfolding code [13], and  
 51 GEANT4[14] (version 10.2.p02) was used to simulate the initial guess  
 52 spectrum required for the unfolding. The response matrix of the  
 53 ERBSS was calculated with MCNPX, MCNP and LAHET [15], [16].  
 54 Spectrometry measurements with ERBSS were performed in order to  
 55 validate the simulated neutron spectra provided by CERF, and to  
 56 provide experimental neutron spectra at CS positions where no  
 57 simulated CERF spectra were available.

### 58 2.4. Measurement Setup

59 Two ELDO dosimeters were mounted on a PMMA phantom (30 x 30  
 60 x 15 cm<sup>3</sup>) (Fig. 5). This phantom was installed at a distance of 25 cm  
 61 above the iron roof and concrete roof shielding, respectively, and at a  
 62 distance of 25 cm to the concrete side wall, the front side of the  
 63 phantom and the dosimeters facing towards the roof or wall. The  
 64 Bonner spheres were installed at a distance of 25 cm between the



**Fig. 5.** Sketch of the dosimeters on the PMMA phantom

65 center of the spheres and the roof or wall.

### 66 2.5. CERF reference values

67 CERF provides reference neutron energy spectra published in 1997  
 68 [17], calculated with the Monte Carlo code FLUKA (improved version  
 69 of FLUKA92 [18]) [19]. These spectra were calculated for each of the  
 70 16 positions on the reference grid, at a distance of 25 cm from the roof.  
 71 (Note that no reference spectra were available for the concrete side  
 72 wall). The corresponding reference doses were then obtained by  
 73 folding the calculated neutron energy spectra with the fluence to  
 74 personal dose equivalent conversion coefficients of ICRP 74 [10] (up  
 75 to 19 MeV) extended above 19 MeV with conversion coefficients from  
 76 Olsher et al. [20].

### 1 3. Results

#### 2 3.1. Neutron Doses

3 Table 2 shows neutron personal dose equivalent  $H_p(10)$  values  
4 measured with the electronic neutron dosimeter (ELDO), and  
5 corresponding  $H_p(10)$  values obtained by folding the neutron energy  
6 spectra measured with the Extended Range Bonner Sphere  
7 Spectrometer (ERBSS) with the  $H_p(10)$  fluence-to-dose conversion  
8 function, and folding the FLUKA reference neutron energy spectra  
9 provided by CERF with this function (see Fig. 6).

10  
11 **Table 2:**  $H_p(10)$  doses measured with the electronic dosimeter  
12 (ELDO; mean of two instruments per position) (column 2), and  
13 corresponding calculated values based on ERBSS measured neutron  
14 spectra (column 3), and the FLUKA reference neutron spectra  
15 provided by CERF (column 4); IT = iron top, CT = concrete top and  
16 CS = concrete side. PIC = count from precision ionization chamber  
17

Position	ELDO [pSv/PIC]	ERBSS [pSv/PIC]	CERF [pSv/PIC]
CT04	300	226	198
CT06	310	340	281
CS02	333	466	-
CS04	278	405	-
IT04	884	1835	1234
IT06	817	2215	1630

18  
19 Table 3 shows the  $H_p(10)$  values obtained by folding the neutron  
20 energy spectra measured with the ERBSS and with the FLUKA  
21 neutron energy spectra provided by CERF with the ELDO response  
22 functions (from Fig. 4). For comparison the  $H_p(10)$  values measured  
23 with ELDO (two instruments per position) are also shown. These gave  
24 consistent results.  
25

26 **Table 3** Neutron personal dose equivalent  $H_p(10)$  obtained by  
27 folding the neutron energy spectra measured with the Extended  
28 Range Bonner Sphere Spectrometer (ERBSS) and with the FLUKA  
29 reference neutron energy spectra provided by CERF with the ELDO  
30 response functions (Fig. 4) (column 2 and 3, respectively). Column 4  
31 and 5:  $H_p(10)$  values measured with two ELDO instruments per  
32 position; IT = iron top, CT = concrete top and CS = concrete side.  
33 PIC = count from precision ionization chamber. Note that for  
34 folding, only response functions of Albedo and Fast sensors were  
35 used.  
36

Position	ELDO res. *ERBSS- Spectra [pSv/PIC]	ELDO res. *FLUKA- Spectra [pSv/PIC]	ELDO-no: [pSv/PIC]	ELDO-no: [pSv/PIC]
CT04	168	162	#106: 305	#110: 295
CT06	263	225	#108: 309	#114: 311
CS02	338	n/a	#106: 334	#110: 333
CS04	279	n/a	#108: 256	#114: 299
IT04	336	278	#106: 726	#110: 1042
IT06	546	412	#108: 817	#114: n/a

#### 37 3.2. Neutron Energy Spectra

38 The neutron energy spectra calculated with FLUKA for the  
39 measurement positions (reference spectra from [21]) are shown in Fig.  
40 6, together with those measured with the ERBSS. In the figure, the  
41 neutron fluences are normalized to the corresponding particle current  
42 measured during the experiment with a Precision Ionization Chamber

43 (PIC). Note that one PIC count corresponds, within 10%, to about  
44 22,000 incoming particles [3].

45 During the measurements behind the concrete side wall only six of the  
46 18 measurement channels of the ERBSS could be used (3", 6", 9", 12"  
47 and the two 9" with lead spheres), due to technical reasons.  
48 Consequently, the resulting neutron energy spectra are less precise,  
49 especially at thermal energies, because the bare detector was missing,  
50 which is most sensitive to thermal neutrons.

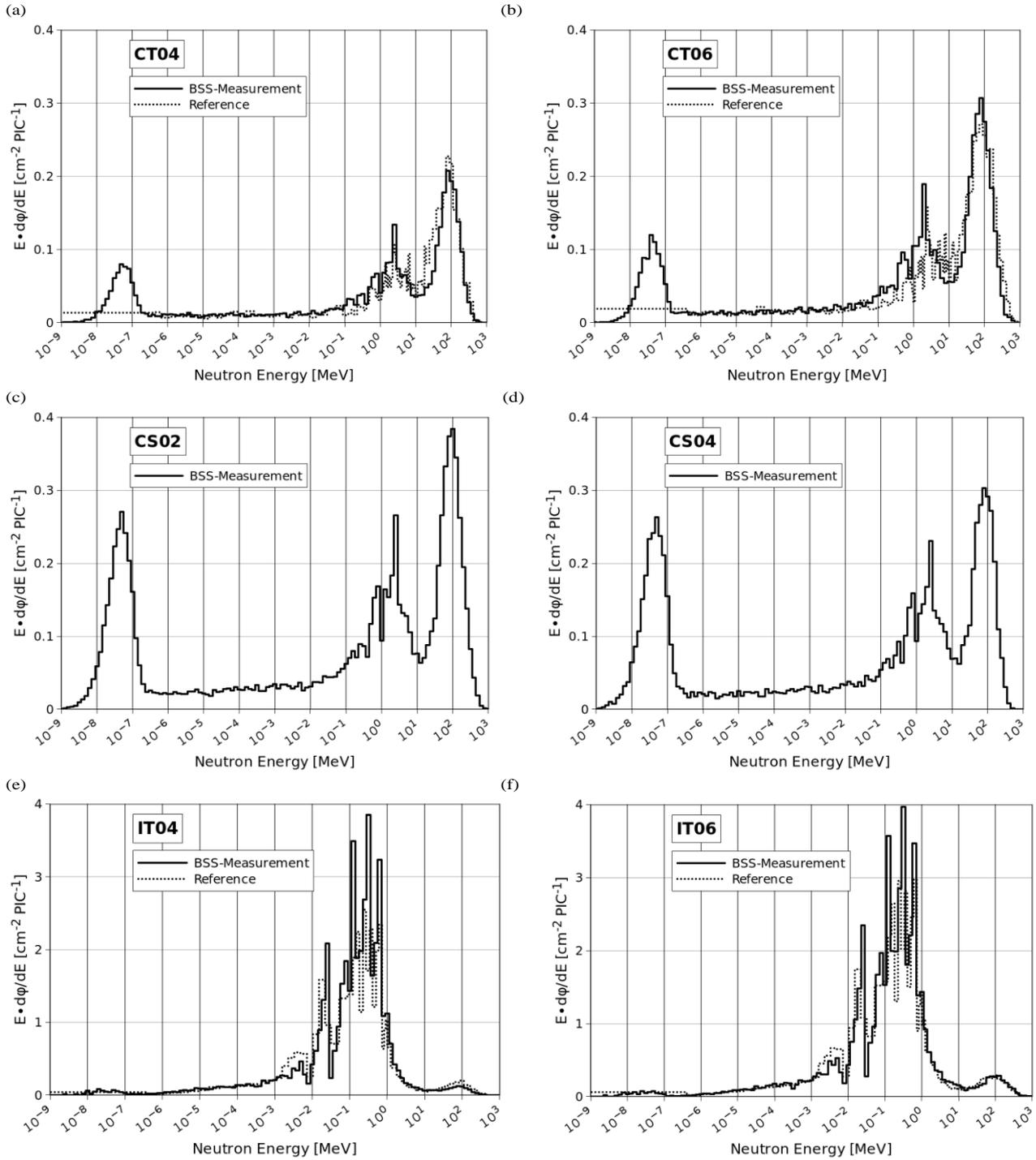
### 51 4. Discussion and Conclusion

52 For the concrete roof (CT), the folded  $H_p(10)$  dose values obtained  
53 with the ERBSS and with the CERF reference neutron spectra are in  
54 very good agreement (Table 2, columns 3 and 4: better than 20%).  
55 This is not surprising given the fact that the corresponding neutron  
56 spectra shown in Fig. 6 are very close. In contrast, the CERF reference  
57 results for the iron roof (IT) are about 30% less than those measured  
58 with ERBSS, because the total fluence (which is dominated by  
59 neutrons in the energy range 10 keV – 20 MeV) in the CERF reference  
60 spectra are about 30% less than those measured with ERBSS (see also  
61 Fig. 6). Note that the CERF reference values were calculated in 1992,  
62 with an early version of the FLUKA code and a rather simplified  
63 description of the geometry of the experiment, and will be recalculated  
64 [22].

65 Furthermore, the  $H_p(10)$  values measured with ELDO and those  
66 obtained from the ERBSS neutron spectra show notable differences  
67 (Table 2, columns 2 and 3). Interestingly, there is a much better  
68 agreement for values obtained on top of the concrete roof (CT), i.e.,  
69 the ERBSS values agree within about 20% compared to the ELDO  
70 values. The fact that the ELDO values for CT04 and CT06 are rather  
71 similar (Table 2, column 2), although the corresponding values  
72 measured by the ERBSS are different (Table 2, column 3) is not yet  
73 fully understood. The same holds for IT04 and IT06. The agreement is  
74 slightly worse for the side wall (CS) where the ELDO values are about  
75 30% less than the ERBSS values, which might be due to the fact that  
76 only a limited number of Bonner spheres could be used for the neutron  
77 spectra measurement at these positions.

78 On the other hand, rather large differences were observed on top of the  
79 iron roof (IT), where the ELDO gave a much lower value than the  
80 ERBSS (by up to 70%). This is due to the fact that the sensitivity of  
81 the Delta sensor was automatically reduced via software control, due  
82 to the presence of high-energy neutrons. Because the major  
83 contribution to neutron fluence on the iron roof was from energies  
84 between 10 keV and several MeV where the response of the Delta  
85 sensor is important, a major contribution to neutron dose from this  
86 energy range was missed. A similar effect did occur with the spectra  
87 measured on concrete top and wall (CT, CS), but in these cases the  
88 dose contribution from neutrons in this energy range (10 keV – several  
89 MeV) to total neutron dose was relatively small, due to dose  
90 contributions from neutrons with other energies measured with the  
91 Fast and Albedo sensors.

92 Table 3 demonstrates that the results obtained with two prototypes at  
93 the same time and position are consistent within  $\pm 20\%$  or better than  
94 the average (Table 3, columns 4, 5). The fact that the measured ELDO  
95 doses are sometimes higher than the doses obtained by folding ERBSS  
96 or CERF spectra with the sensor responses shown in Fig. 4 (with the  
97 Delta sensor being ignored) might be at least in part due to the fact that  
98 the actual threshold of the fast sensor was not exactly at the position as  
99 assumed in Fig. 4. Note that the influence of the threshold of the Fast  
100 sensor is most pronounced at IT04 and IT06, due to the shape of the  
101 spectra (Fig. 6).  
102



**Fig. 6.** Neutron energy spectra measured with the Extended Range Bonner Spheres Spectrometer (“BSS-Measurement”) and simulated with FLUKA (“Reference”), at position CT04 (a) and CT06 (b) on the concrete roof, at position CS02 (c) and CS04 (d) close to the concrete side wall, and at position IT04 (e) and IT06 (f) on the iron roof. Note that there were no FLUKA reference spectra available for CS02 and CS04. FLUKA reference spectra are from [20]. Note also: FLUKA spectra not in log-equi-distance energy-bin structure.

1 We conclude that the ELDO dosimeter provides reliable doses in  
 2 mono-energetic neutrons fields [6], and in continuous neutron fields  
 3 excluding neutrons with energies above about 7 MeV. In this paper we  
 4 have shown that for continuous neutrons spectra including those  
 5 neutrons, as those at CERF behind concrete shielding (CT, CS) or  
 6 secondary neutrons from cosmic rays (see Fig. 2), the dosimeter results  
 7 are satisfactory for radiation protection purposes. However, in neutron  
 8 fields including neutrons above about 7 MeV where the major neutron  
 9 dose contribution is from neutrons between 10 keV and several MeV  
 10 (like those at IT) the doses provided by ELDO might be too small.  
 11 Further investigations are needed (for example to investigate the  
 12 influence of angular dependence of dosimeter response on the overall  
 13 result in this particular field and for this particular geometry) to obtain  
 14 more reliable neutron doses in radiation fields that include high-energy  
 15 neutrons.

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