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Weak Interactions with Neutral Atom Traps: new observables using beta-decay daughter momenta¹

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We use modern atomic physics techniques to trap localized samples of atoms with polarization known to high accuracy. The low-energy daughter nuclei escape the trap, and their detection permits a variety of new observables. We have placed the best general limits on first generation scalar interactions by measuring the β - ν correlation in $^{38\text{m}}\text{K}$ decay [Gorelov, PRL 94 (2005) 142501], and we have also made a 3% measurement of the ν spin asymmetry in ^{37}K decay [Melconian DNP 2005]. We plan upgrades of both. Here we concentrate on measurements of the daughter nucleus momentum by time-of-flight with respect to the atomic shakeoff electrons, a technique demonstrated by LBL researchers [Scielzo, Nucl.Phys.A 746 (2004) 677c]. The spin asymmetry of daughter nuclei in singles in a pure Gamow-Teller decay vanishes in the standard model [Treiman, Phys. Rev. 110 (1958) 448], so it is a very sensitive probe for new interactions. We have measured the daughter spin asymmetry in ^{80}Rb decay, achieving statistical accuracy that would complement the best existing limits on tensor interactions in beta decay. The same observable in ^{37}K decay would be sensitive to right-handed currents with statistics competitive with μ decay experiments. We also plan a search for the admixture of keV-mass ν 's with the electron ν in the electron capture decay of ^{131}Cs . Our goal is sensitivity to $<10^{-5}$ admixtures at mass <30 keV. Such a ν would be a warm dark matter candidate and would have other astrophysics implications.

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