

Production and validation of industrially produced large-sized GEM foils for the Phase-2 upgrade of the CMS muon spectrometer

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Abstract

The upgrade of the CMS detector for the high luminosity LHC (HL-LHC) will include gas electron multiplier (GEM) detectors in the end-cap muon spectrometer. Due to the limited supply of large area GEM detectors, the Korean CMS (KCMS) collaboration had formed a consortium with Mecaro Co., Ltd. to serve as a supplier of GEM foils with area of approximately 0.6 m². The consortium

has developed a double-mask etching technique for production of these large-sized GEM foils. This article describes the production, quality control, and quality assessment (QA/QC) procedures and the mass production status for the GEM foils. Validation procedures indicate that the structure of the Korean foils are in the designed range. Detectors employing the Korean foils satisfy the requirements of the HL-LHC in terms of the effective gain, response uniformity, rate capability, discharge probability, and hardness against discharges. No aging phenomena were observed with a charge collection of 82 mC cm^{-2} . Mass production of KCMS GEM foils is currently in progress.

Keywords: GEM, Double-mask, CMS, High luminosity LHC

1. Introduction

Since the concept of a gas electron multiplier (GEM) was introduced [1], the technology has garnered considerable attention from the experimental particle and nuclear physics communities. Owing to its substantially high flux capability, significant hardness to radiation, and high position resolution, GEM technology has been widely applied and adopted for next generation tracking devices in several experiments, including the CMS experiment.

To take advantage of the increased luminosity of the HL-LHC compared to that of the LHC [2], upgrades of the CMS experiment are planned to enhance performance under HL-LHC operating conditions. The upgrades include three stations of GEM detectors for the endcap muon system [3, 4]. These stations, in order of their distance from the interaction point, are called ME0, GE1/1, and GE2/1. The installation of the GE1/1 stations is complete and commissioning is ongoing. Production and assembly of GE2/1 detectors has just begun and will be followed by production for ME0. The GE2/1 (ME0) stations are scheduled to be installed during the LHC year end technical stops 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 (LHC long shutdown 3, 2026-2028) [5, 6].

The GE1/1 station is comprised of two types of detector modules, long and short, to accommodate existing support structures while maximizing acceptance. A short-type module was used for the study presented here. To cover a large area with uniform detector properties, the GE2/1 detectors are comprised of eight modules, labeled M1 to M8. An M2-type module is being used for the aging study described at the end of Subsection 3.3.

The Korean CMS group (KCMS) is designated as a second supplier of large-sized GEM foils for the CMS upgrades. For a long time, the CERN micro pattern technologies (MPT) workshop was the sole supplier of large-sized GEM foils. This motivated the CMS experiment to find a second supplier of large-sized GEM foils in the industrial sector. For this purpose, the KCMS had formed a consortium with MECARO Co., Ltd., a Korean company producing components and materials for semiconductor production [7]. The objective of the consortium was to contribute to the CMS upgrade, as well as other experiments, by supplying large-sized GEM foils. Korean GEM foils will be produced for and deployed in the GE2/1 and ME0 detectors.

2. GEM foil production

GEM foils are made from flexible copper-clad laminate (FCCL) consisting of 50 μm thick polyimide (PI) coated on both sides with 3–5 μm thick Cu. The foils are perforated by symmetric bi-conical holes with diameter $70 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$ (Cu) and $55 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$ (PI). The holes are separated with a pitch of 140 μm .

The consortium is the world's first and sole producer of large-sized GEM foils using a double-mask technique. This technique, employing semi-automated machinery, is significantly simpler and faster than the previously used single-mask technique [8].

With the double-mask technique, the alignment of the top and bottom masks is crucial in producing GEM foils with the proper geometry. The allowable misalignment is under 7 μm . Fig. 1 presents the large-sized bipolar ultraviolet (UV) exposure machine that aligns the masks through which UV light is irradiated onto dry film photoresist (DFR) laminated on both sides of the FCCL. The misalignment was verified to be approximately 5 μm .

The machine's size becomes the limiting factor for the size of producible GEM foil. The maximum area exposed to UV radiation and available area for pattern development is approximately $125 \times 58 \text{ cm}^2$. Emulsion glass masks are adopted for the alignment.

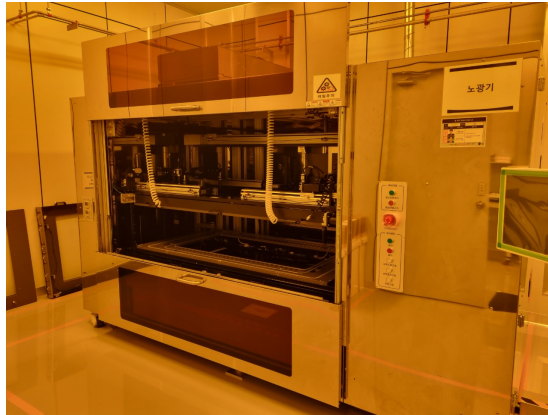


Figure 1: Large-sized bipolar UV exposure machine aligning top and bottom masks and irradiating UV through the masks.

Subsequent to pattern development on DFRs, Cu holes are generated through chemical wet etching, allowing for tunable hole diameters via adjusted etching conditions. The process involves automated conveying machinery for DFR development and Cu etching. PI holes are manually developed by immersing FCCLs in a bath filled with etchant. Cu layers laminated on the PI layer function as masks for the PI etching processes. A mixture of mono ethanolamine (MEA) and potassium hydroxide is used as the PI etchant[9]. By adjusting the composition of the PI etchant, the geometry of developed PI holes is tunable. To form the supporting areas, such as electrodes, a secondary Cu etching is

carried out. For this etching, emulsion glass masks are not necessary because the alignment of masks is not critical for the support areas. After the post processes, such as resistor soldering, the production is complete.

3. Quality validation

After fabrication, the GE1/1 short-type GEM foils were validated. Fig. 2 shows a GE1/1 foil used for the validation. The GE1/1 foils are single-segmented foils: only the Cu layer facing the drift electrode (drift side) is segmented to control the amount of energy released when a discharge occurs. The opposite layer, facing the readout electrodes (readout side), is not segmented. The validation process utilized the CMS GEM detector assembly facility and CERN's gamma irradiation facility (GIF++) [10].

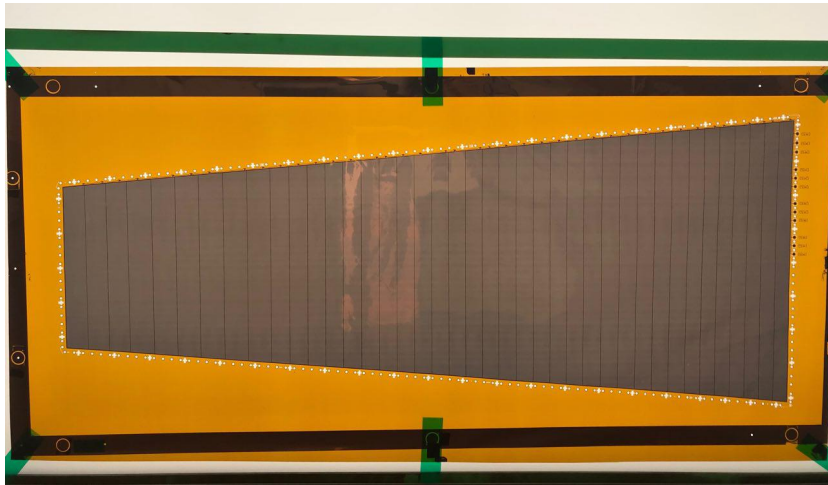


Figure 2: CMS GE1/1 short-type GEM foil fabricated by the KCMS and Mecaro consortium for quality validation. The active area has dimensions of 106.1 cm in height, 23.1 cm in short base and 42.0 cm in long base.

3.1. Optical inspection

To begin, optical inspections were conducted to assess the quality of hole development. Given that the properties of GEM foils rely heavily on geometry, it is crucial to ensure that the designed geometry is accurately realized.

Scanning electron microscope (SEM) images were taken to evaluate the quality of the hole development. Fig. 3 shows SEM images of the drift and readout sides and cross-section of a fabricated GEM foil.

The diameters of the holes were first measured with a manually controlled optical microscope that was calibrated with circular patterns of accurate diameters. For 15 positions on the GEM foil and 30 holes for each position, the diameters of 450 holes were measured. The Cu (PI) diameters were 70.7 ± 2.0

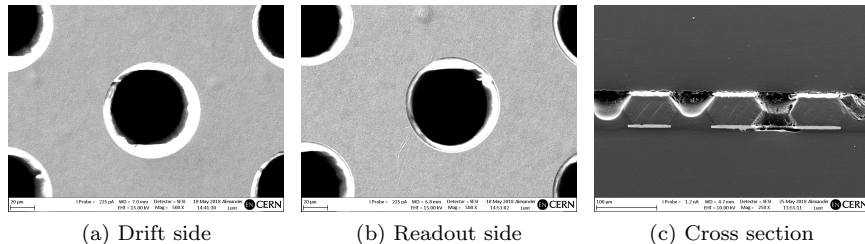


Figure 3: SEM images of a GEM foil fabricated by Mecaro. In the cross-section view (c), the material visible inside the holes is resin that was added to protect the foil during the cutting and polishing process.

$(50.7 \pm 2.0) \mu\text{m}$. No significant difference in the diameters was observed based on position.

Since hole diameter depending on position within a foil is an important factor in uniformity of detector response, an automated 2-D CCD camera scanner [11] is employed to measure the diameter of every hole in a foil. The distribution of hole diameter is shown in Fig. 4. The distribution is well described by a single Gaussian with variance of the Cu (PI) diameter of $3.08 (2.49) \mu\text{m}$. The difference in central values between the manual microscope and the scanner measurements is attributed to the scanner introducing a bias during hole recognition and diameter measurement.

However, it was observed that the diameters of PI holes varied by production batches. Review of the PI etching process pointed to the denaturing of the etchant under reaction with carbon dioxide in air, which was not considered previously. The process was modified so that the etchant is tuned before use with each PI batch. In addition, a strict quality control (QC) protocol is applied. The diameters of Cu holes are observed to be robust.

3.2. Long-term measurement of leakage current and applied voltage in dry nitrogen

After optical inspection of a foil, its leakage current was measured to assess its cleanliness. Because contaminants on the foil can provide electrical bridges between the Cu layers, the foil's impedance is a measure of its cleanliness. It is also important to identify defects in the structure of the foil that may induce sparks. In principle this could be accomplished by optical inspection. However, owing to the microscopic nature of the foil, optical inspection is impractical because it takes a long time and can even be destructive in some cases. Instead, defects can be identified during leakage current measurement by trips of the power supply due to an abrupt increase in current. Thus, measurement of leakage current and trips in applied voltage are practical tools to evaluate the cleanliness and quality of GEM foils.

Leakage current and frequency of discharges were measured with high voltage applied to the GEM foils using a QC methodology developed for the CMS GEM

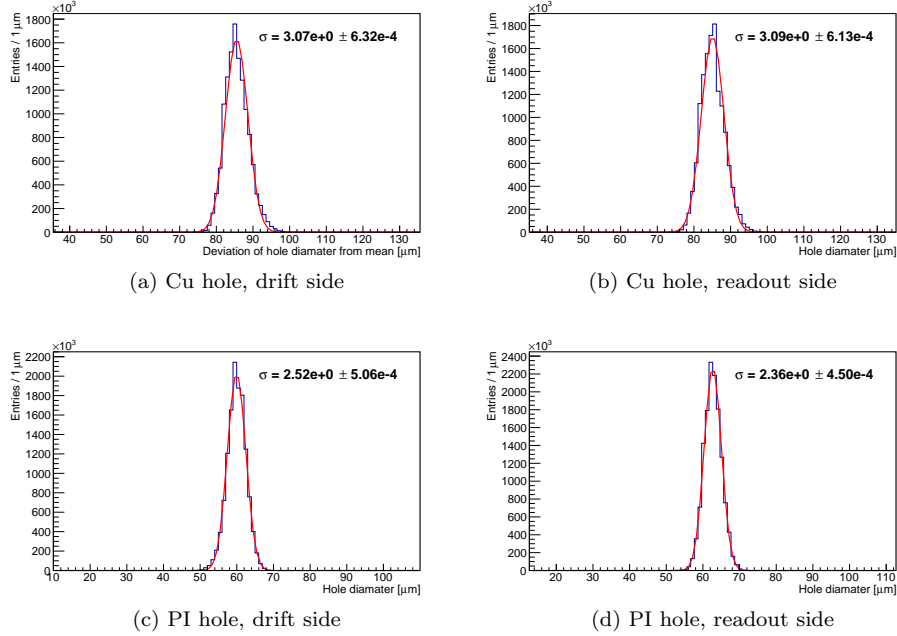


Figure 4: Distributions of hole diameters. The first (second) row presents the deviation of Cu (polyimide) hole diameters, while the first (second) column illustrates the deviation measured from the drift (readout) side of the GEM foil. [12].

upgrade [13]. The QC procedure consists of two parts, called QC-fast and QC-long. The differences between QC-fast and QC-long are the time duration and atmospheric environment.

The QC-fast is a short test and is performed in ordinary air. Preliminary assessment of a foil is obtained via the QC-fast. The QC-long lasts for at least 7h, depending on the cleanliness quality of the GEM foils. The QC-long is performed inside a plexiglass container filled with dry nitrogen to control relative humidity.

Fig. 5 presents an example of a QC-long result showing stable, low leakage current without discharge which can be identified by power supply trips. Only foils that pass the QC-long test are used in assembling detectors. If a foil shows leakage current more than 5 nA or discharges that occur too frequently, the foil is repeatedly cleaned chemically and physically.

3.3. Quality validation with CMS GE1/1 short-type detectors

Korean GEM foils that passed the QC-long test were used to assemble four CMS GE1/1 short-type detectors. The GE1/1 detectors are the triple-GEM detectors with 3/1/2/1 mm gap configuration and operate using a mixture of 70% Ar and 30% of CO₂. High voltage is supplied using an in-house designed voltage divider as described by Fig.6. The design of the GE1/1 detectors is

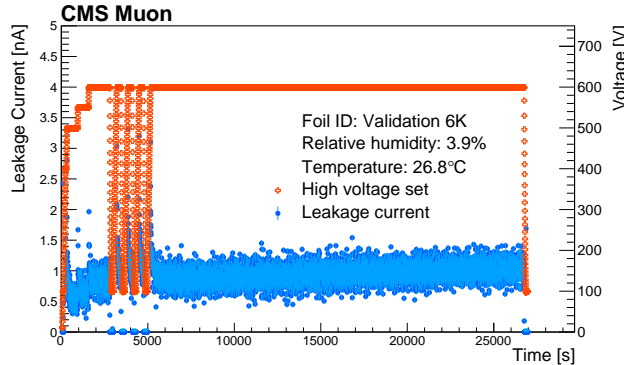


Figure 5: Conventional example of QC-long test result of GEM foil fabricated by KCMS and Mecaro. The horizontal axis represents duration of the test. Applied high voltage to the GEM foil is shown by the red markers. Blue markers denote leakage current. The rapid changes in applied voltage at the beginning of the test are intended to stress the foils.

described in detail in [3]. The properties of the detectors were measured to validate the quality of the Korean GEM foils. Upon assembly completion, integrity verification was conducted through gas tightness and high voltage circuit tests, ensuring the assembly’s soundness before proceeding to measure other detector properties, as outlined in [14].

Effective Gain: Effective gain (G) is a basic property of a GEM detector and can be used to compare detectors assembled with Mecaro foils with those assembled with CERN foils. The effective gain was calculated from the readout current (I_{RO}) and event rate (R) of detectors irradiated with x-rays from an Amptek Mini-X2 generator with an Ag transmission target. I_{RO} was measured using a Keithley 6487 picoammeter. The calculation of effective gains followed the formula $G = \frac{I_{RO}}{R \times q_{el} \times N_p}$, where q_{el} is the electron charge and N_p signifies the number of primary electrons generated through ionization due to the fluorescence of a Cu atom within the drift electrode, which has absorbed an x-ray from the generator. N_p is estimated as 346.0 ± 2.9 by comparing the response of a detector to x-rays from the generator with the response to x-rays from ^{55}Fe , as described in [14].

Measurements of effective gain versus both of high voltage divider current and the average voltage applied to GEM foils for four detectors are presented in Fig. 7. A current of $660 \mu\text{A}$ provides a reference working point that can be used to compare the effective gas gain of different detectors. For the four detectors with Mecaro foils, the effective gains were measured to be in the range 5.3×10^3 to 1.2×10^4 , consistent with the gains of detectors with CERN foils [14].

Response uniformity: It is important that the signal response from strips in all regions of the detector is uniform to ensure good trigger and track reconstruction efficiencies over the geometrical acceptance of the detector. The readout strips of the CMS GE1/1 detector are comprised of a total of 3072 strips, organized in a matrix of 8 rows in the rapidity direction and 384 columns

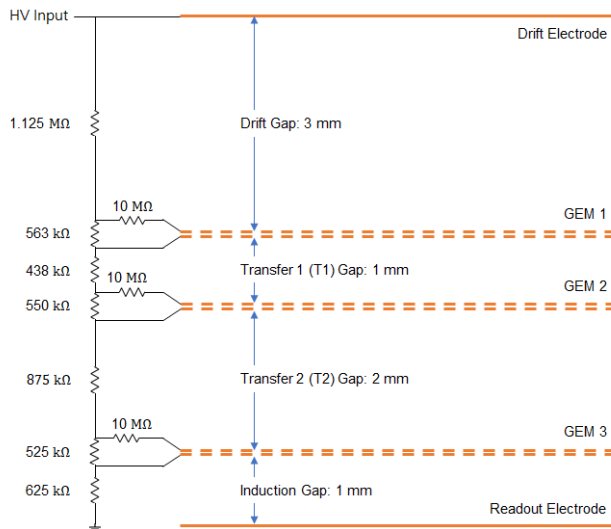


Figure 6: High voltage supply scheme of the CMS GE1/1 detectors. High voltage is distributed to drift electrodes and GEM foils with a voltage divider. Surface mounted protection resistors of $10\text{ M}\Omega$ are positioned on the drift side of GEM foils, serving as the path for applying high voltage to the active regions of the GEM foils.

in ϕ direction. To measure response uniformity, as elaborated in detail in [14], adjacent sets of four readout strips in the ϕ columns are grouped together, segmenting the detector into a total of 768 virtual sectors. For each sector, the spectrum of charge was obtained while the detectors were exposed to x-rays. The detector strips were read out by APV25 front-end ASICs [15] and ADCs. The ADC spectrum for each sector was fit with a Cauchy distribution function and a fifth order polynomial to determine the ADC value of the Cu fluorescence peak.

Fig. 8 illustrates the two-dimensional distributions of this peak ADC value obtained from the four readout strips fit. Since the GE1/1 detector lacks internal pillars fixing the drift board and readout board, it exhibits a tendency for the center of the detector to warp. Consequently, the center of detector shows lower gains, while the edges display higher gains. This tendency, due to mechanical characteristic of the GE1/1 detector structure, is similarly observed in GE1/1 detectors assembled with CERN foils [16]. Fig. 9 presents a one-dimensional representation of the peak ADC distribution from Fig. 8. The distributions were fit again with a Gaussian function to obtain mean (μ) and variance (σ). Response uniformity, σ/μ , of the four detectors are in the range 10.2% to 16.2%, consistent with the uniformities of detectors with CERN foils [14].

Rate capability: To estimate the rate capability of GEM detectors with Mecaro foils, the effective gas gain of the detector was measured as a function of x-ray flux. The gain was measured as discussed previously. X-ray flux was tuned by varying the current of the x-ray tube and the number of Cu attenuators. To

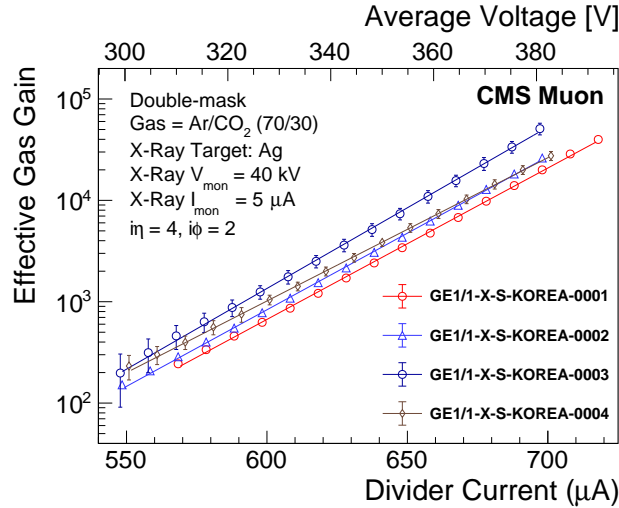


Figure 7: Effective gain versus both of HV divider current and the average voltage applied to GEM foils for four CMS GE1/1 short-type detectors assembled with Mecaro foils.

control the area of x-ray exposure, a brass collimator with a 2 mm diameter aperture was used. Fast preamplifier electronics were utilized to avoid pileup of the signals. No pileup was observed up to a signal rate of 5×10^5 Hz as determined by the linearity of signal rate versus x-ray tube current. Above that value, the signal rate was estimated via extrapolation based on the linear relationship between the x-ray flux and x-ray tube current, and the effect of the Cu attenuators.

The normalized gas gain versus x-ray flux for a CMS GE1/1 short-type detector assembled with Mecaro foils is shown in Fig. 10. The gain is stable for x-ray fluxes up to 1×10^5 Hz mm⁻². Beyond that flux, no characteristic change is observed in the gain behavior of the GEM detector, which typically follows a pattern of increase and subsequent decrease due to variations in extraction efficiency and gas gain prompted by space charge; instead, the gain decreases [17]. This phenomenon is attributed to a voltage drop originating from the protection resistors positioned as shown in Figure. 6. When the detectors are exposed to very high x-ray flux, the current flowing through the GEM foils becomes significant, thereby inducing voltage drops across the resistors and reducing the voltage applied to the GEM foils. To verify this behavior, detectors with 10×10 cm² GEM foils, fabricated in the same way as larger-sized GE1/1 foils, were equipped with small protection resistors. The flux capability measurement showed the characteristic change in normalized gain at high fluxes. The GE1/1 detector with Mecaro foils has comparable flux capability as those fabricated with CERN foils.

Because particle flux varies rapidly with angle from the collision axis, the foils of the ME0 detectors will be radially segmented to equalize the gain drops

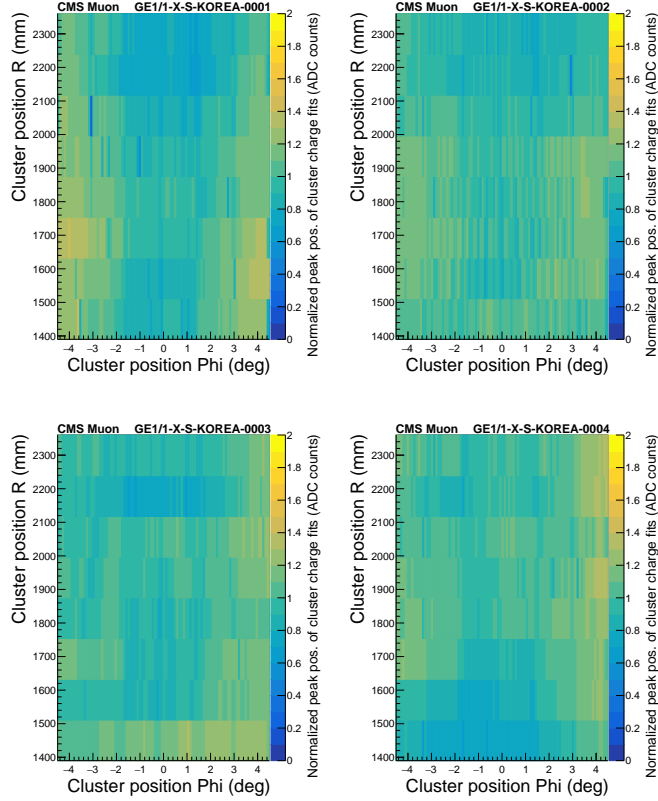


Figure 8: Gain variation across a GE1/1 chamber with Mecaro foils normalized to the chamber average. Note that the coordinates are plotted in angular distance from the centerline of the chamber and radial distance from the beamline in the CMS experiment.

in the high voltage sectors [18].

Discharge probability and robustness after discharge: Because discharges may damage the GEM foil or readout electronics, the discharge probability should be minimized. Since imperfections in the structure of holes in the GEM foil might induce discharges, it is important to verify that a detector with Korean foils exhibits a discharge probability as low as those of detectors with CERN foils.

Discharges were induced by 5.5 MeV α -particles from ^{241}Am that entered the detector through 5 mm diameter holes drilled into the drift plate. The holes were covered by plastic to prevent gas from leaking. Discharges were detected by the current pulse induced in a wire loop surrounding the high voltage line. To increase the frequency of discharges, the gain was set above the value used in normal operation. The discharge probability at normal gain was estimated by extrapolation.

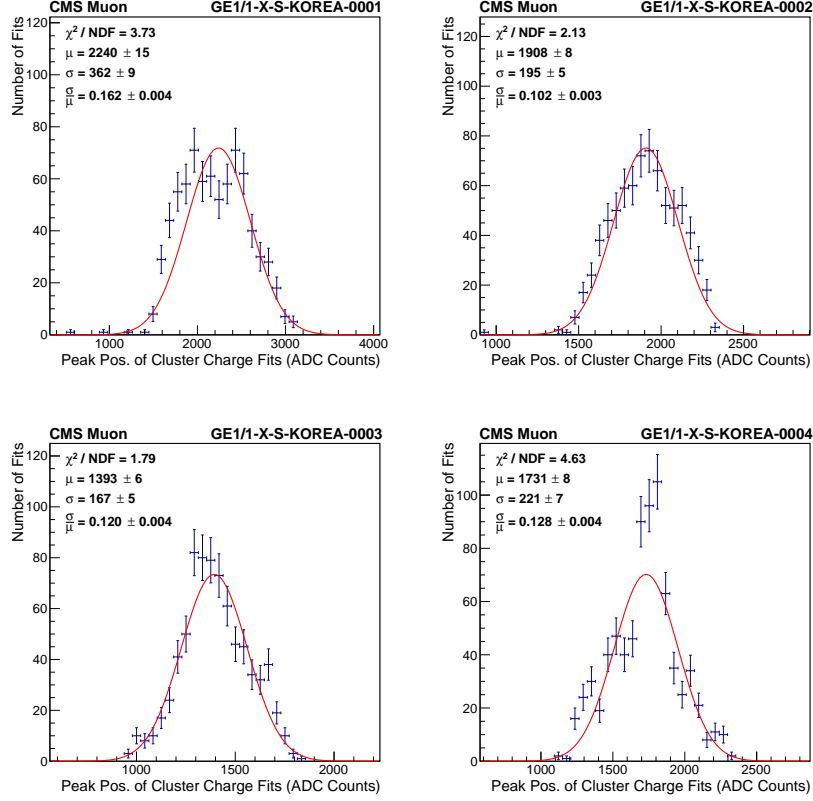


Figure 9: Peak ADC distributions of CMS GE1/1 short-type detectors with Mecaro foils. σ/μ represents the response uniformity of a detector. The response uniformities of the four detectors lie in the range 10.2% to 16.2%, consistent with the uniformities of detectors with CERN foils.

Fig. 11 presents the measured discharge probability per incident alpha particle, $\frac{N_{discharge}}{N_{\alpha}}$, as a function of effective gas gain for a GE1/1 short-type detector with Mecaro foils. N_{α} was measured by the number of current pulses from the GEM readout strips. The uncertainties shown by vertical bars are calculated by the Feldman-Cousins approach [19]. The data were fit with an exponential function using Poisson maximum likelihood. At the reference gain of 1×10^4 , the discharge probability is $2.6_{-0.8}^{+1.1} \times 10^{-9}$, consistent with that of detectors with CERN foils [3].

To assess the robustness of the GEM foils to discharges, effective gas gain and energy resolution were compared before and after operation with discharges. There were 229 discharges, most of which occurred at the highest gains. The measurement method for effective gas gain was discussed previously with examples shown in Fig. 7. Measurements of gain versus HV divider current for the

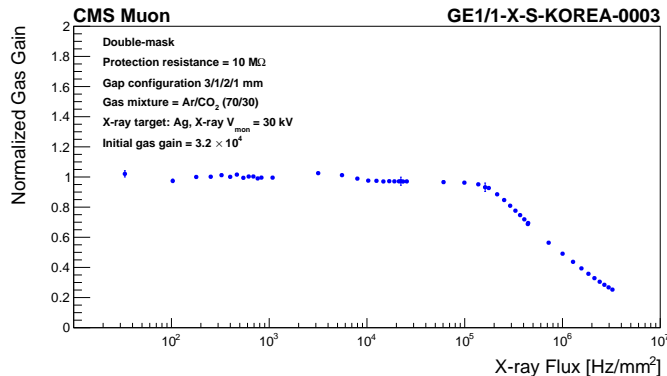


Figure 10: Normalized gas gain versus x-ray flux for a CMS GE1/1 short-type detector assembled with Mecaro foils. The gain remains stable for x-ray fluxes up to $1 \times 10^5 \text{ Hz mm}^{-2}$.

same detector before and after operation with discharges are shown in Fig. 12. There is no degradation in gain.

The energy resolution was determined using the 5.9 keV X-ray produced with a ^{55}Fe source. The energy spectra, shown in Fig. 13, were fit with two Gaussian functions and a 5th order polynomial to obtain the full width at half maximum of the main peak. The width did not increase after operation with discharges.

Before and after the discharge experiment, 9.5% gain fluctuation was observed. GEM detectors typically experience changes of around 10% in gain even under normal conditions without specific events such as discharges. This could be due to unknown effects of environmental fluctuation or the charging-up phenomenon. Nevertheless, identifying the precise source of this gain variation poses a formidable challenge. Notably, the detector’s performance did not deteriorate after the discharges.

Aging phenomena: The well-established robustness of GEM detectors against classical aging [20] is important for long-term, reliable operation in the harsh HL-LHC environment. At the time of the studies reported here, the background flux for an ME0 detector was expected to result in an accumulated charge of 283 mC cm^{-2} over ten years of operation. The current estimate of the accumulated charge is about thirty times as large and the ME0 HV sectorization has been modified to increase rate capability [18].

To evaluate the effects of aging, properties of detectors with Korean foils were monitored during exposure to high-flux radiation. The first GE1/1 detector assembled with Korean foils was installed in GIF++ in January, 2018. The initial gain was adjusted to be 2×10^4 and the detector was exposed to 662 keV γ -rays emitted from a 14.1 TBq ^{137}Cs source whose radioactivity was calibrated in 2015. During exposure, I_{RO} was measured to calculate the normalized gas gain and the collected charge. Gain fluctuation from environmental variation was suppressed as described in [21].

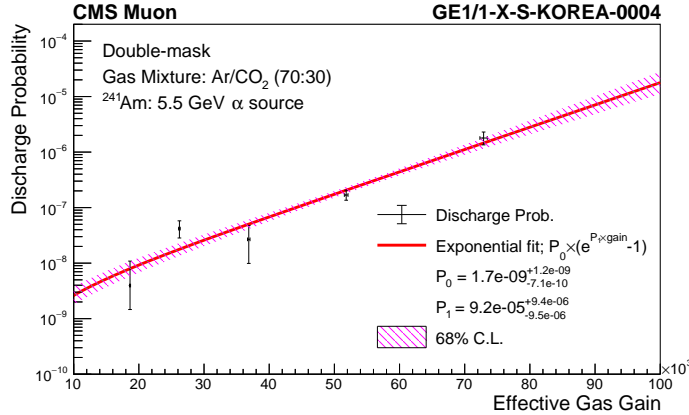


Figure 11: Discharge probability per incident alpha particle and its 68% confidence interval as a function of effective gas gain for of a GE1/1 short-type detector assembled with Mecaro foils. The discharges were induced by 5.5 MeV α -particles from ^{241}Am .

Fig. 14 presents the normalized gas gain as a function of charge collected by readout. No degradation of detector performance was observed up to a collected charge of 82 mC cm^{-2} that corresponds to the value expected for GE2/1 detectors after operation for 273 years under HL-LHC conditions.

Because of the much larger accumulated charge expected for ME0 compared to GE1/1 and GE2/1, new measurements are in progress to study aging behavior with much larger fluxes than obtained in 2018. The current measurements utilize an x-ray generator with a Ag transmission target as the radiation source instead of the ^{137}Cs source. Because the interaction cross section of the lower energy x-ray is significantly higher than that of the γ -ray from ^{137}Cs , a faster charge collection rate is achievable even though the intensity of the x-ray generator is lower than that of the ^{137}Cs source [21]. The detector under test is a GE2/1 M2 detector, which is equipped with double-segmented foils. The foil is divided into several sectors, encompassing an area of approximately 10 cm^2 , and each sector is electrically isolated through resistive coupling on both the top and bottom sides of the GEM foil. This configuration effectively inhibits the propagation of discharges from one foil to the adjacent foil [22]. In contrast, the GE1/1 detectors use single-segmented foils as described at the beginning of Section 3.

4. Mass production results and plan

The successful completion of QC and QA of GEM foils provided by the new vendor enabled the KCMS collaboration to begin mass production of these foils. From May 2021 to September 2022, KCMS produced GE2/1 foils, of which 292 foils passed the QC criteria and are being used in the assembly of GE2/1 detectors. The 292 foils correspond to 64% of the number requested to be built

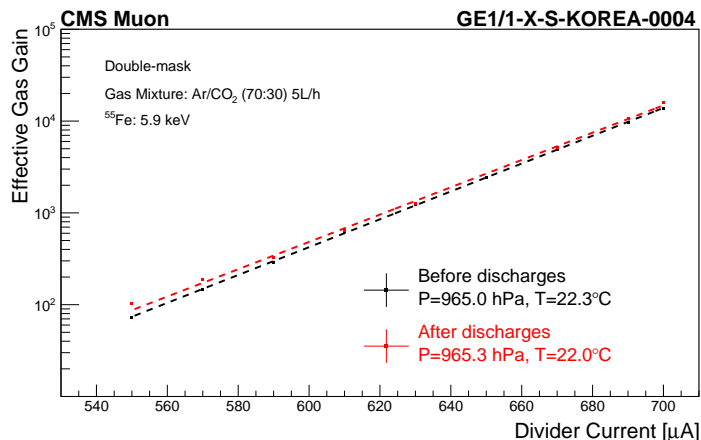


Figure 12: Gain versus HV divider current for a GE1/1 detector with Mecaro foils before and after operation with discharges.

by KCMS. Unfortunately, mass production was suspended because the KCMS-Mecaro consortium ended. The production facility is being relocated with completion expected by mid-2023, after which KCMS will start mass production of ME0 foils.

5. Summary

We have validated the performance of GEM foils with an area of approximately 0.6 m^2 produced by a new vendor, the KCMS and Mecaro consortium, employing the double-mask technique for the GE2/1 and ME0 detectors for the Phase-2 upgrade of CMS. After verifying that the dimension and structure of the produced foils were within the designed range, electrical evaluation of the foil's cleanliness was performed based on the QC methodology developed for the CMS upgrade. Subsequently, CMS GE1/1 short-type detectors were assembled with the foils. After the integrity of the assembly was validated, several properties of the detectors were measured. The detectors assembled with Korean foils were comparable in quality to the CERN detectors, and they satisfied the requirements of the CMS upgrade in terms of the effective gain, response uniformity, rate capability, discharge probability, and robustness to discharges. Evaluation of hardness to classical aging was studied and no degradation of the detector performance was observed up to a charge collection of 82 mC cm^{-2} . A new aging study for the ME0 requirement is in progress. The successful QC and QA results enabled the KCMS collaboration to begin mass production of GE2/1 foils. Of these foils, 292 passed the QC criteria and are being used in the assembly of GE2/1 detectors. Since the consortium between the KCMS collaboration and Mecaro has ended, equipment is being transferred to KCMS for mass production of ME0 foils.

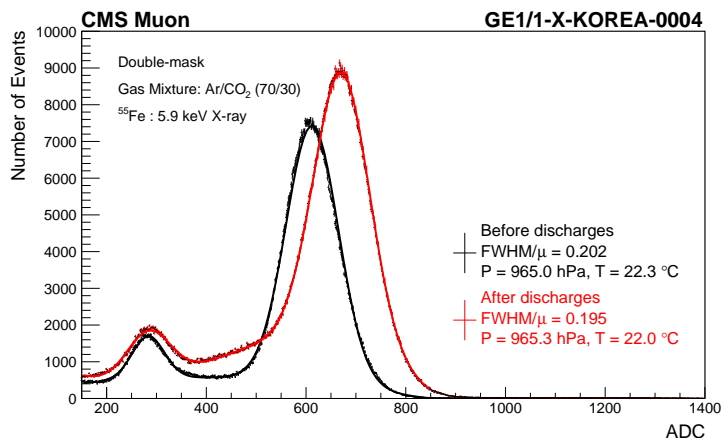


Figure 13: Energy spectra of x-rays from a ^{55}Fe source irradiating a GE1/1 detector with Mecaro foils before and after operation with discharges.

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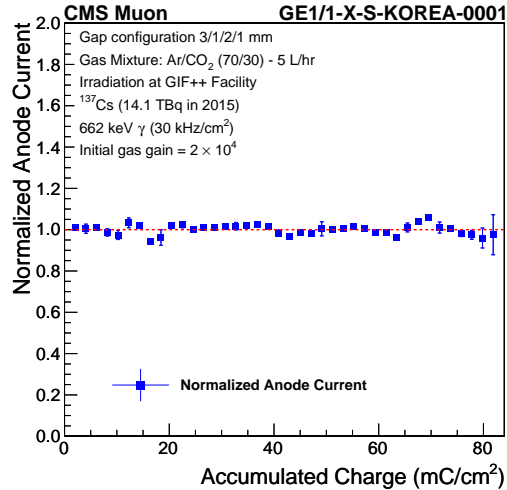


Figure 14: Normalized gas gain as a function of charge collected by readout to test for evidence of aging.

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