

Probing Nuclear Structure of the Edge of the N=20 Region of Deformation through the β -decay of Exotic Ne and Na Isotopes

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Neutron-rich nuclei in the N=20 region of deformation have played a key role in our understanding of nuclear structure. In this mass region, so-called intruder states from nucleon occupations in the pf-shell are observed to energetically compete with the expected configurations in the sd-shell. Although nuclei in this mass region can be experimentally challenging to access, β -decay can clearly populate such intruder configurations, which play a critical role in our understanding of nuclear structure by providing clear benchmarks for nuclear theory.

The current presentation will highlight the β -decay of neutron-rich Ne and Na isotopes approaching the dripline. The discussion will focus on data collected from one of the last experiments to run at the NSCL, where neutron-rich isotopes centered on ^{31}Ne were created through the fragmentation of a ^{48}Ca beam and implanted into the β Counting System. Here, β -delayed γ -ray spectroscopy data were collected. Details of the nuclear structure obtained from the implanted $^{31,30}\text{Ne}$, and $^{33,32}\text{Na}$ isotopes will be discussed, with a focus on their half-lives and β -branchings. Spin-parity assignments are made from logft and β -branching arguments for observed levels in $^{31,32,33}\text{Mg}$, and $^{30,31}\text{Na}$ following the β or β -n decay branches.

Notably, the data suggests a novel $J^\pi = 3/2^+$ assignment for the ground state of ^{31}Ne —an unnatural parity assignment, which illustrates the presence of significant odd particle-hole configurations in its ground state, rather than the primarily even particle-hole configurations that have been suggested so far. Moreover, this marks the first identification of ground states with odd-particle- odd-hole configurations from a beta-decay measurement in the N=20 region of deformation. A discussion of the confirmation of these states compared to various theoretically predicted states from modern shell-model calculations will be presented. The dominance of these odd particle-hole configurations in the ground-state configuration of ^{31}Ne is a prime example of how this mass region continues to challenge our understanding of nuclear structure.

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