

Progress Report #2:
Radio Frequency Noise Reduction in the LIGO Hanford
Observatory

Matthew O. Withers
Department of Physics and Engineering
Washington and Lee University

Mentor: Dick Gustafson
Co-Mentor: Keita Kawabe

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Introduction

In aLIGO, several critical subsystems, including the interferometer sensing and control (ISC) system and pre-stabilized laser (PSL), are dependent upon the reliable operation of a carefully designed radio frequency (RF) distribution system [1]. The RF distribution system produces and delivers a variety of RF signals, most derived from a base frequency of 9.10023 MHz [2]. These signals are used to both modulate and demodulate the interferometer’s various input and output channels, making control of the interferometer possible. Given the RF distribution system’s importance in the proper operation of aLIGO’s interferometers, noise arising from its constituent components has the potential to increase the noise present in the interferometers’ differential arm motion (DARM), the primary output used to detect gravitational waves. As such, developing a rigorous way to determine the effect of RF noise on DARM is of high value to continued efforts to fully characterize the behavior of the aLIGO detectors.

Our work at the LIGO Hanford Observatory (LHO) during the last month has focused on efforts to map the noise present in the shielding of LHO’s RF transmission lines to DARM. By combining a theoretical description of the noise coupling mechanism with a series of experiments, we have produced plots describing the effect of the shield noise of the main 9.10023 MHz line, as well as a secondary 9.10023 MHz distribution line, on DARM. These plots allow us to evaluate the impact of shield noise on the behavior of the interferometer as a whole. Furthermore, the mapping procedure we have developed is transferable to investigations of other transmission lines used within the aLIGO interferometer network, making it of use in future efforts to identify noise within the RF distribution system.

aLIGO’s RF Transmission Lines

Our efforts to map cable shield noise to DARM began with a brief background investigation of the types of RF transmission lines used at LHO. According to [3], the aLIGO detectors use HELIAX LDF4-50A cables, which are manufactured by Andrew. The specifications of these cables can be found at [4]. As a coaxial cable, LDF4-50A connects to an RF source and load as depicted in Figure 1. The RF signal V_S first passes from the source to the cable core, which

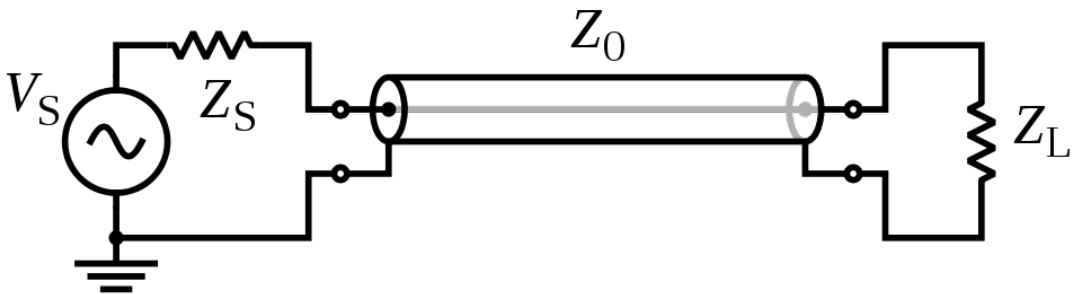


Figure 1: The typical connection configuration of a coaxial cable. V_S is the AC voltage signal provided to the cable, Z_S is the impedance of the signal source, Z_0 is the characteristic impedance of the cable, and Z_L is the impedance of the load. Notice that the AC signal travels through the core of the cable, while the shield provides a connection to ground.

delivers it to the load Z_L . After passing through the load, the signal returns to ground via the cable’s shield, a conductive layer which surrounds the core. The shield also serves as a means

of protecting the core from unwanted electromagnetic interference (EMI) [5]. Thus, there are two primary voltage within the cable at any given time: the core voltage $V_{core} \approx V_S$ and the shield voltage $V_{shield} \approx V_S + Y$, where Y is the noise signal transferred to the shield via EMI. Our investigation focuses on determining how deviations of V_{shield} from V_{core} affect the DARM output of the LHO interferometer.

Noise Coupling Method

In March, LHO scientist Dr. Dick Gustafson, performed a series of RF noise injections onto the shielding of the main 9.10023 MHz transmission line, which is located in the CER at ISC-C4-41-5. He noticed that injections of $V_{inj} = -30$ dBV at a frequency $\nu_{inj} = 9.10023$ MHz $\pm Y$ Hz, appeared in DARM at Y Hz. Figure 2 shows the DARM signal resulting from an injection of $V_{inj} = -30$ dBV at $\nu_{inj} = 9.10023$ MHz + 55 Hz, which Dr. Gustafson performed on 15/03/2019 at 20:50:40 UTC. Notice the presence of a noise line at 55 Hz in the

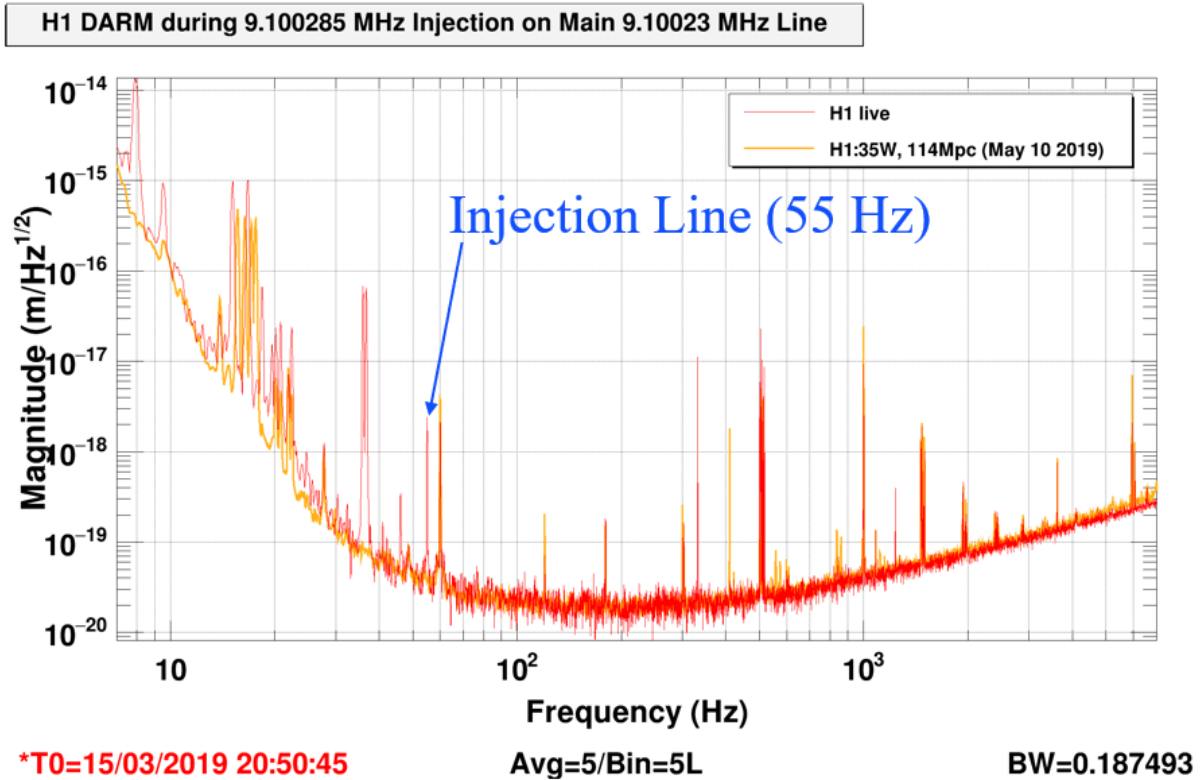


Figure 2: An amplitude spectral density plot of LHO’s DARM signal (red curve) during a $\nu_{inj} = -30$ dBV, $V_{inj} = 9.10023$ MHz + 55 Hz injection onto the main 9.10023 MHz line. Notice that a line appears in the DARM at 55 Hz. This line is not present on LHO’s reference DARM signal (yellow curve), collected on 10 May 2019, indicating that its presence is due to the injection.

H1 live trace (red curve) but not in the reference trace (yellow curve), indicating that it arose due to the injection. Because the noise line appears in DARM at a predictable location (i.e., at Y Hz when the injection is performed at 9.10023 MHz $\pm Y$ Hz), its characteristics can be used to map the noise present on the shield of the cable to DARM. Such mappings operate under the assumption that the transfer function from cable shield noise to DARM is flat. Such an

assumption is reasonable given Dr. Gustafson’s observations; however, further work is necessary to verify the transfer function’s true characteristics.

Shield Noise to DARM Mapping Methodology

There are two primary means of interacting with the shield of an RF cable: injection and probing. As Figure 3 demonstrates, an RF signal can be injected onto the shield of an RF transmission line via a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer. When such an injection occurs, a portion of

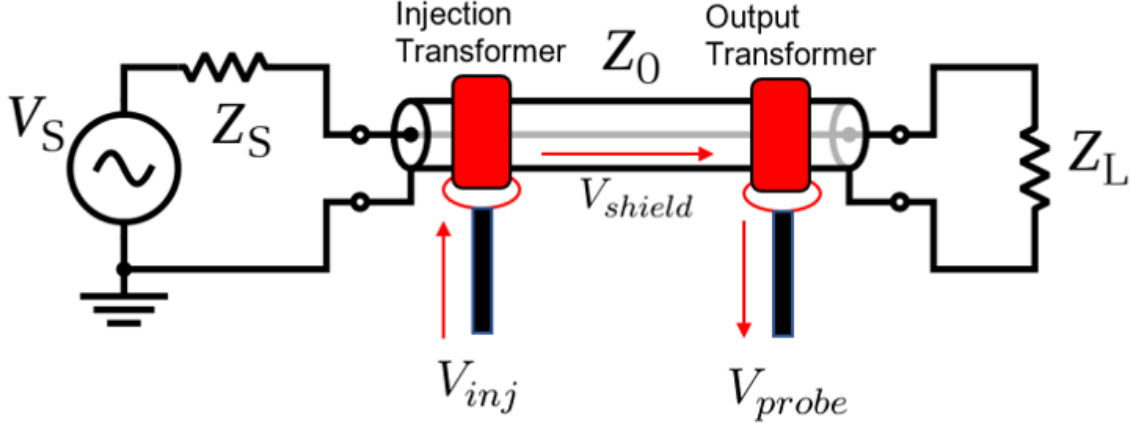


Figure 3: The typical setup for injecting signals onto the shield of an RF transmission line and probing the noise signal currently present on the line. The injection and output transformers are 1:1 ferrite-core transformers. Different configurations of these transformers allow for different measurements.

the injected signal V_{inj} passes to the cable shield as V_{shield} . For simplicity, we assumed a linear relationship between V_{shield} and V_{inj} . This produces the equation

$$V_{shield} = aV_{inj}. \quad (1)$$

Likewise, a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer can be used to probe the signal on the shield. We assumed that the probe output V_{probe} is also linearly related to V_{shield} . Thus, V_{probe} is given by

$$V_{probe} = bV_{shield}. \quad (2)$$

Using Equations 1 and 2, we found that the transfer function between V_{inj} and V_{probe} is simply

$$ab = \frac{V_{probe}}{V_{inj}}. \quad (3)$$

Next, we turned our attention to the relationship between cable noise and DARM. If the DARM response of an aLIGO interferometer is truly influenced by the noise present on the shield of an RF transmission line, the following relationship must hold:

$$\frac{ASD(D)}{ASD(V_{shield})} = \frac{D_{inj}}{V_{shield,inj}}, \quad (4)$$

where $ASD(D)$ is the amplitude spectral density of mirror displacement in the interferometer (i.e., the classic DARM output in units of $\text{m}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$), $ASD(V_{shield})$ is the amplitude spectral density of the RF noise present on the cable shield (in units of $\text{V}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$), D_{inj} is the apparent mirror displacement caused by a controlled injection onto the cable shield (in units of m), and $V_{shield,inj}$ is the noise present on the shield due to that injection (in units of V). In other words, the effect of noise present on a cable's shield due to a test injection on the apparent mirror displacement should be equivalent to the effect of the amplitude spectral density of cable shield noise on the apparent amplitude spectral density of mirror displacement (DARM). Via algebraic manipulation and careful substitution of Equations 1 and 2, Equation 4 becomes

$$ASD(D) = \frac{1}{ab} \frac{D_{inj}}{V_{inj}} ASD(V_{probe}). \quad (5)$$

This equation suggests that, to map cable shield noise to DARM, we must have three pieces of information: the transfer function ab between V_{probe} and V_{inj} for a HELIAX LDF4-50A cable, the mirror displacement D_{inj} caused by an injected RF signal V_{inj} , and the amplitude spectral density of the noise on the cable $ASD(V_{probe})$. Therefore, we continued by conducting individual experiments to obtain each of these quantities.

Experiment 1: Obtaining the Cable Transfer Function ab

To obtain the transfer function ab we began by constructing the experimental apparatus outlined in Figure 4. Using the signal generator and a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer, we injected

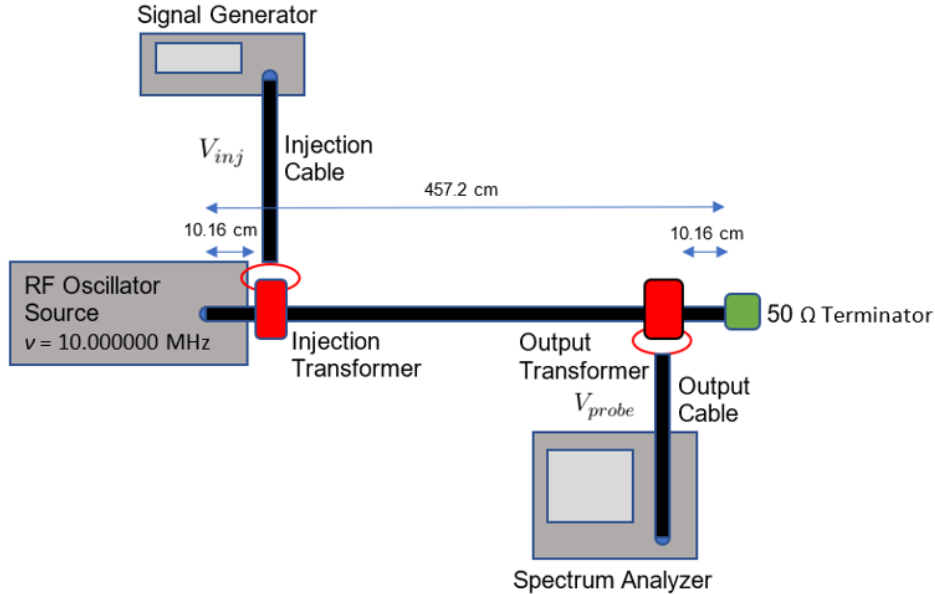


Figure 4: Our experimental setup for Experiment 1. The signal generator injects a noise signal V_{inj} onto the shield of the cable via a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer while the spectrum analyzer measures the noise level at the other end of the cable V_{probe} via another 1:1 ferrite-core transformer. Plotting V_{probe} versus V_{inj} allows me to determine the cable's transfer function ab .

a $9.10023 \text{ MHz} + 5 \text{ Hz}$ RF signal onto the cable shield at a variety of amplitudes, ranging from $V_{inj} = 0.007 \text{ V}$ to $V_{inj} = 1.259 \text{ V}$. The injection frequency was selected to be the same

frequency used during Experiment 2 (see below). Consistency between the injection frequency used here for cable characterization and the frequency in Experiment 2 for injection onto the IFO’s 9.10023 MHz cable is necessary because previous experiments have shown that the transfer function of HELIAX LDF4-50A changes according to the injection frequency. For each injected signal, we recorded the corresponding output V_{probe} at the other end of the cable by observing its amplitude on a spectrum analyzer. After plotting the V_{probe} series against the V_{inj} , we performed a least squares regression between the two series. The slope of the resulting linear equation is equivalent to the transfer function ab . Figure 5 demonstrates our results. The

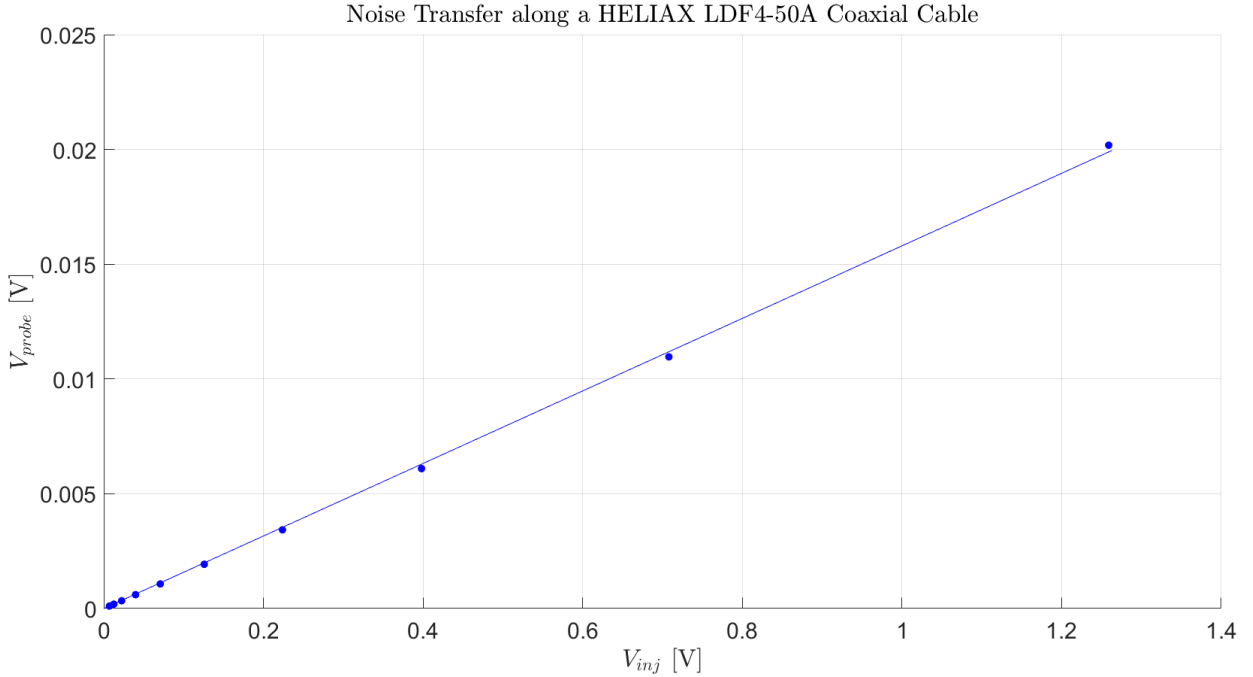


Figure 5: A plot of V_{probe} versus V_{inj} for our sample HELIAX LDF4-50A cable. The slope of the resulting curve provides the cable’s transfer function ab under an injection at 9.10023 MHz + 50 Hz.

graph suggests that $ab = 0.0158$; therefore, we used this value throughout the remainder of our analysis.

Experiment 2: Obtaining the Apparent Displacement D_{inj} Produced by an Injection V_{inj}

To obtain the displacement D_{inj} produced by an injected frequency V_{inj} , we performed a ferrite-core transformer injection onto LHO’s main 9.10023 MHz line (ISC-C4-41-5). Figure 6 details our experimental setup. Notice that we placed the injection transformer just before the transmission cable leaves the CER for the interferometer (i.e., at the outgoing patch panel). Also notice that our injection frequency, $\nu_{inj} = 9.10023 \text{ MHz} + 50 \text{ Hz}$, is offset 50 Hz from the cable’s internal (core) frequency, which should produce a noise line at 50 Hz in DARM.

Figure 7 shows the DARM output at the time of the injection (red curve) along with an observing mode reference trace (yellow curve). Notice that a noise line is present at 50 Hz on the injection trace but not the observing mode trace, indicating that its presence is most likely due to the injection. To obtain D_{inj} from this plot of $ASD(D_{inj})$ we had to calculate the area under the 50 Hz peak. Figure 8 shows the peak in more detail. The peak is formed by several

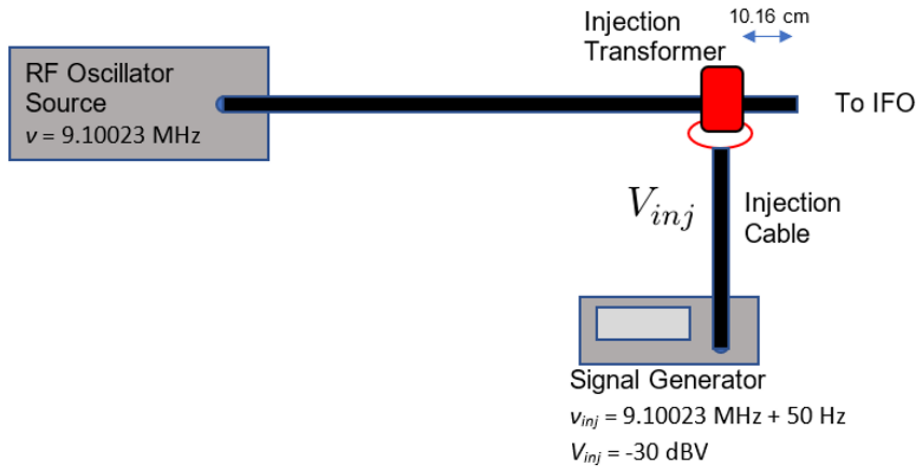


Figure 6: Our experimental setup for Experiment 2. The signal generator provides a $V_{inj} = -30 \text{ dBV}$ signal at $\nu_{inj} = 9.10023 \text{ MHz} + 50 \text{ Hz}$ to the cable shield by passing the signal through a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer.

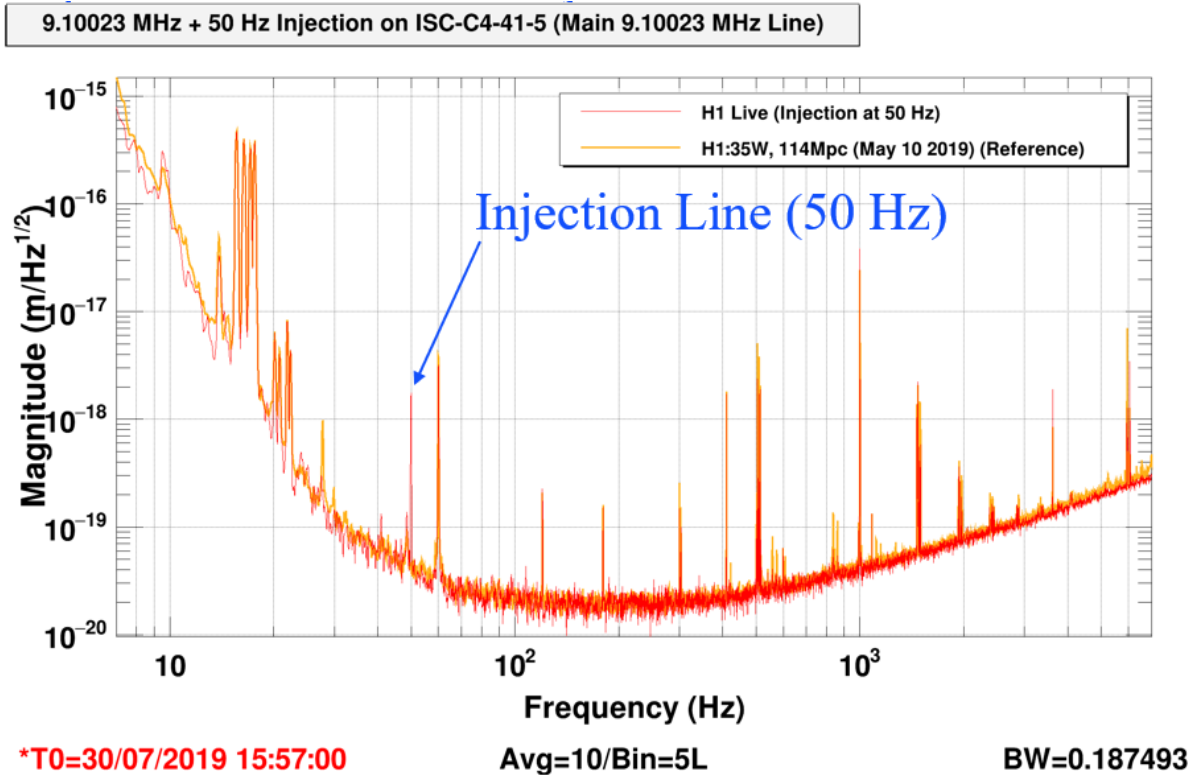


Figure 7: An amplitude spectral density plot of LHO's DARM signal (red curve) during a $V_{inj} = -30 \text{ dBV}$ at $\nu_{inj} = 9.10023 \text{ MHz} + 50 \text{ Hz}$ injection onto the main 9.10023 MHz line. Notice that a line appears in the DARM at 50 Hz. This line is not present on LHO's reference DARM signal (yellow curve), collected on 10 May 2019, indicating that its presence is due to the injection.

9.10023 MHz + 50 Hz Injection on ISC-C4-41-5 (Main 9.10023 MHz Line)

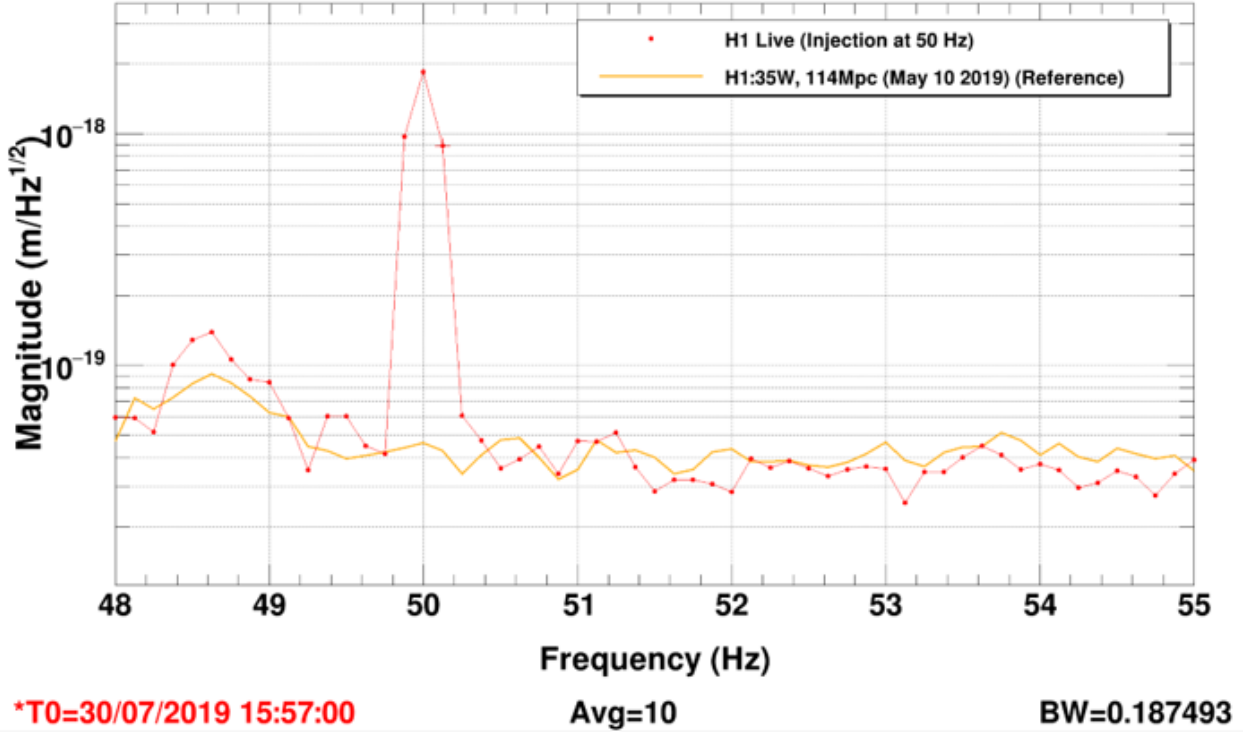


Figure 8: A close up view of the 50 Hz peak which arose during our injection (red curve). The apparent mirror displacement D_{inj} this peak represents is computed by calculating the area under the peak. Once again, notice the lack of a peak in the 10 May 2019 reference (yellow curve).

measurement bins d_i , which enclose an area

$$D_{inj} = \sqrt{\left(\sum_i d_i^2\right)BW}, \quad (6)$$

where BW is the measurement bandwidth. Using this equation, our data show that a $V_{inj} = -30$ dBV injection produces a displacement of $D_{inj} = 5.77 * 10^{-19}$ m.

Experiment 3: $ASD(V_{probe})$ Profile Collection

Finally, to obtain the $ASD(V_{probe})$ profile of the cable, we constructed the experimental apparatus shown in Figure 9. Notice that the output transformer, used along with the spectrum analyzer to measure V_{probe} , was located at the exact same location as the input transformer used in Experiment 2. This parallel was by design: we needed to know how noise at this location affects the DARM, given the reference provided by the injections performed during Experiment 2.

Figure 10 shows V_{probe} as measured by the spectrum analyzer¹. Notice the peak at 9.10023 MHz, the frequency carried by the cable's core. Because analysis of previous RF noise injections indicates that a cable shield noise signal at $9.10023 \text{ MHz} \pm Y \text{ Hz}$ appears in DARM at $Y \text{ Hz}$, we

¹Note that the noise floor of the data in this image is limited by the noise floor of the spectrum analyzer. It is possible that more distinct signals exist; however, a device with a lower noise floor must be used to detect them.

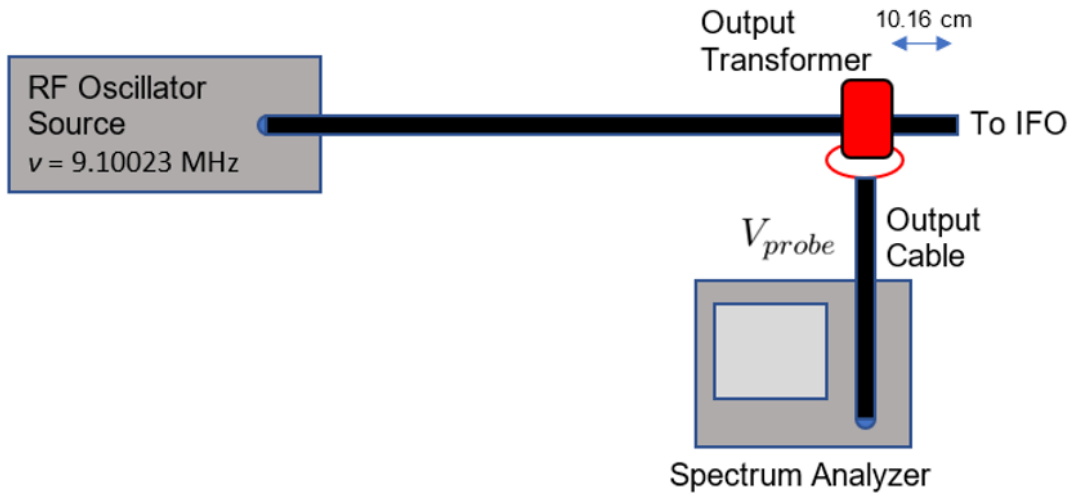


Figure 9: Our experimental setup for Experiment 3. The spectrum analyzer displays and records a profile of V_{probe} , which is collected from the cable's shield via a 1:1 ferrite core transformer.

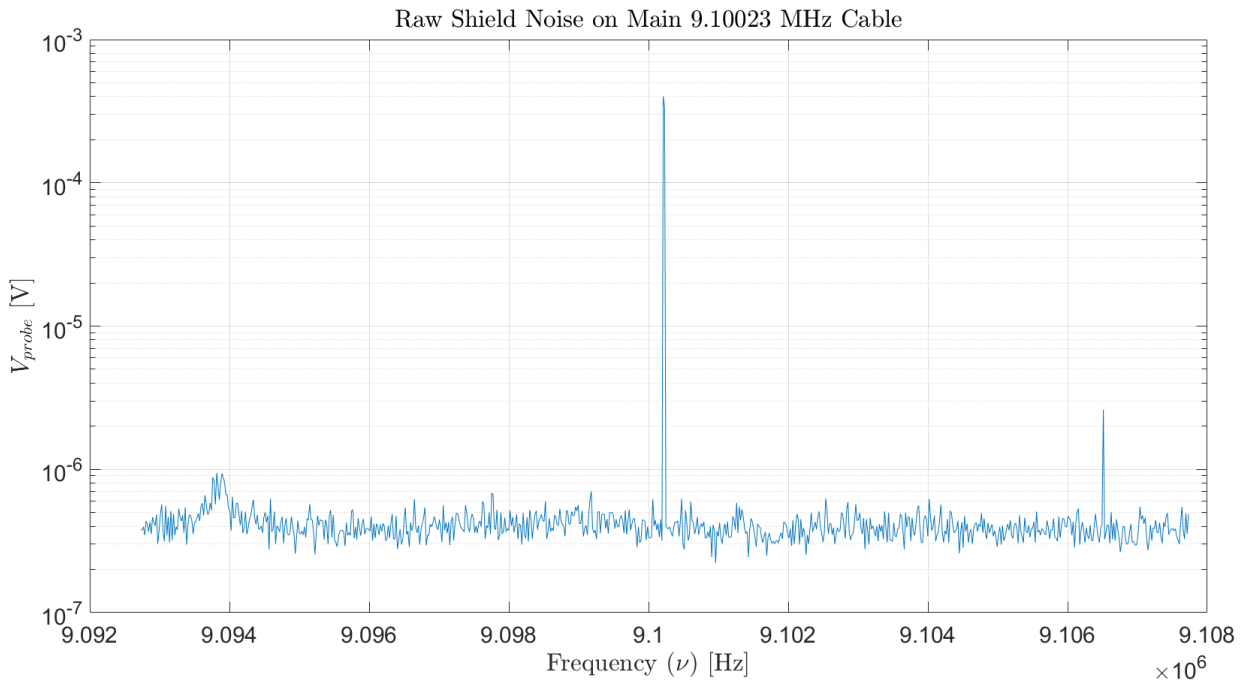


Figure 10: The spectrum of V_{probe} , collected via a spectrum analyzer and a 1:1 ferrite-core transformer. Notice the presence of a peak at the cable's core frequency $\nu_{core} = 9.10023$ MHz (as expected). Any noise signal present at $\pm Y$ Hz of this peak will appear in LHO's frequency range at Y Hz. Note that the noise floor of the data is limited by the analyzer's noise floor.

shifted the plot so that the 9.10023 MHz peak corresponds with 0 Hz (see Figure 11). To account for the fact that frequency offsets in the negative direction affect DARM in the same way as frequency offsets in the positive direction, we then folded the negative frequency values over the V_{probe} -axis (see Figure 12) and summed the overlapping series in quadrature (see Figure

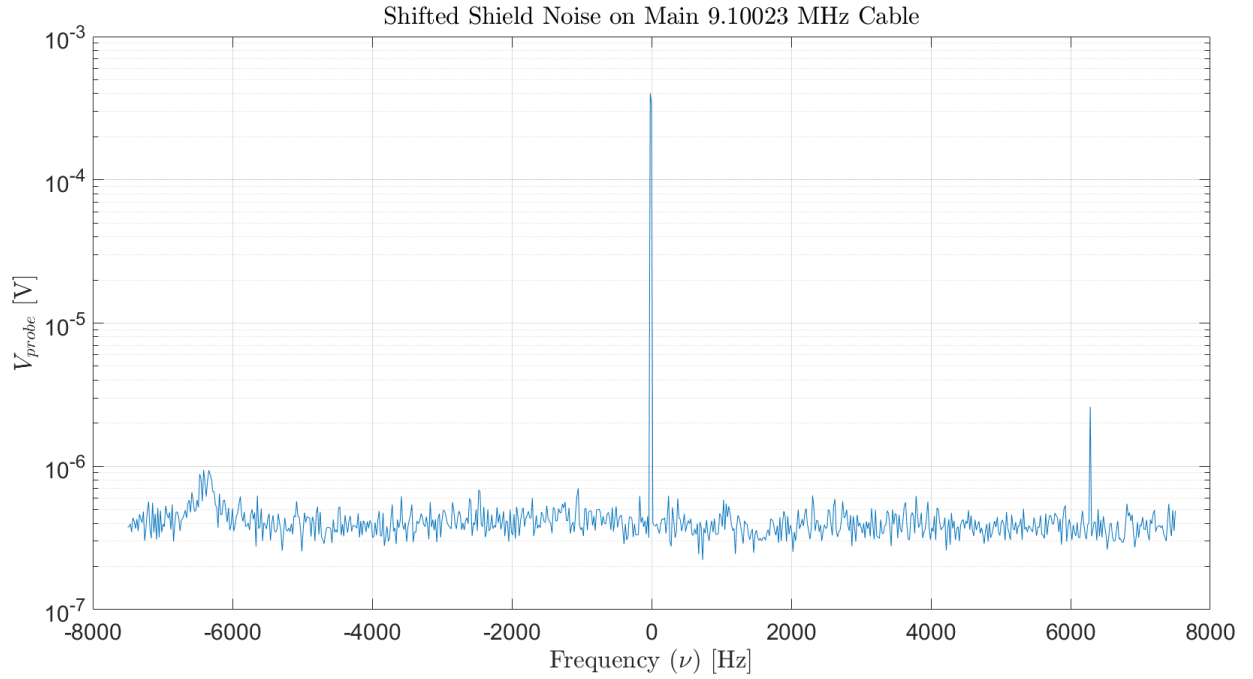


Figure 11: The spectrum of V_{probe} with the 9.10023 MHz peak shifted to $\nu_{probe} = 0$ Hz. Shifting the curve facilitates the mapping of noise frequencies to the proper location within LHO's frequency band.

13). With this plot, which we expressed as an amplitude spectral density so as to obtain $ASD(V_{probe})$, we could then produce a map of the effect the main 9.20023 MHz cable has on aLIGO DARM.

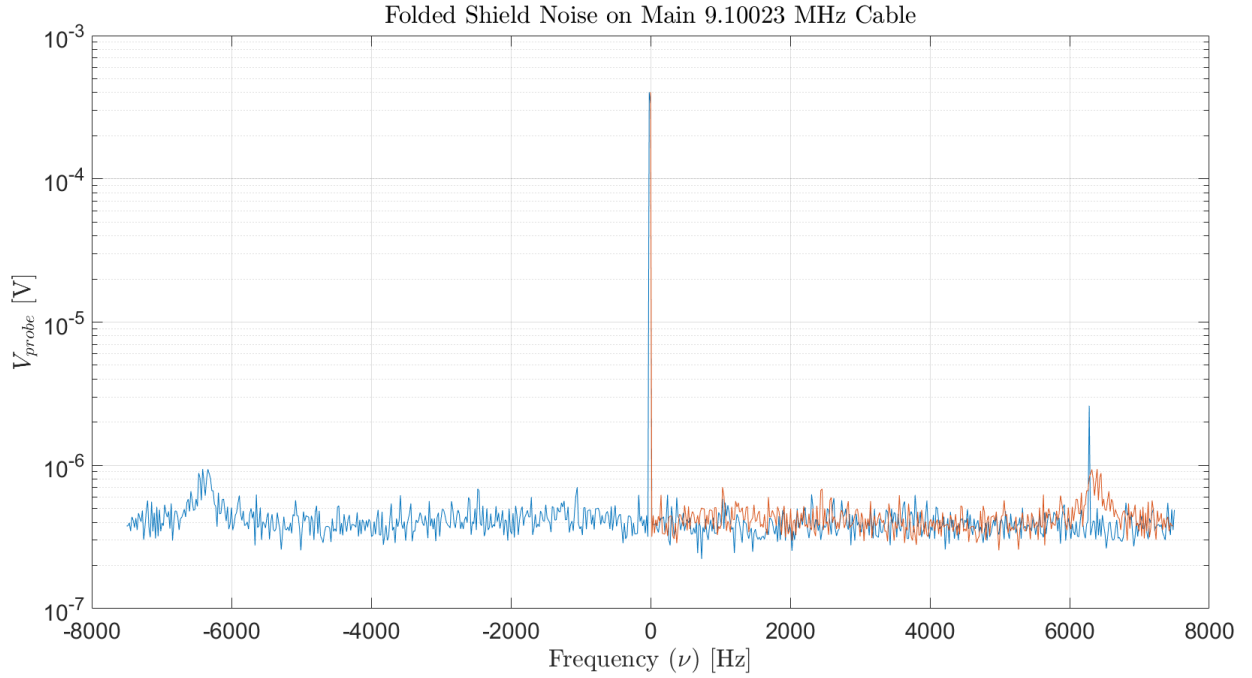


Figure 12: The spectrum of the shifted version of V_{probe} with all negative frequency values folded over the V_{probe} -axis. Folding occurs so as to match frequency values that are offset by $-Y$ Hz with frequency values that are offset by $+Y$ Hz.

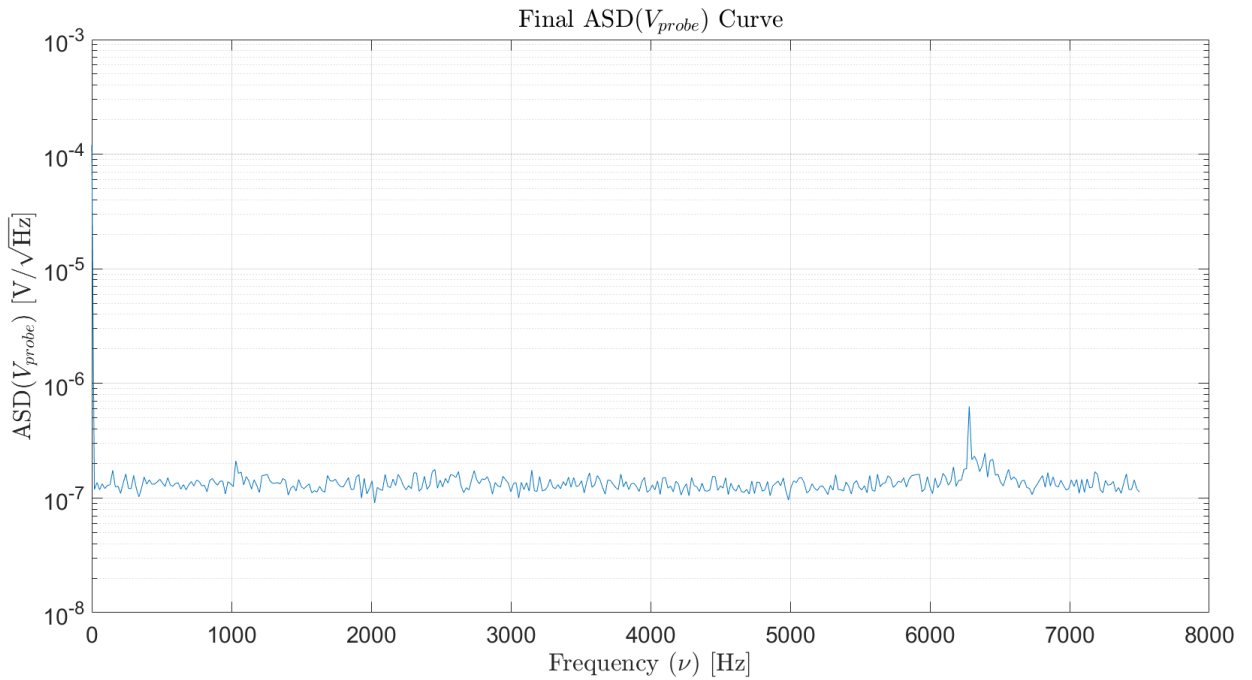


Figure 13: A plot of $ASD(V_{probe})$ after adding the folded portion of the V_{probe} probe spectrum to the unfolded section in quadrature and converting to an amplitude spectral density. This is the curve we ultimately passed into Equation 5 along with the results of Experiments 1 and 2 to produce an accurate map of the cable shield noise to DARM.

Preliminary Results and Observations

Using a simple MATLAB script, we combined the results of Experiments 1-3 to obtain the ASD(D) plot found in Figure 14. Additionally, we repeated all three experiments on a secondary

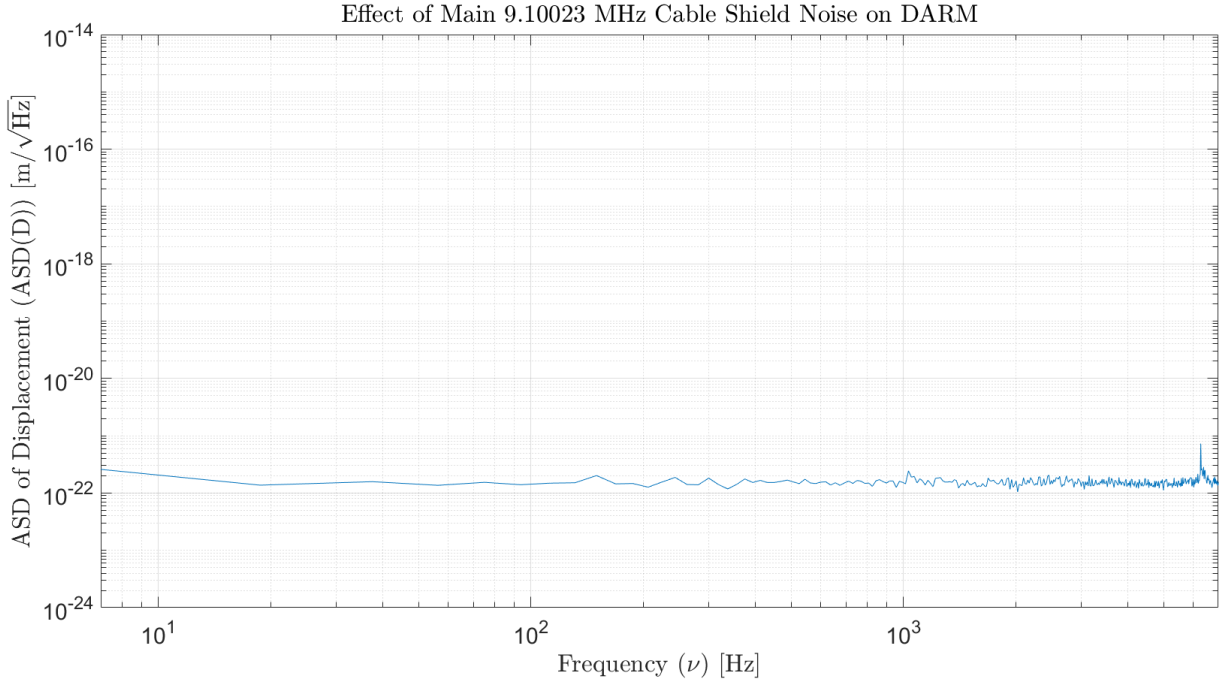


Figure 14: Our final map of the effect of the cable shield noise present on LHO's main 9.10023 MHz line to DARM. Notice that the noise appears at approximately 10^{-22} m/ $\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$, at least two order of magnitudes lower than the current aLIGO noise floor.

9.10023 MHz cable, obtaining the results in Figure 15. Figures 14 and 15 demonstrate that the noise present on both 9.10023 MHz cables produces a signal on the order of 10^{-22} m/ $\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$. In fact, this value is only an upper limit of the produced signal due to the noise floor limitations of our spectrum analyzer. As of the writing of this report, the measured DARM of both the Hanford and Livingston observatories appears anywhere from 10^{-15} to 10^{-20} m/ $\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$ across the aLIGO observation frequency band. Thus, the effect of the noise on the cables is at least two orders of magnitude lower than the DARM signal across the frequencies that are critical to a successful aLIGO run. From these values, we are able to conclude that the cable shield noise currently present on both 9.10023 MHz lines has no negative impact on the the behavior of LHO's interferometer.

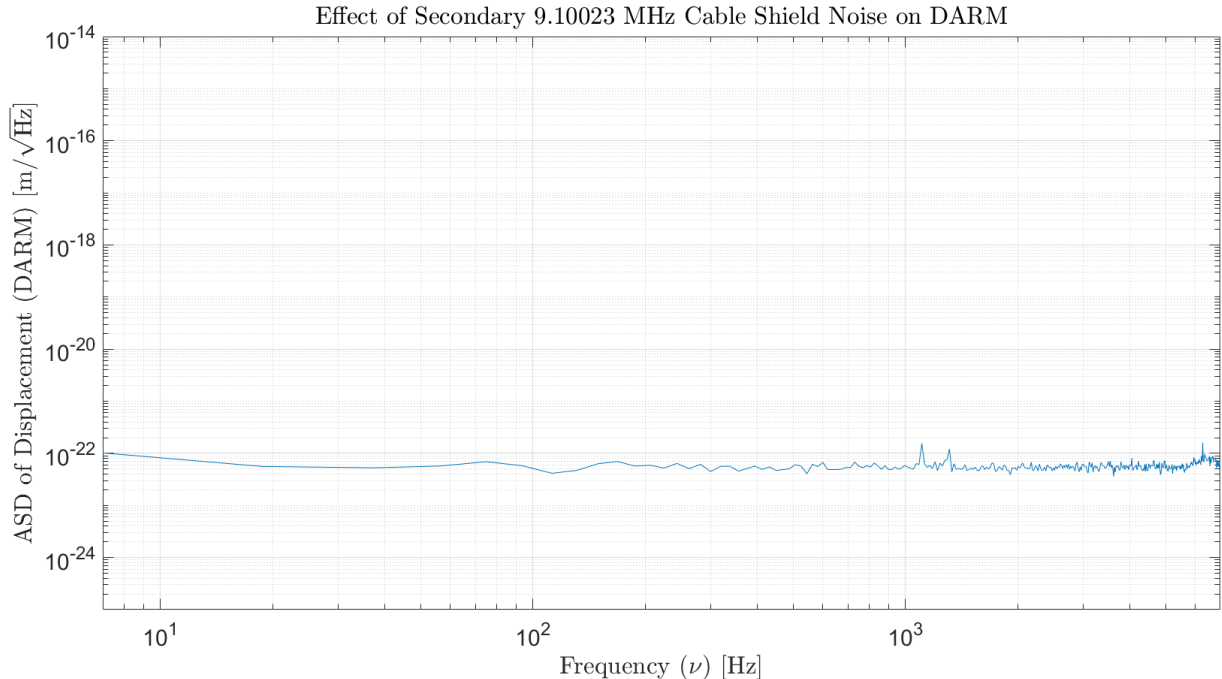


Figure 15: Our final map of the effect of the cable shield noise present on LHO’s secondary 9.10023 MHz line to DARM. Notice that the noise appears at approximately 10^{-22} m/√Hz, at least two orders of magnitudes lower than the current aLIGO noise floor.

Future Work

As we continue our investigation of noise within the RF distribution system at LHO, we intend to carry out four main tasks. First, using the methods outlined above, we would like to create noise-to-DARM maps of several other cables, focusing first on the 45.50115 MHz line. These maps will provide the observatory with a broader picture of the impact of cable shield noise, helping members of the electrical engineer group make decisions about future improvements to the grounding of the RF distribution system. Second, we would like to use our mapping methodology to determine the of shield noise amplitude that must be present on each cable to induce a measurable impact on DARM. This information will be useful in developing specifications for acceptable levels of cable shield noise in future designs. Third, as mentioned in our first progress report, a portion of our time at LHO has been devoted to the task of reducing harmonic noise in the many RF Distribution Amplifiers installed within LHO’s RF distribution system. While we have already determined that the addition of an appropriately selected LC low pass filter between the chassis’s amplifier and eight-way splitter successfully removes the unwanted harmonics, we must determine the impact of filter insertion on the phasing of the device. Finally, we would also like to develop a method for mapping the harmonic noise present within an RF Distribution Amplifier to DARM.

References

- [1] <https://awiki.ligo-wa.caltech.edu/wiki/RfDesign>
- [2] <https://people.ligo-wa.caltech.edu/~daniel.sigg/protel/D0900559-A.pdf>

- [3] <https://dcc.ligo.org/DocDB/0063/E1100591/015/E1100591-v15.pdf>
- [4] <https://www.commscope.com/catalog/cables/pdf/part/1329/LDF4-50A.pdf>
- [5] <https://www.mouser.com/pdfdocs/alphawire-Understanding-Shielded-Cable.pdf>