

SCENARIO: SUSY discovery

The ATLAS and CMS experiments at the CERN LHC have just discovered evidence for "SUSY". This is the theory of Supersymmetry that has been postulated to resolve various [mathematical] problems in the Standard Model of particle physics and could also explain "Dark Matter" that makes up about 25% of the universe. These are early results, so the scientists are being cautious about making definitive claims, but there is a very high likelihood that the discovery is real.

(For reference, only about 5% of the universe is in the form of normal matter, i.e. stars, planets, etc.; about 25% is Dark Matter that could be explained by SUSY; and the remaining 70% is so-called "Dark Energy".)

More information

In this scenario, you are working on one of the two experiments and being interviewed about the SUSY discovery.

Both experiments have seen events with many jets and large missing transverse energy at a rate significantly above what is expected in the Standard Model. A rough estimate of the combined significance is 5.2 sigma, although each individual experiment only sees an effect of less than 5 sigma. More data will be needed before definitive claims can be made, but there is a lot of discussion in the physics community that has been picked up by the press.

In more detail, the results in your experiment are based on two zero-lepton analyses, i.e. analyses that veto isolated leptons. One analysis considers events with 2–6 jets, while the other one requires 7–10 jets; in both cases large missing transverse energy is required. Each of these two analyses has a significance of about 4 sigma.

You don't have much detail about the analysis of the other experiment, but you are aware that a signal excess of about 4.5 standard deviations is observed. You know that this is from a zero-lepton search requiring high jet multiplicity and large missing transverse energy.

Both experiments rely on improvements that were made for the start of Run 2 to mitigate the effects of pileup on the jets plus missing transverse energy signature. In one experiment an improved resolution on the missing transverse energy is achieved with a new particle-flow based algorithm that assigns a pileup probability to each reconstructed particle. In the other experiment improvements to the digital signal processing in the first-level calorimeter trigger allow lower thresholds at constant rate for events with this signature.

You know details that you are not allowed to discuss in public from your own experiment. A search looking for events with two same-sign leptons plus missing transverse energy has a significant excess of more than 5 sigma by itself. However, there are some issues with the background determination method that are still being sorted out.