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Scientists may have discovered a new particle in nature – or it could be a glitch

📅 December 23, 2015 📌 Science

Recently, LHC researchers said that “something peculiar” was spotted in two of the machine’s experiments, which may be a new particle, or merely a data glitch. Following the Higgs Boson’s discovery in 2012, the LHC has gotten significant upgrades allowing it to track higher-energy collisions. Currently, the accelerator works with particles around a 17-mile circumference ring of electromagnets at a rate of 13 TeV, or almost twice the energy used when the Higgs Boson was first discovered.



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The LHC works by recreating what had happened in the Big Bang, that event that took place close to 14 billion years ago, giving birth to the universe. This allows researchers to effectively go back into time and see what particles were created as the universe cooled in the aftermath of its creation. The Higgs' discovery, in particular, had confirmed that physics' so-called "standard model" was correct in describing all the particles in our universe, though many questions remained following this confirmation. That's what has given birth to the field of "exotic physics," which includes finding proof of the elusive dark matter that makes up a good bulk of our universe.

CERN worked in partnership with IDT to create a low latency interface based upon the company's RapidIO device technology. It was part of a three-year collaboration between IDT and CERN openlab. "The key to achieving better data analytics performance is having superior real-time interconnect with low, deterministic latency," said Alberto Di Meglio, head of CERN openlab. RapidIO was used because it provides a low-latency connection with deterministic transfer between clusters of computer processors, dramatically speeding the movement and processing of data. The LHC platform is based on x86 processing, a 200GBaud RapidIO interconnect fabric, network interface card and CERN's root analytics framework.

Inside two of the same LHC experiments that led to the discovery



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of the Higgs Boson, a small anomaly in energy at around 750 GeV has been detected, according to Run 2 preliminary results from the CMS and ATLAS detectors. “We’ve been working round-the-clock to understand and triple-check our numbers, and (Dec. 15) was the culmination of the year’s worth of work by thousands of people,” said particle physicist James Beacham, a post-doctoral research fellow with the Ohio State University, in an interview with Discovery News. When new particles are produced by the collisions, they typically decay quickly. But they produce other particles as they decay, which might also be detected by LHC experiments.

While the bump was tiny and could prove insignificant – another detector, The CMS, also picked up on a small signal in the same energy range. The new phase of collisions is still in its infancy, but if the signal is confirmed, it could indicate the presence of something like a bigger Higgs boson particle. Beacham is hopeful that they will have collected significantly more data by next summer. High-energy physics requires infallible statistical evidence, meaning more collision data is needed to prove the case for a new particle – though bumps from two detectors could prove to be more than a coincidence.

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