A new polarimetric scheme for attenuation correction at C band

Alexander Ryzhkov¹, David Hudak², and John Scott²

¹University of Oklahoma / National Severe Storms Laboratory, Norman (USA)
²Environment Canada, King City (Canada)

1 Introduction

A long-standing problem of attenuation correction at shorter weather radar wavelengths can be efficiently resolved by using measurements of differential phase $\Phi_{DP}$ if the radar is polarimetrically upgraded. Original polarimetric method for attenuation correction by Bringi et al. (1990) stipulates that the ratio $\alpha_h$ between specific attenuation $A_h$ and specific differential phase $K_{DP}$ does not vary much for a particular radar wavelength. This assumption, however, is not valid at C band in the presence of large drops associated with anomalously high differential reflectivity $Z_{DR}$. Several modifications of a dual-polarization rain profiling algorithm have been suggested to address this issue (Carey et al. 2000; Bringi et al. 2001; Lim and Chandrasekar 2006).

In this paper, we describe another possible scheme for attenuation correction at C band. This new methodology was tested on several summer storms in Ontario, Canada, using the data collected by the C-band polarimetric radar recently developed by Environment Canada (Hudak et al. 2006).

2 Scattering considerations

High variability of the coefficient $\alpha_h$ at C band is attributed to strong resonance scattering effects which impact $A_h$ and $K_{DP}$ for raindrop sizes exceeding 5 mm. The dependencies of normalized $A_h$ and $K_{DP}$ on equivolume raindrop diameter are illustrated in Fig. 1. As a result of resonance scattering, the ratio $A_h/K_{DP}$ rapidly increases for drop diameters larger than 5 mm and then tends to decrease at the higher end of raindrop spectrum.

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Correspondence to: Alexander Ryzhkov
Alex.Ryzhkov@noaa.gov

Fig. 1. The dependencies of $A_h$ and $K_{DP}$ on raindrop equivolume diameter at C band (T = 20°C). Raindrop shapes are assumed as in Brandes et al. (2002).

In order to assess variability of the ratio $\alpha_h$, we simulate $A_h$ and $K_{DP}$ using 25920 drop size distributions (DSD) measured in Oklahoma. The aspect ratio of raindrops was modeled as specified by Brandes et al. (2002). Because vertical dimension of larger drops is smaller than horizontal, one can expect that the resonance effects at vertical polarization are less pronounced than at horizontal and the ratio $\alpha_v$ between specific attenuation $A_v$ at vertical polarization and $K_{DP}$ is smaller and less variable than $\alpha_h$.

The scatterplots of $A_{h,v}$ versus $K_{DP}$ for all DSDs and for DSDs with $Z_{DR}$ less than 3 dB are shown in Fig. 2. The majority of points for DSDs without large drops ($Z_{DR} < 3$ dB) concentrate along straight lines which means that the $A_{h,v}/K_{DP}$ ratios are quite stable for such DSDs. The points outside of these “line clusters” are attributed to resonance effects due to large drops. It is evident that the $A_v - K_{DP}$ scatterplots are less prone to the resonance effects than the $A_h - K_{DP}$ scatterplots, especially for $Z_{DR} < 3$ dB. Also, attenuation at horizontal polarization is...
noticeably larger than at vertical polarization for a given $K_{DP}$, i.e., differential attenuation $A_{DP} = A_h - A_v$ is positive.

Identification of “hot spots” is a crucial component of the algorithm. They can be detected using the 3 dB threshold of $Z_{DR}$ provided that differential reflectivity is corrected for differential attenuation. Alternatively, the 45 dBZ threshold of $Z_h$ can be used after radar reflectivity factor is roughly corrected for attenuation using a simple formula

$$\Delta Z = \alpha_0 \Phi_{DP}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

Indeed, the $Z - Z_{DR}$ scatterplot at C band simulated from the measured DSDs reveals that these detection thresholds in $Z$ and $Z_{DR}$ are quite consistent (Fig. 3). In this study, we use the radar reflectivity threshold $Z_t = 45$ dBZ.

Fig. 3. The scatterplot $Z_H - Z_{DR}$ at C band simulated from the measured DSDs (T = 20°C).

### 3 Modified ZPHI method

According to the traditional ZPHI method (Testud et al. 2000), the old Hitchfeld – Bordan scheme is used with integral constraint based on the total span of differential phase within the range interval $(r_0, r_m)$ containing radar echo

$$\int_{r_0}^{r_m} A_h(s) \, ds = \int_{r_0}^{r_m} a_h K_{DP}(s) \, ds = \frac{a_h}{2} \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; r_m), \hspace{1cm} (2)$$

where

$$\Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; r_m) = \Phi_{DP}(r_m) - \Phi_{DP}(t_0).$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

Radial profile of $A_h(r)$ is estimated using attenuated radar reflectivity $Z_a$ and $\Delta \Phi_{DP}$ using the formula

$$A_h(r) = \frac{[Z_a(r)]^b \left[10^{0.1bZ_a \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; r_m)} - 1\right]}{I(t_0; r_m) + \left[10^{0.1bZ_a \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; r_m)} - 1\right][r; r_m]} \hspace{1cm} (4)$$

where

$$I(t_0; r_m) = 0.46 b \int_{t_0}^{r_m} [Z_a(s)]^b \, ds \hspace{1cm} (5)$$
and

\[ I(r; t_m) = 0.46 b \int_r^{t_m} \left[ A_h(s) \right]^b ds \]  
(6)

The parameter \( b \) is an exponent in the relation \( A_h = a Z^b \).

In the modified ZPHI method, we assume that

\[ \alpha_h(r) = \alpha_0 + \Delta \alpha(r) \]  
(7)

In (7), \( \alpha_0 \) is a constant climatological value and \( \Delta \alpha \) is arbitrary in the gates where intrinsic reflectivity \( Z \) exceeds threshold \( Z_t = 45 \) dBZ. While \( \Delta \alpha \) is allowed to vary from ray to ray, it is supposed to be constant for all gates where \( Z > Z_t \) for any particular ray. Correspondingly, the constraint equation (2) can be rewritten as

\[ \int_{t}^{t_m} A_h(s) ds = \alpha_0 \int_{t}^{t_m} K_{DP}(s) ds + \Delta \alpha \int_{Z > Z_t} K_{DP}(s) ds \]

\[ - \frac{\alpha_0}{2} \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; t_m) + \frac{\Delta \alpha}{2} \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z > Z_t) \]

where integration in the second integral is performed over range gates where \( Z > Z_t \), and \( \Phi_{DP}(Z > Z_t) \) stands for the \( \Phi_{DP} \) increase within the gates with \( Z > Z_t \). Eq (8) stipulates that in the basic formula (4) for the traditional ZPHI method the term \( \alpha_0 \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; t_m) \) should be replaced with the term \( \alpha_0 \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; t_m) + \Delta \alpha \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z > Z_t) \). This means that two measured differential phase parameters, \( \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; t_m) \) and \( \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z > Z_t) \), are used for constraining the procedure instead of one. As a result, radial profile of \( A_h \) becomes dependent on the value of \( \Delta \alpha \). The appropriate factor \( \Delta \alpha \) should be defined from the iterative process of incrementing \( \Delta \alpha \) until the following condition is satisfied:

\[ \int_{Z < Z_t} A_h(s, \Delta \alpha) ds = \frac{\alpha_0}{2} \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z < Z_t) \]  
(9)

where integration is performed over the gates with \( Z < Z_t \) and

\[ \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z < Z_t) = \Delta \Phi_{DP}(t_0; t_m) - \Delta \Phi_{DP}(Z > Z_t) \]  
(10)

A similar procedure can be applied for attenuation correction of radar reflectivity measured at vertical polarization. The use of vertically polarized component of radar signal is particularly recommended for azimuths with substantial attenuation where differential attenuation is also significant and the radar sensitivity is higher at vertical polarization.

4 Validation of the modified ZPHI method

The modified method for attenuation correction was applied to the C-band data collected in south central Ontario during summer of 2005 using the C-band polarimetric radar developed by Environment Canada. Five storms have been examined. They occurred on June 9, June 14, July 14, August 2, and August 19. All five storms produced either hail or significant precipitation causing substantial attenuation of the C-band radiation. Maximal differential phase measured for each of the five storms varied between 100 and 300°. The corresponding maximal attenuation within the radius of observations of 250 km changed from about 10 to 20 dB at horizontal polarization.

We corrected radar reflectivity factor at horizontal polarization only because the corresponding reflectivity at vertical polarization was not directly available from the radar data processor. Based on the results of simulations of \( A_h \) and \( K_{DP} \) at C band for \( Z_{hi} < 45 \) dBZ, \( T = 20^\circ \)C, and raindrop shape determined by Brandes et al (2002) we set the parameter \( a_0 \) in Eq (7) – (9) to 0.06 dB/deg. We also use \( b = 0.8 \) in Eq (4) – (6) as justified by Bringi and Chandrasekar (2001).

The consistency between rain rate fields obtained from \( K_{DP} \) and corrected \( Z_{hi} \) was used to validate the performance of the suggested method for attenuation correction. Rain rates were computed using formulas

\[ R(K_{DP}) = 25.1 |K_{DP}|^{0.777} \text{sign}(K_{DP}) \]  
(11)

and

\[ R(Z_{hi}) = 1.6910^{-2} 10^{0.0717 Z_{hi}} \]  
(12)

derived from 25920 DSDs for C band. In Eq (11) – (12), \( K_{DP} \) is expressed in deg/km and \( Z_{hi} \) is in dBZ.

As an example, Fig. 4 illustrates the fields of \( R(K_{DP}) \) and \( R(Z_{hi}) \) for the storm on August 19, 2005 which triggered flash flooding in Toronto. It is obvious that rain rates estimated from uncorrected \( Z_{hi} \) are heavily underestimated compared to \( R(K_{DP}) \) (Fig.4b). Rain rates remain negatively biased if the traditional ZPHI algorithm with fixed \( a_0 = 0.06 \) dB/deg is utilized (Fig.4c). The best match between \( R(K_{DP}) \) and \( R(Z_{hi}) \) is achieved if the modified ZPHI method is applied (Fig.4d). Average value of \( \Delta \alpha \) in the area of heavy precipitation with \( Z_{hi} > 45 \) dBZ is close to 0.04 dB/deg. Hence, in the cores of rain cells in Fig. 4 the ratio \( A_h/K_{DP} \) is about 0.10 dB/deg.

Our analysis of five rain events shows that the difference between attenuation-related biases in the radar reflectivity factor estimated from the standard and modified ZPHI methods can be as large as 4 dB which may project into about two times difference in the corresponding rain rates.

5 Conclusions

Strong resonance scattering effects at C band cause high variability in the ratio \( A_h/K_{DP} \) for raindrops larger than 5 mm. Such an uncertainty negatively impacts the quality of attenuation correction if the standard ZPHI rain profiling algorithm is utilized.
A modification of the ZPHI method is suggested to mitigate the problem. This implies the use of different constraint in the algorithm.

In the presence of heavy attenuation, it is more advantageous to use radar reflectivity at vertical polarization because vertically polarized radar signal is less attenuated in rain and is less vulnerable to the resonance scattering effects.

A preliminary test of the suggested technique was performed using the C-band polarimetric data collected for five storms in south central Ontario, Canada.

References


