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## Nuclear experts hold court at Liberty

By Ray Reed

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Two nuclear energy experts who advocate clean sources of energy told a small crowd at Liberty University how atoms are split to make electricity Wednesday, generating a few questions about the safety of that process.

No one in the audience of about 30 asked a single question about uranium mining, although a mining expert helped make the presentation and several people in the crowd either support or oppose a plan to mine uranium in Pittsylvania County.

Representing an industry-advocate group called Clean Energy America, engineers Mark Hollenbeck of South Dakota and Natalie Wood of Louisiana came to Lynchburg on a speaking tour of several Virginia universities, hoping to stimulate talk about the future of nuclear power.

A few of the LU students asked about job prospects in the nuclear power industry, and Wood told them each of the nation's 104 nuclear plants employs dozens of engineers.

Hollenbeck, who is employed by Powertech Co., answered a question about nuclear safety that was asked by Del. Scott Garrett, R-Lynchburg, by saying most safety concerns raised in the United States are a "red herring" because power plants are closely watched by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Today's young people don't remember the Three Mile Island accident at a nuclear plant in Pennsylvania in 1979, and neither do many of their parents, Hollenbeck said, so fears caused by it are disappearing.

However, no one can see or feel radiation, "so it's easy to scare people about the effects of radiation," Hollenbeck said.

Actually, coal-fired power plants can emit more radiation than nuclear plants because coal often contains uranium, he said.