

FORUM

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reactor incidents - Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima - which he said occurred at a rate 20 times higher than one would anticipate based on safety factors.

They occurred not as the result of a flaw in the design of the reactors, Mei said, but because of human error.

In 1990, a report by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued a report outlining a scenario much like the one now facing Fukushima.

"The U.S. agencies pointed out that Japan could have this kind of disaster 20 years ago. ... Tokyo Electric did not take that consideration seriously," Mei said. "It was not the fault of the Japanese government. That's human error."

The problem, Mei said, is that the company wanted to make more money, and taking all the safety recommendations into account would limit its ability to do so.

Heaton said the occurrence of nuclear disasters in the past has aided the United States in preventing them from happening in the future.

"One of the things we learned from Three Mile Island is that operators are often not prepared for certain things, and miss key pieces of information," he said.

As a result, nuclear technicians now undergo intensive training, with drills and mock-ups held on a regular basis, he said.

"They throw problems at each other and see how they react. They're really on their toes," Heaton said.

The reactors at Fukushima are boiling water reactors, which Heaton termed the "simplest" type of nuclear reactor.

"You have a containment vessel with the fuel. ... Basically, fission generates heat, and you have water within a reservoir, and that water is boiled into steam, the steam is let out the top, which turns a turbine to generate electricity," he said.

Nuclear plants are constructed with different levels of containment, so they would be

able to withstand the pressure caused by a natural or manmade disaster without leaking any of the water, he said.

"If water should leak out of any of these systems, there's enough heat just from the radioactivity ... to melt the pellets and just completely lose control of the reactor," Heaton said.

As workers would no longer be able to use tools such as cranes to remove the fuel within the water, he added, "Your only option would be to cement the whole plant in and keep people away from it for a few hundred years."

According to the Associated Press, officials at Fukushima have acknowledged there was radioactive water in all four of the complex's most troubled reactors, with readings of airborne radiation high enough as to prevent emergency workers from getting inside to pump out the water.

Government spokesman Yukio Edano was quoted as saying that some of the radioactive water is "almost certainly" seeping from a damaged reactor core in one of

the units.

Heaton and Mei each discussed the pros of using nuclear power, calling it a significant fuel source.

"An apparently small amount of fuel can produce a huge amount of energy. A tiny pellet of uranium is equal to 50 barrels of oil," Heaton said.

He also emphasized the safety involved, stating that plants cannot "become atomic bombs" as they use only slightly-enriched uranium.

Mei pointed out that 20 percent of the electricity used in the United States is derived through nuclear power, making it the biggest user in the world.

"We cannot lose 20 percent of our electricity. Where are you going to go to replace that?" Mei said. "So the safety measures must be implemented. Otherwise we'll have a disaster."

- The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Legionnaire convention set

Legionnaires from Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Hutchinson and Yankton Counties will gather Sunday, April 10 at Tripp for the annual District 7 Spring Convention of the S.D. American Legion.

The Legion business session will start at 1:30 p.m. at the Tripp American Legion Post Home.

There will be a social hour from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by a banquet at 12:30 p.m. All Legion activities will be in the Legion Post Home.

Participants will elect district

officers for two year terms and county commanders and vice commanders in the district for one-year terms during the business meeting.

The session will also feature Post reports regarding the past year's unusual activities, Post Americanism reports, a membership turn-in, recognition of the District 7 Legionnaire of the Year and an address by State American Legion Commander G. D. "Hoot" Gibson of Sioux Falls.

The District 7 Auxiliary will hold its convention meeting at 1:30 p.m. at the Tripp Fire Hall.

525 W. Cherry, Vermillion, 624-5574

Deputy to attend FBI training academy

The FBI National Academy (FBINA), one of the most prestigious law enforcement academies in the country, will be getting a Canton representative this spring:

Lieutenant Chad Brown, of the Lincoln County sheriff's Department, formally of Vermillion.



BROWN

The academy, location in Quantico, VA, on the U.S. Marine Corps Base, has four sessions a year, roughly corresponding to the season. Each session allows only 250 law enforcement officers from around the country and the world, an elite group that now includes Lt. Brown.

Approximately 10 percent come from law enforcement agencies outside the U.S.

The application process for Brown began about a year ago, when he submitted his application to the local FBI office in Minneapolis and was given approval from his boss, Sheriff Dennis Johnson. He had to undergo a series of background checks and interview as well.

Brown said typically officers would expect to wait at least three to four years to hear back on their applications, with such a competitive program. Brown heard back in half a year.

"I was not expecting it that early!" he said. Once the application was sent in, he said he almost pushed it to the back of his mind, expecting to wait several years for contact.

He learned of his acceptance five months ago from the Minneapolis office and received the official letter two months ago.

"It's definitely an honor," he said. "There's a lot of excitement."

Brown's training session begins April 3 and goes through June 10.

The 10 week training session, taught by FBI teaching staff and other professional educators, will focus on leadership development and emphasize critical thinking.

Course offerings include legal issues, leadership, behavioral science, forensic science, law enforcement communication, fitness/health and a specialized instruction program in the law enforcement arts.

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*Not all scores were available at press time. For a complete list of scores and the leader board go to: <http://play2win.collegehoops.upickem.net/collegebasketball/registration/login.asp> then Login and click Play Game

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16 Ala. St.

SOUTHWEST March 15
16 NC-Ashville
16 Ark.-Little Rock

WEST March 18
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16 Hampton
8 Michigan
9 Tennessee
March 18
5 Arizona
12 Memphis
4 Texas
13 Oakland
March 17
6 Cincinnati
11 Missouri
3 UConn
14 Bucknell
March 17
7 Temple
10 Penn. St.
2 San Diego St.
15 N. Colorado

SOUTHWEST March 15
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