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## **Utah State going nuclear / School picked for U.S. energy project**

LOGAN -- Utah State University is one of only four schools in the country selected to research nuclear energy in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory.

USU's research project will last for three years and is aimed at enhancing nuclear reactors.

"People are realizing we don't have a permanent, sustainable solution to energy," said USU associate engineering professor Heng Ban, who will oversee the research.

"Nuclear is coming back in a big way. It's actually much safer than coal."

Right now, 20 percent of the nation's electricity is produced by nuclear power and about 50 percent is powered by coal, Ban said.

Acid rain, global warming and mine safety issues are just a few of the reasons Americans should be concerned with increasing the use of alternate fuels, he said.

Advances being made in nuclear technology both reduce the amount of nuclear waste produced and allow nuclear waste to be recycled, Ban said.

Calling the growing popularity of nuclear power a "nuclear renaissance," Idaho National Laboratory

spokesman John Walsh said the collaboration between education and Department of Energy facilities is a win-win situation.

"They get the benefit of our facilities, we get the benefit of their knowledge," he said.

This is the second year research proposals have been accepted by the laboratory in Idaho. This year, the laboratory received 14 applications. Experiments from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of California-Santa Barbara and University of Wisconsin were also selected.

USU's proposal focuses on studying the thermal properties of aluminum and a material called hafnium.

"This material is going to be used for development of new types of reactors," Ban said.

A handful of USU students will assist in the research, he said, so the relatively close proximity of the university to the laboratory just outside Idaho Falls is a huge advantage. A one-way trip is about 128 miles.

Research will be conducted at both USU and the laboratory in Idaho.

Typically, universities cannot afford to run experiments at the nuclear laboratory because related costs are so expensive, Walsh said, but the laboratory will cover research expenses as part of the partnership.

For more information about the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy, log on to [www.ne.doe.gov](http://www.ne.doe.gov).

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