

Nuclear Batteries May Be Made in South N.M.

By The Associated Press

BUNICE, N.M. A new nuclear energy company formed by former scientists from Los Alamos National Laboratory is eyeing Lea County as a possible home for a manufacturing facility.

The southeastern New Mexico town has seen growing interest from several nuclear energy companies after construction started on the Louisiana Energy Services' National Enrichment Facility, the first major nuclear facility to be licensed in the United States in three decades.

Los Alamos-based Hyperion Power Generation Inc. says the southern New Mexico county could be the place it produces its first commercial, mass-produced nuclear power reactor, said Deborah Blackwell, vice president of licensing and public affairs for Hyperion.

"Lea County is a contender for the manufacturing site," Blackwell said. "We are not actively looking at potential sites, but we do very much consider Lea County a possibility because of the uranium enrichment facility there." Blackwell said the company also is looking at Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Hyperion was formed by a group of scientists with connections to Los Alamos and other government laboratories to market uranium hydride energy reactors. The discovery was made at Los Alamos lab more than 50 years ago, Blackwell said.

Hyperion is seeking a design certification and a manufacturing license from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to produce 4,000 Hyperion Power Modules, a device best described as a nuclear battery, Blackwell said.