

Duke Energy committed to efficiency, according to company's relations director

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CLEMSON — Mike Wilson, in his 20th year with Duke Energy and currently serving as director of community and business relations, said times have changed regarding the public's perception of energy.

"In the 1990s, nobody cared about energy," Wilson told members of the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce during a luncheon Wednesday. "Now, though, it seems to be a topic on everyone's minds here in the 21st century. People talk about the weather, about global warming, about droughts and it all goes back to energy."

Wilson said Duke Energy, one of the largest electric power companies in the U.S. that supplies and delivers electricity to nearly four million U.S. customers and 11 million overall, is committed to energy efficiency. Yet, Wilson said the company, whose fuel mix also includes coal, gas, hydro and renewables in addition to nuclear, is equally committed to ensuring that its goal is



Greg Oliver/Staff

Mike Wilson, director of community and business relations for Duke Energy, is greeted by Lou Robinson, regional community development agent for Clemson University, following his appearance at the Clemson-Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Wednesday.

achieved in an environmentally friendly manner.

That is why Wilson feels good about the company's sustainability plan.

"Duke Energy's sustainabil-

ity plan is more than just energy," he said. "Sustainability means doing business in a way that is good for people, the planet and profits."

Wilson said Duke Energy

In order for the U.S. to become more energy independent, Wilson said nuclear power, whose public perception was negatively impacted by Three Mile Island in 1979 and Chernobyl in the Soviet Union in 1986, must make a comeback

is committed to providing affordable power, reliable power and clean power — three areas that are difficult to attain together. In an effort to meet growing customer demand, with 40,000 new customers each year, Wilson said one of the first priorities is to modernize its power plants.

But nothing comes cheap. Although Wilson said Duke Energy is among the less expensive power producers in the U.S. and in South Carolina as a whole, Carbon Legislation under consideration in Congress could result in increased costs.

"We'll do all we can to keep it low," Wilson said, adding that Duke Energy is striving to meet its own goal to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030.

Wilson said Duke Energy is already practicing energy conservation measures through renewable energy that includes the use of solar rooftops in buildings across North Carolina and the use of hydro-electric energy.

But Wilson said Duke Energy is also encouraging customers to become more energy efficient, adding, "The cleanest kilowatt hour is the one not used." He said the company plans to introduce programs next month that will provide incentives for customers that practice energy conservation measures.

For example, Wilson said the company plans to construct the Lee Nuclear Station in Cherokee County, although rising costs for construction are posing a financial challenge for the multibillion dollar investment.

"It will be a huge boost for that area," he said. "Look at what has happened in the Oconee County and Pickens County areas since the nuclear plant (Oconee Nuclear Station) was built in the late 1960s."