# Laboratory director meets the press

## Jose Alonso will lead efforts to open lab in old gold mine

*By Tim Velder, Lawrence County Journal Tuesday, October 23, 2007*

LEAD -- South Dakota Science and Technology Authority executive director Dave Snyder let his new laboratory director do most of the talking during a half-hour session with reporters Tuesday in Lead. Snyder hired Jose Alonso last week as Interim Laboratory Director for the Sanford Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory at Homestake and introduced him to local news media during a break from a day filled with planning meetings and appointments.

As interim laboratory director, Alonso will serve as chief executive with responsibility for the startup and overall operation of the Sanford Laboratory.

Alonso discussed his background in physics and responsibilities for the science authority as they work to get the former gold mine open for business.

The underground laboratory will host multidisciplinary science research experiments at the 4,850-foot level. Alonso will serve as the lab's emissary, connecting researchers with state officials and helping the state provide adequate facilities for the wide range of experiments people want to bring to Lead.

"I really enjoy this," Alonso said. "We're setting up a lab here, interfacing a large community of researchers with the facilities here."

His experience includes work a particle accelerator in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where a new lab complex was created to study nuclear physics, and the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in California in the particle accelerator program there.

He said the infrastructures are similar between Lead and Oak Ridge, which gives him experience with the state's needs and schedule.

"It's an extremely aggressive schedule that we are dealing with," Alonso said.

The state is sending crews underground, securing the shafts that lead to the 4,850-level. After that is done, work begins to pump out water that has been seeping into the mine since it closed in 2002. The water has likely reached the 5,000-foot level, putting time pressure on the entire project.

Alonso also expressed his enthusiasm for the potential of the project. He said some "extremely crucial experiments" are on the horizon for the lab. "They are very sensitive (experiments) that have a bearing on our understanding of nature," he said. "They are extremely difficult to do on the surface."

Many of the experiments will search for particles to support theories in a difficult environment. He compared the search for subatomic particles among a density of other particles that bombard Earth every day to looking for a needle in a haystack.

Placing a laboratory underground filters out the unwanted matter. "The haystack gets smaller the deeper you go, and it's easier to see the needle," the former physics teacher said.