



Office of the Chancellor

University of Missouri-Columbia

FAXED
4/16/01

April 16, 2001

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David B. Matthews, Director
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Subject: NRC Concerns About A Chilling Effect at the University of
Missouri-Columbia Research Reactor (Office of Investigations
Report No. 4-2000-029)

Dear Mr. Matthews:

In a March 5, 2001, letter, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) informed the University of Missouri-Columbia Research Reactor (MURR) of its concerns regarding the potential existence of a chilling atmosphere at the facility. The letter requested that MURR provide: (1) an assessment by the University of the freedom of MURR employees to report problems without fear of retaliation and (2) an assessment by the University of the continuing effectiveness of corrective actions taken to address the past chilling effect at the reactor. This letter also noted that an extension to the requested submittal date would be considered by the NRC where good cause is shown. On March 9, 2001, the NRC provided a supplemental letter to MURR, which noted that a decision will be made regarding whether a public meeting is necessary after MURR submits the requested information.

Significant progress has been made regarding both of the NRC requests. MURR is currently evaluating information that will provide an indication of the degree of safety conscious work environment at MURR. For example, University consultants have developed and distributed a survey to over a hundred MURR-related employees in an attempt to gather candid views of the MURR work environment from a safety conscious work environment perspective. We are attempting to allow adequate time for the workforce to respond to this survey to maximize the statistical value of the information gathered and want to allow adequate time to evaluate the responses, when received. Also, MURR consultants are in the process of conducting interviews of a sampling of MURR-related personnel to assess their comfort level regarding raising safety issues.

Regarding the second matter, an extensive and comprehensive effort to identify and evaluate all actions taken by MURR during and subsequent to the 1994 chilling atmosphere events is ongoing. MURR appreciates the NRC sharing the OI report summary excerpted in the March 5 submittal. As you may be aware, the text of this

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submittal was requested promptly after we received the NRC's March 5, 2001 letter. That document was not provided to MURR (pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)) request until recently. In addition, MURR only received part of the OI report in response to the FOIA request. Exhibits and attachments which may provide additional insight into specific NRC and workforce concerns were not provided by the NRC. Therefore, an additional FOIA request has been made seeking the release of this additional and potentially informative information. We hope that this information will be forthcoming in the near future. We believe that a thorough review of the OI report and its attachments is necessary to ensure that all NRC and workforce concerns regarding this matter are adequately addressed in our submittal.

Notwithstanding the progress made in preparing a response to the NRC request, MURR does not believe that it will have complete results of these efforts nor will we have time to analyze the full OI report prior to the NRC-requested May 3, 2001 due date for submitting the above information. Therefore, consistent with the NRC's comment regarding possible delays in providing the requested information, I hereby request that MURR be allowed to submit the requested information 30 days after receipt of the FOIA request for OI report exhibits and attachments. We believe that this extension will better enable MURR to provide the NRC with a thorough and complete submittal, which responds to NRC concerns, and will result in a comprehensive plan for future actions. We are convinced that these actions will better ensure that a safety conscious work environment is maintained at MURR.

We continue to believe that after you have reviewed our assessments and actions, the NRC will agree that MURR has taken reasonable steps to minimize the likelihood of a chilling atmosphere. Please promptly contact me if you do not concur with our revised submittal date.

Sincerely yours,



Richard L. Wallace
Chancellor

SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME:

this 16th day of April 2001

Notary Public (Print name) Barbara A. Aufranc

Notary Public (Signature) Barbara A. Aufranc

My Commission Expires: 5/3/03

BARBARA A. AUFRANC
NOTARY PUBLIC
NOTARY SEAL
STATE OF MISSOURI
BOONE COUNTY
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: MAY 3, 2003