

February 5, 2002

Dr. Jonathan R. Cole
Provost & Dean of Faculties
Office of the Provost
205 Low, Columbia University
New York, NY 10025

Dear Dr. Cole:

SUBJECT: CLOSURE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY TEST FACILITY

The U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has conducted extensive thermal-hydraulic research over the past 25 years to insure the safe operation of nuclear power plants in this country. As part of this effort, we have designed, constructed, operated and maintained numerous experimental facilities and are well aware of the costs associated with their existence. These facilities have not only supported our mission, but have also provided a wealth of information that has benefitted thermal-hydraulic researchers worldwide.

At Columbia University, you have a unique testing facility known as Heat Transfer Research Facility (HTRF). This experimental facility has been used to generate departure from nucleate boiling (DNB) data for nuclear rod bundles, and is an important part of industry's nuclear design process. Nearly all rod bundles in pressurized water reactors today reference DNB data and correlations from the HTRF as part of their design basis. While the U.S. NRC does not require the use of this particular facility to license nuclear fuel, nor has plans to conduct our own research there, we recognize the facility's historical value and continued importance to the U.S. nuclear industry.

We have been made aware that Columbia University is considering closure of the HTRF. No doubt, there are competing priorities for the space this facility occupies. However, we urge you to consider the value of this facility in reaching your decision. Its closure will likely force the research performed in this facility overseas and represent a loss to the U. S. at a time when there is a growing concern over the closure of experimental facilities supporting nuclear related research.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

cc: Dr. Zvi Galil
Dr. George Rupp

bcc: C. Brinkman, Westinghouse
David Modeen, NEI

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