UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

College of Engineering

[redacted]

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April 17, 1996

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Dr. W. Vernetson, Director of Nuclear Facilities
Region III
801 Warrenville Road
Lisle, IL 60532-4351

SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF NEW DIRECTOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI RESEARCH REACTOR (MURR)

Dear Dr. Vernetson,

I am concerned that [redacted] from the [redacted] has been appointed on a temporary basis, and what is expected to be on a permanent basis, a Director of MURR. [redacted] has little experience for this job. All past Directors of MURR have had great experience working at reactors for many years and have a knowledge of Health Physics and Reactor Physics. [redacted] has none of this experience necessary for the safe operation of the reactor. To my knowledge, [redacted] has never performed an experiment at MURR, been issued a film badge at MURR or elsewhere, and has never taken the Health Physics annual safety test. His knowledge of reactor operation is zero.

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I believe that this appointment has been made by [redacted] based on political pressure from a few campus professors, and not made in the best interest of the safe operation of MURR. As a member of the Reactor Advisory Committee (RAC), I have listened to [redacted] philosophy for the last year. It is his intention to close staff positions at MURR and convert them to faculty positions, a number of which would end up in his department. During this process, MURR would loose key personnel necessary for the safe operation of the reactor. I can clearly say that the staff a MURR do not trust [redacted] at all. I have received many phone calls

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since this appointment on Friday, April 12, 1996, from staff at MURR and all have deep concerns for their jobs and the safety of MURR unde[redacted] administration. When [redacted] was [redacted] at the University of Missouri-Columbia, relations between faculty of his department and physicists at MURR rapidly worsened. [redacted] and a few other professors in physics have a political agenda and do not have the best interests of MURR at heart. I fear in a effort to carry out this agenda, safety at the reactor will be compromised. Certainly [redacted] knowledge of reactors in general would not be of use in an emergency. I feel that safety at MURR will be compromised to some extend with [redacted] in charge. It appears to me that some investigation of his lack of experience is required. Since this appears to involve politics, I would appreciate it if my name were not used.

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Very Sincerely,

[redacted]

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[redacted]
University of Missouri-Columbia
114 Jesse Hall • Columbia, MO 65211 • Telephone (573) 882-6596 • Fax [573] 882-0080

April 15, 1996

Seymour H. Weiss, Director
Non-Power Reactors and Decommissioning Project Directorate
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop 0-11-B-20
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Dr. Weiss:

I want to thank you and Dr. Adams for your kindness and quick response to my questions regarding temporary changes I am making at the University of Missouri Nuclear Reactor. Essentially, as I describe to you, I am eager to let our Director, Dr. James Rhyne, devote more energy and attention to our research mission. Recent internal and external reviews have strongly encouraged me to take advantage of the wonderful research opportunities that having our nuclear reactor provide.

To enable Dr. Rhyne to focus his full attention on research for at least four months, I am asking [redacted] to become the chief operating officer at MURR. [redacted] role is temporary but it will serve two important purposes for us. First, it will enable Dr. Rhyne to devote the energy to our research mission that he and the faculty desire. Second, it will permit [redacted] to become more familiar with the day-to-day activities in a complex nuclear reactor center and to be better able to inform our advisory committee about nuances that can only be learned through direct experience.

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I will send you another letter when I end this brief experiment.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

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