

Strike averted at VY

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Brattleboro Reformer

Monday, August 27

BRATTLEBORO -- A strike by union employees at Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant was averted late Friday night after Entergy announced it had reached a second tentative agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The first agreement, reached last week, was rejected by the 157 members Tuesday, who said it didn't do enough to protect retirement benefits, forced them to pay too much for medical benefits and had a wage package that didn't keep up with cost of living increases.

Union representatives and Entergy went back to the negotiating table Wednesday and, aided by a pair of federal mediators, were able to hammer out a second contract, on which union members will vote Monday.

Union employees account for about one-third of those who work at the power plant in Vernon, which has operated since 1972.

Recently, Entergy received approval to increase the power level of its boiling water reactor in order to create more electricity.

Entergy also has an application before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to extend its license for Yankee from 2012 to 2032.

Earlier this month, the NRC announced it had found the plant's extended operation would have no significant environmental impacts.

Its final decision is expected early next year.

Details of the new contract won't be available until union members vote on and accept it. If it is rejected a second time, the union must notify Entergy 72 hours before it plans to take a work action, such as walking off the floor.

The tentative contract averted a strike that was scheduled to occur at 3:30 today.

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