

RAS 14460

PO Box 6001  
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October 12, 2007

Office of the Secretary  
Rulemakings and Adjudicatory Staff  
US Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington DC 20555-0001

DOCKETED  
USNRC

October 17, 2007 (3:58pm)

OFFICE OF SECRETARY  
RULEMAKINGS AND  
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Docket No. 50-271-LR

Alex Karlin, Chairman  
c/o Marcia Carpentier, Esq., Law Clerk  
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel  
Mail Stop T-3 E2C  
US Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington DC 20555-0001

**Re: Vermont Yankee Renewal Application  
No: I-07-050**

*Limited Written Statement for Consideration*

While I was present at the first session of the ASLB at Brattleboro VT on October 11, 2007, I declined to make a statement, thinking my comments would be too general and non-specific. However, upon further reflection, I submit the following for your consideration:

There was some discussion by both Mr. Shaffer and Mr. Sachs about the applicability of the "old car" analogy to the maintenance at Vermont Yankee. As Mr. Shaffer pointed out, by reference to his son's "classic car," the issue is not whether one can repair an old vehicle, it is whether one has the will, motivation, resources and determination to do so. [Sach's letter, *Brattleboro Reformer*, October 9, 2007, pg. 4, <[www.reformer.com](http://www.reformer.com)>, enclosed for reference.]

With that analogy in mind, I beg your indulgence by referencing another analogy. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to board a seagoing Egyptian vessel at a US seaport. I was ushered into the chief mate's quarters and was greeted during our discussion with water dripping from the ceiling near the light fixture. When I asked to use the 'head,' the chief mate informed me that the toilet needed to be bailed after use. While that vessel may have been able to make at least that trans-oceanic voyage, what does that inattention to ordinary maintenance say about how other, perhaps more crucial, maintenance

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schedules were being followed? What level of scrutiny would you use to assess that vessel's seaworthiness?

In applying this analogy to Vermont Yankee, consider then, from a common sense perspective, the following:

¶ Consider whether the reliance on surveillance cameras rather than hands on inspection, now considered to be an explanation for the partial collapse of the cooling fan structure, is being similarly inappropriately used in other areas of the plant.

¶ Reference a photograph that appeared on page six of the October 11-17, 2007 *Valley Advocate*, [[www.valleyadvocate.com](http://www.valleyadvocate.com)] enclosed, labeled "V60-3B-STOP". This photo purportedly depicts the area where the value shut down, causing the SCRAM. The accompanying article quotes a former nuclear technician who gives the opinion that the duct tape patch is likely on a pipe that does not carry radioactive material and therefore is non-dangerous. But, he also notes the evidence of scraped paint and rust on the equipment in the photo, leading one to question the housekeeping and maintenance schedules.

¶ Note that recently the workers at Vermont Yankee threatened to strike during the final hours of contract negotiations. While not privy to the internal discussions prior to the strike announcement, I would ask you to consider that such a level of worker dissatisfaction in a plant should be a cause for further concern and investigation. One of the issues that was publicized involved the disparity between higher executives' salaries and workers' salary increases. Might not an inquiry into the amount allocated to plant maintenance be reasonable?

I would submit that these very recent indicators at Vermont Yankee argue that a higher level of scrutiny be used to assess the "seaworthiness" of the plant.

Thank you for your time and attention and your further consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Oeser

Enclosures  
cc: Gary Sachs

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

# OPINION

Page 4 Brattleboro Reformer

www.reformer.com

## Nuclear energy is not sustainable

Editor of the *Reformer*:

The article "Nuke plant tries to explain cooling tower collapse" by Dave Gram, Associated Press, Sept. 13, stated, "Norm Rademacher, Vermont Yankee's engineering director, added ... 'What we know now is that the inspection program we have in place needs to be enhanced.'"

This is not the issue.

The issue is that the public, the NRC, the state regulators and the region's state governments need to be convinced that there will not be other deferred maintenance issues that come back to haunt Entergy VY.

Vermont's reactor is beyond its peak of being called "reliable". It is an old reactor. — (opened the same year McGovern got whooped in the election by Richard M. Nixon.)

Old machines are less reliable than new ones. The longer Vermont continues to invest in the old machine as the sole centralized in-state local energy producer for the region, the longer we will be mired in an old inefficient technology. If Entergy VY sought regulatory permission as a new reactor today, it would not win approval.

Repeatedly Vermont Yankee has been likened to an old car. Sooner or later one gets tired of the challenges that old car presents. First it is the brake lines rusting. On top of this the exhaust begins to rattle (see cooling tower cell collapse photo here). Or the oil leaks (on to a transformer causing a spectacular fire circa June 2004.) Then it is the extra sounds as other parts with gears begin to wear out (power up slowly to monitor the frequency of the vibrations lest you bust a duct wall), then the A/C or radio stop working (weather alert radios rarely work as planned and the sirens often do not work effectively) ... and the ignition only works if you hold it just right (thus preventing any more SCRAMs) ... and at one point you decide that the purchase price of a newer used car or a new car is justified.

Fortunately for us, and a bummer for Entergy is that no one as yet sells late model used reactors.

The time is soon, no the time is now, for the Vermont Legislature to determine we are justified in backing, using, and choosing a sustainable source of electricity generation for our fine region.

Nuclear is not sustainable.

Gary Sachs  
Brattleboro, Oct. 4

# Vermont Yankee and the American Duct Tape Council

**P**atching a pipe in a nuclear power plant with duct tape: we thought it would only happen on *Prairie Home Companion*. But this is an actual photo of the part of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant that houses the stop valve (at center) that malfunctioned August 30, causing the plant to surprise its operators by going into a scram. Notice the pipe at the right, with its duct tape patch. Note, too, the places where paint is missing and rust is taking hold. The plant's owner, Entergy of Mississippi, has applied to extend the aging plant's license from its current expiration date of 2012 to 2032.

For comment on this picture we contacted David Lochbaum, a former nuclear technician who is now a nuclear safety expert for the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington. Lochbaum said the pipe probably only carries nonradioactive drainwater, so a flimsy patch on it isn't extremely dangerous.

However, Lochbaum added, if you take into account the patched pipe, the scraped paint, the rust and the dust, "... the housekeeping here is not what the industry norm is. If you go to most plants, you could eat off the floor. ... If this is the way they take care of the equipment they need to make money, what kind of care are they giving the equipment that protects the public?"

On September 6 and 13 the *Advocate* published this photo (*lower right*) of the cooling tower that collapsed at the plant August 21, a photo evidently taken by the same unknown photographer who took the one at top right.

Taking these problems together—the crumbling cooling tower, the scram nine days later and the rundown look of the plant components shown in the photo of the valve—Lochbaum said, "Unless these are two pictures that are totally unlike the rest of the plant, it's not going to make it to 2012, much less 2032. This reactor needs a lot of upgrade." That, he added, would be expensive.

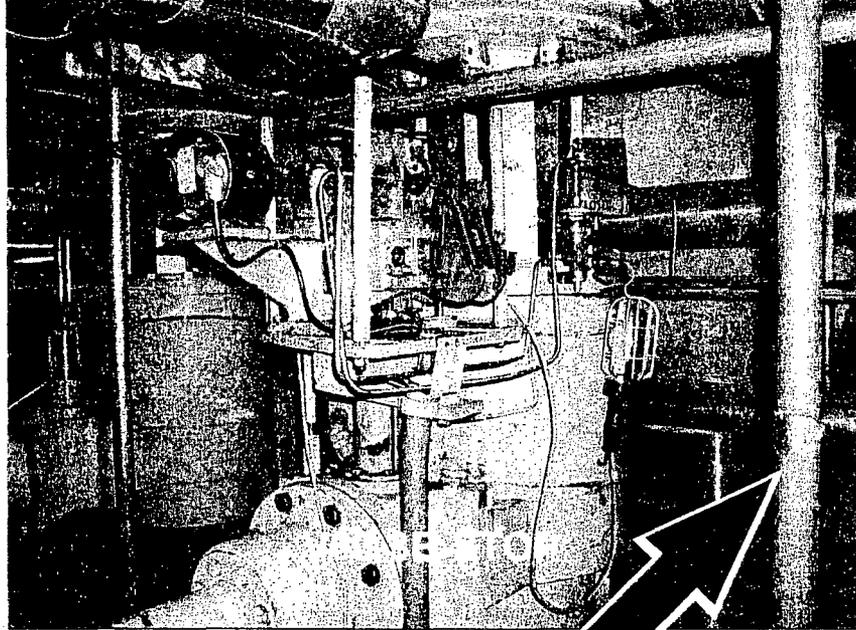
Perhaps too expensive: maybe that's why *Financial Week* just reported that Chicago-based Exelon may buy the five nuclear power plants now owned by Entergy. They are Vermont Yankee; the Pilgrim plant in Plymouth; Indian Point near New York City; the FitzPatrick plant in Oswego, N.Y., and Palisades in South Haven, Mich.

Meanwhile U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont last week confronted Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Dale Klein with the photo of the cooling tower collapse and demanding an independent safety assessment of the plant before the license extension is approved. "I would hope [local residents] trust the NRC," Klein replied.

Retorted Sanders, "They don't."

However, the widely circulated picture by the anonymous photographer brought an admission from Klein that's rare for an NRC official. "When you see that visible collapse," Klein said, "it is a concern, and you would question the maintenance and safety and so forth."

*The NRC will hold a public hearing on the proposed license extension for Vermont Yankee at the Latchis Theatre in Brattleboro Thursday, Oct. 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. and from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. At 6 p.m. there will be a rally at Pliny Park in downtown Brattleboro. In case of rain the rally will be held at the River Garden. For more information contact Bob Bady at 802-254-9098 or go to [www.nukebusters.org](http://www.nukebusters.org).*



PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

