



On an ironically clear and placid day in August 2007, a three story tall cooling tower at the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant collapsed, goring a massive hole in the center of the structure and spewing asbestos, rotting wood, plastic panels, and thousands of gallons of water onto the bank of the Connecticut river.

It later emerged that several employees had expressed concerns about the tower, and that, in the days before the collapse, others heard odd noises from within the structure.

Plant administrators refused to allow reporters onto the property for three days. They insisted the tower was of minimal import, and continued running the reactor.

Nine days after the collapse, Yankee was forced to make a full emergency shut down – known as a SCRAM at boiling water reactors, like those at Japan’s crippled Fukushima plant and Vermont’s Yankee - after a critical reactor valve failed. The proper lubrication had been neglected.

The plant’s response mirrored its reaction to a transformer fire, in 2004. In June of that year, as a stream of dense, chalky smoke billowed from the compound, the governor’s office became irate with the plant for not providing sufficient information, according to an official who worked for the state at the time. A month later, the plant was cited by the NRC for “Failure to make timely notification of status upon declaration of unusual event.”

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