

# **Vt. nuke plant says cooling tower problems should not be part of license review**

By Associated Press

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BRATTLEBORO, Vt. - The company that owns the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant says the collapse of a portion of a cooling tower should not be looked at by federal officials considering whether to extend the plant's operating license for 20 years.

In a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Entergy Nuclear says the cooling towers are not strictly considered "safety" equipment and so are outside the scope of federal review.

The NRC had asked Entergy for any details of age-related degradation of the tower components following the Aug. 21 collapse and gave Entergy 30 days to respond.

NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan said the commission would be studying the Entergy response and determine whether additional information was needed.

The company said the collapse was due to an "iron salt attack" on the lumber that makes up the frame of the cells.

The cooling towers are not directly associated with the nuclear side of the plant. But two of the 11 cells in the affected tower provide a backup emergency cooling system to the reactor.

Entergy Nuclear has asked for permission to extend the operating license of Vermont Yankee for 20 years beyond the current license expires in 2012.

Entergy has maintained that since the towers are not involved in the nuclear side of the plant, or even with the generation of power, they are outside federal review.

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