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What can we honestly expect at Vermont Yankee?

by: [Sue Prent](#)

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Vermont is looking at a whole new relationship with **Entergy**; one in which the town of Vernon will see diminished returns in the way of taxes, and the entire region must rely upon the word of the energy giant that it will live up to its safety and decommissioning commitments despite any temptation to cut and run.

With Entergy anticipating a **40% cutback in staff** at VY, all in all, it's looking more and more like a cup half-empty situation.

That's why stories about Entergy's treatment of its workforce in other locations should have significance for us.

A case in point is the company's **Indian Point** facility, where one employee whistleblower **is suing Entergy** for sidelining him after he complained to authorities about security issues.

In his complaint, **Clifton "Skip" Travis Jr.** alleges that Entergy allowed financial considerations to override good practice in implementing a new perimeter monitoring system without adequate training for staff.

"I understand they're in business to make money ... but my job, my concern, my obligation is to defend that facility against radiological sabotage," Travis said during an interview Wednesday, frequently repeating his belief that a terrorist attack on the plant is inevitable. "It was never my intention to hurt them. ... This is not a vendetta. This is holding them accountable."

In his lawsuit, Mr. Travis says that the company rushed installation of a new security system in 2011 in order to avoid hefty fines from the NRC, and neglected important training components. He maintains that subsequent tests of the system under simulated terrorist attack, have resulted in consistent failure.

Apart from frequent system crashes, poor training and operational policy seem to be key issues.

Travis claims that the company encourages security staff to bring laptops so they can watch movies and play video games to keep from falling asleep during their shifts. He said that many staff members routinely remove the batteries from the lights on their weapons so they can use them in their personal electronic equipment and often don't replace them.

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Further details of the lawsuit are equally hair-raising. Quite apart from the treatment meted out to an employee with the temerity to cry foul is the company's alleged reluctance at Indian Point to invest in adequate training and personnel.

Once Vermont Yankee has been moth-balled, will the monitoring staff be similarly distracted, undertrained and under-deployed? We've already experienced maintenance neglect while the plant was still turning a profit.

In Entergy's endgame at these geriatric reactor facilities we see the flaw in for-profit operation of nuclear reactors. When they were all shiny and new, accompanied by hefty government incentives and insurance guarantees, operators were already looking every year to improve yield for their shareholders.

Once a tipping point had been reached at which no more efficiencies could be introduced without bending the rules, the NRC became engaged as an accomplice in enabling the continued profitability of aging reactors.

Now, there are some serious failures in the for-profit model, and **Entergy Vermont Yankee**, still under corporate control, is expected to transition to what is essentially a not-for-profit model, while upholding its safety obligations in the presence of escalating outside menace.

To me, that seems like an unrealistic expectation. I wish it were not, but fear that it is.

*I am very proud to be associated with **Fairewinds Energy Education** in a non-technical capacity. As always, the opinions I share on Green Mountain Daily are my own alone and not those of Fairewinds.*

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