Venting Failure in the Nuclear Reactors at Fukushima Daiichi

After the earthquake and tsunami, the overheated fuel rods gave off hydrogen gas, which built up in the torus. Workers should have been able to open a valve, channeling the hydrogen through a hardened vent to the exhaust stack. The valve failed, probably because the mechanism relies on a series of electrical connections that did not work.

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Sources: Tepco; General Electric; Nuclear Regulatory Commission