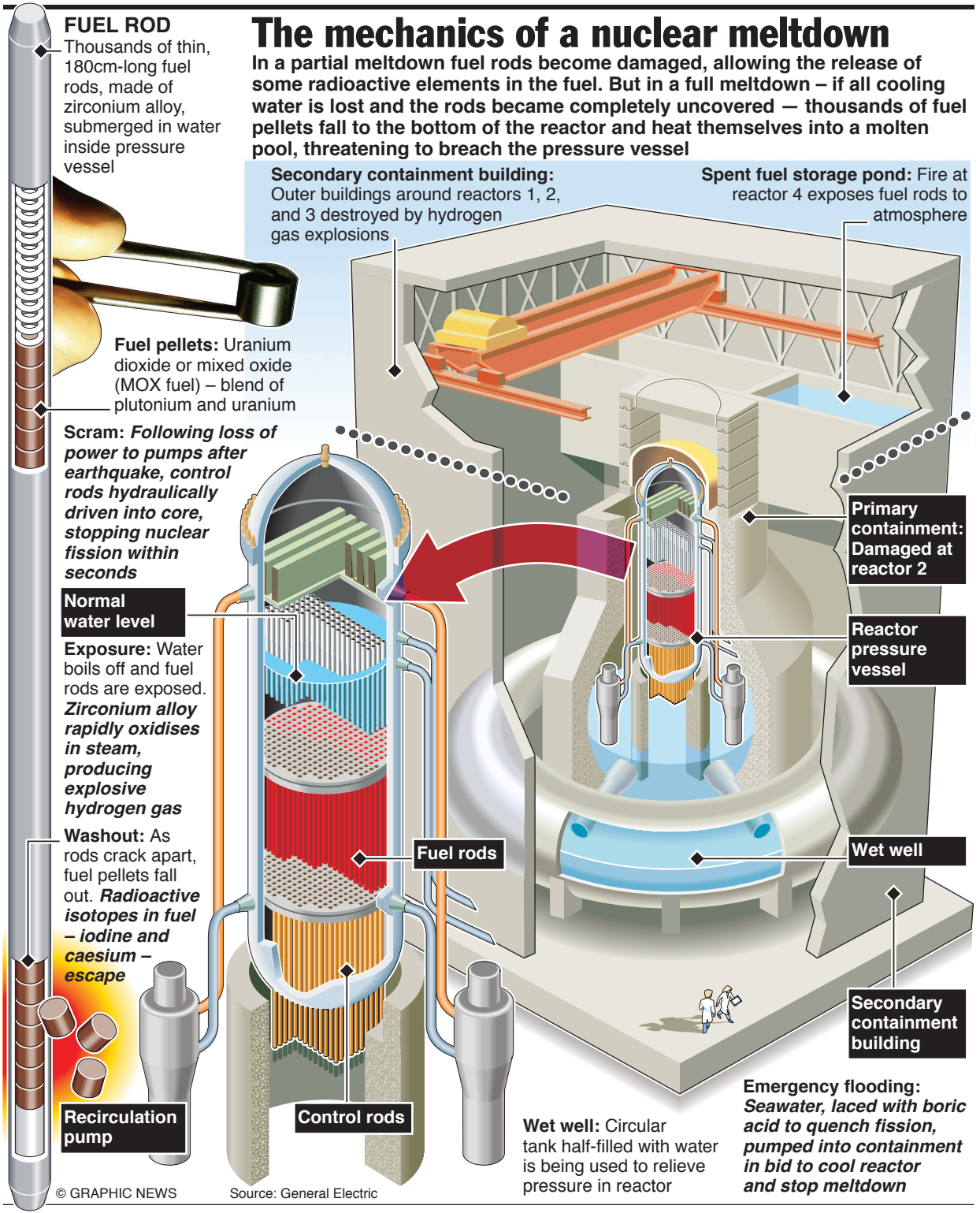
The mechanics of a nuclear meltdown

In a partial meltdown fuel rods become damaged, allowing the release of some radioactive elements in the fuel. But in a full meltdown – if all cooling water is lost and the rods became completely uncovered — thousands of fuel pellets fall to the bottom of the reactor and heat themselves into a molten pool, threatening to breach the pressure vessel



Source: General Electric