

**DOCKETED**

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*Comment Received From: Natalie Simmons*  
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## **Opposition to BESS Facility**

I am a resident of the Capistrano Royal Homeowners Association. We are a community of 108 homes located on a hillside across the freeway less than 4,000 feet east of the plant, and directly downwind from the site of the proposed BESS in San Juan Capistrano. I am opposed to the location of this project.

### **Public Safety:**

Whilst I appreciate the need for these battery energy storage facilities, I am opposed to locating them so close to large communities that are vulnerable to fires. All the other projects are out in the desert or central valley very far away from residential neighborhoods. This location is not in any way similar, there are hundreds of thousands of people living within just a few miles of this site. The location for the new storage facility has recently been rezoned into a "High" Fire Hazard Risk Zone. This combined with the windy nature of the location means our neighborhood is directly in the line of any potential fire embers that might result from this facility. The recent fire at the Moss Landing site shows us that there are real risks of this happening. The developer claims that the new Tesla Megapack LFP technology is safer, but only marginally, a fire can still happen. A lithium fire cannot be extinguished with water, and there is no built-in fire detection or suppression inside these containers. The recommended strategy is to let it burn out, and to spray water on the neighboring containers to keep them cool, which can take days. During this time toxic fumes containing heavy metals and embers will be released into our air. Further, contaminated water resources will be poured out into the sensitive OSO Creek "FOR DAYS!"

At a virtual public outreach meeting in February, Compass Energy presented a misleading plume analysis that showed the light winds going along the valley away from homes. In their application to the CEC the developer shows wind analysis from the North to South and East to West. However, the reality is that the prevailing winds here blow daily from the West to the East across the valley directly towards our community. The winds are modified by the topography of the land along the canyon that is Highland Drive. Only when there is a Santa Ana wind event does the wind reverse and blow East to West, then it will blow towards large housing communities in Laguna Niguel!

If we would have to evacuate our community the only exit road is Highland and Ranch Viejo Road, and this takes us directly towards the fire. Making a left turn from Highland onto RVR away from the site is already difficult to make during normal traffic. Our only option may be to turn right and go closer to the fire. There is no other way to get out.

In addition, there is another equally large Association next door, Stoneridge, whose only exit is also Highland. Another neighboring Association, Village San Juan, has 691 homes and is even closer to the proposed site. All these associations' exit routes

converge on the same street - Rancho Viejo Road. Also located nearby are several schools and assisted living communities. In the event of an evacuation Rancho Viejo Road will quickly become gridlocked.

Community Benefit is not clear:

The AB-205 Opt-in process requires the developer to show benefits to the community as part of the application. At a telephone-based town hall in February the developer claimed \$50 million in tax revenue benefit to the local communities, but they have not provided any specific detail of how this number has been derived in their application to the CEC. The city of San Juan Capistrano has also written to the CEC on March 28th expressing concerns about the contents of community benefit plan submitted as part of the application process. Clearly the City did not feel that the benefits claimed are real or worth it to the community.

Land Use:

Another reason this project application should be refused is because the land is designated open space, not industrial. This land was donated to Saddleback Church to provide a public resource for recreational and religious purposes. Allowing this area to become an industrial zone is just wrong, this is an historic and beautiful city.

For these reasons I respectfully request that you deny the AB-205 Opt-in application. These projects should be located further away from residential neighborhoods, schools, and assisted living communities. Please consider the impact on our local communities and put our safety and economic wellbeing first.

Natalie Simmons