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Public Comment, ALCO OES, Preparedness and Response Recommendations

Dear Commissioners,

As the Emergency Manager for the Alameda County Office of Emergency Services (OES), I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Potentia-Virdii Battery Energy Storage Project in Alameda County.

Alameda County recognizes the vital role large-scale battery energy storage facilities play in strengthening local and regional energy resiliency, particularly in mitigating the impacts of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and other grid disruptions. Projects like this support our collective climate and energy goals by providing a more stable and sustainable energy infrastructure.

That said, battery storage facilities also present unique fire, safety, and public health considerations that require comprehensive planning and coordination. Recent incidents at similar sites in California, including Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, underscore the significant resources required to manage lithium-ion battery fires and their residual heat, toxic emissions, and re-ignition potential.

To ensure a safe and resilient outcome for this project, Alameda County OES recommends:

1. A robust Site Emergency Response Plan (ERP): The ERP should address cascading battery cell fires, residual heat, and re-ignition potential, with clearly defined roles for site safety officers and coordination with local fire, law enforcement, public health, and emergency management agencies.
2. Integrated Alerting and Public Information Processes: The facility should establish and fund a public alerting and notification process developed in coordination with Alameda County OES, ensuring residents and businesses downwind of the site can receive timely protective action messages during an incident.
3. Public Health and Education Outreach: Ongoing community education should help nearby residents understand the facility's safety measures, potential hazards, and what to do in the event of a large-scale fire or release.
4. Support for Local Response Agencies: The project proponent should consider allocating resources or agreements to strengthen local emergency response capabilities—training, equipment, and interagency coordination—before the facility becomes operational.

With these measures incorporated, the Potentia-Virdii Battery Energy Storage Project can enhance regional energy resilience while ensuring local preparedness and safety. Alameda County OES stands ready to collaborate with the project team and the California Energy Commission to help develop practical, protective measures that safeguard our communities and first responders.

Respectfully,

////Signed////

Brentt Blaser

Emergency Manager

Alameda County Office of Emergency Services

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