

## DOCKETED

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## **Gas fired power plants unnecessary, unhealthy, and unjust**

Climate 911 Comment on the Puente Power Plant

As health professionals dedicated to promoting the health of our patients and communities, we oppose the construction of new gas fired power plants and support the ISO's proposal to study alternatives before approving any new fossil fuel fired plants.

### **Unnecessary**

California already has more gas-fired power plants than it needs, with plants operating below capacity, closing prematurely, and producing a projected oversupply of electricity through 2020. (LA Times, 2017) but our state still lacks sufficient clean energy infrastructure to meet its clean energy commitments. New gas fired plants offer no economic advantage and divert crucial investment away from clean energy, energy efficiency, and energy storage, making it impossible for our state to meet its goals.

### **Unhealthy**

With a 20 year global warming potential 80 times higher than carbon dioxide, upstream and downstream methane emissions from natural gas contribute significantly to climate change. Climate related wildfires, heat waves, floods, air particulates and ozone cause thousands of excess emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths in our state each year and the numbers are rising. Due to methane's short atmospheric lifespan, replacing natural gas with clean energy is one of the few opportunities we have to slow global warming.

Natural gas fired power plants also emit nitrogen oxides, precursors of ground level ozone. Ozone is well known to exacerbate lower respiratory disease; cause childhood asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and premature elder deaths. The majority of our state's population resides in areas in non attainment for ozone. Any additional ozone contributions from power plants add to their exposure and hamper efforts at air quality improvement.

### **Unjust**

A 2001 analysis of the siting of proposed peaker gas fired power plants in California found that these plants are systematically located in Black, Latino, and low income communities, exacerbating pre existing health disparities and harming the health of our most vulnerable citizens. This discriminatory process continues to the present day. For example, Oxnard, location of the proposed Puente Plant is predominantly populated by low income people of color. According to Cal Enviro Screen, the communities nearest to and downwind of the proposed Oxnard plant already suffer elevated burdens of asthma and cardiovascular disease which render them especially vulnerable to both climate change and environmental pollution. EXECUTIVE ORDER B-30-15 directs state agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prioritize the protection of the state's most vulnerable citizens. California Energy Commission approval of the Puente project would violate the Governor's directive on both counts.

We are fortunate to have alternatives to natural gas which are more protective of public health and our state's most vulnerable citizens. The Public Utilities Commission and the Energy Commission must reevaluate California's future energy needs, and the potential for these to be met by clean alternatives, efficiency, and advanced storage before approving construction of any new fossil fuel fired power plants.

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