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## **Opposition to Proposed Compass Energy Storage Project (24-OPT-02)**

THIS IS WHY WE CANNOT HAVE THIS HAZARDOUS LITHIUM STORAGE FACILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY!!!

<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/northern-california-lithium-battery-fire-moss-landing-monterey-county/>

Jan 17, 2025

Huge Northern California lithium battery storage fire called "Three Mile Island" event for the emerging industry

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The massive fire at one of the world's largest lithium battery storage plants in Northern California has shaken a local community worried about possible long-term impacts and brought scrutiny to the emerging industry's safety practices.

The fire at a power plant and battery facility operated by Vistra Energy in the Monterey County community of Moss Landing began Thursday afternoon, forcing evacuations and the closure of coastal Highway 1. A Monterey County official on Friday called it the largest fire ever of its kind.

The Moss Landing Power Plant, about 95 miles south of San Francisco, is owned and operated by Vistra subsidiary Dynegy and also houses two independent battery storage plants. The plant that is burning is owned by Vistra Energy while a second battery storage facility on the same site is owned by Pacific Gas and Electric, which said the incident was not a PG&E event.

There have been no injuries reported in the fire, which is being allowed to burn itself out as is standard procedure for such fires, according to the Monterey County Emergency Operations Center. However, the smoke from the fire has forced other residents not under evacuation orders to close their windows and remain indoors.

Monterey County Supervisor Glenn Church called the incident a "Three-Mile Island event" for the industry, referencing the 1979 partial meltdown at a Pennsylvania nuclear power plant, the worst nuclear accident in U.S. history. The battery energy storage systems industry, known by the acronym BESS, develops systems to store energy from electric, solar, electric, wind, and other energy systems.

Massive battery projects involving hundreds of megawatts are becoming more common in the U.S. and across the globe. California law requires investor-owned utilities to store

energy and the state is expected to need 50 gigawatts of battery storage to meet its 2045 goal of getting all of its power from carbon-free sources from the current 7 gigawatts today, according to Reuters.

"I think that this is, uh, can best be described as a worst-case scenario of a disaster that's happened here. Nobody really predicted anything on this line," said Church. "This is really a lot more than just a fire, it's a wake-up call for this industry. And if we're going to be moving ahead with sustainable energy we need to have safe battery systems in place."

Church said he has fielded numerous questions from his constituents on why it happened, how it happened, and how to prevent a similar accident in the future. Church added it is the fourth fire at the site, a former Pacific Gas and Electric facility, since 2019 and said he and other county officials were previously assured it would not happen again. He called for increased safety protocols for the industry at federal, state, local, and private levels.

The inferno burning on the shore of Monterey Bay is also situated next to environmentally sensitive areas such as Elkhorn Slough, designated a "wetland slough of international importance." Church said while he understands the need for the battery industry, he said the transition to sustainable energy "cannot, will not come before the safety of families and environment."

"This never should have happened," said a visibly shaken Church. "And so, there is obviously some gaps going on here of information, there's some gaps going forth here on safety, there's gaps going here that are going to take some time to understand, but they gotta be - there's gotta be lessons that we learn from this."

Church said it was the largest fire ever of its kind and also called for an independent investigation into the incident.

"If renewable energy is going to be a future, it really needs to rest with safe energy," said Church. "And I'm not going to rest and leave this until I know we have a safe environment and a safe operation in the Moss Landing area."

Texas-based Vistra Energy senior director of community affairs Brad Watson also spoke at the press conference, saying the company considers itself part of the community and has taken the incident very seriously. Watson apologized to all those affected by the current situation.

"We are hurting today because we know primarily it's impacted and disrupted the people who live around our site, our neighbors, our friends, and businesses, and for that, we are sincerely sorry," said Watson.

Watson said it will listen to the community residents on how the company can consider ways to provide assistance. The company was contracting with an air quality monitoring company to keep residents informed of any possible health impacts from the fire's smoke and coordinate its findings with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The cause of the fire has not been determined as of Friday afternoon. It was still burning but at a small rate compared to Thursday night, North County Fire Protection District Chief Joel Mendoza said.

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