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Fire Concern for Economically Vulnerable Community

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



February 15, 2025

California Energy Commission
1516 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Fire Concern for Economically Vulnerable Community

Dear California Energy Commission,

I am writing on behalf of Unidos South OC, a community-based nonprofit organization serving a neighborhood located just 1 mile from the proposed site for the Compass Energy Storage Project in San Juan Capistrano. Our organization is dedicated to advocating for the well-being of residents in this area, which has the lowest median household income in all of South Orange County.

As advocates for our neighbors, we have deep concerns about the fire hazards posed by the proposed Compass Energy Storage Project, and the increasing reports of fires at lithium battery storage facilities have heightened those concerns. If this project were to experience a fire during a Santa Ana windstorm, the potential impact to our neighborhood would be catastrophic. The surrounding hills fill with dried brush every Fall, and the nearby creek bed creates a funnel for the Santa Ana winds, with a capacity to carry live embers over a mile.

Directly in the path of this wind tunnel is our neighborhood of focus. Our neighborhood's construction is over 50 years old, with outdated infrastructure and lacking fire-retardant roofing. As a result, the safety of 4,250 residents is of utmost concern. If a fire were to occur, it would pose an extreme danger to our low-income neighbors.

We respectfully urge the California Energy Commission to reconsider the proposed location of the Compass Energy Storage Project. Our community cannot afford to bear the risk of such a potentially catastrophic event. We ask that the Commission carefully assess the safety concerns posed by this site and explore alternative locations that would not place economically vulnerable residents in jeopardy.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We hope to see the Commission ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Heather Chapman
Co-Executive Director