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Comment Received From: christel pearson franklin loan center
Submitted On: 2/15/2025
Docket Number: 24-OPT-02

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

Dear California Energy Commissioners,

I am writing to you out of a profound sense of urgency and concern as a resident of Laguna Niguel. My home is less than a mile from the proposed battery energy storage system (BESS) facility site, and the dangers this project poses are not just abstract risks—they are imminent threats to my family's safety, health, and well-being. See attached.

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Dear California Energy Commissioners,

I am writing to you out of a profound sense of urgency and concern as a resident of Laguna Niguel. My home is less than a mile from the proposed battery energy storage system (BESS) facility site, and the dangers this project poses are not just abstract risks—**they are imminent threats to my family's safety, health, and well-being.**

The project applicant, Compass Energy Storage LLC, plans to construct, own, and operate an approximately 250-megawatt BESS facility on a 13-acre project site in San Juan Capistrano, immediately adjacent to the eastern border of Laguna Niguel. This site is alarmingly close to residential neighborhoods, including mine, and is within a designated general open space hillside surrounded by native plants and significant vegetation. The proximity to residential areas heightens the potential risk to our community to an unacceptable degree.

Immediate and Catastrophic Fire Hazard

The proposed location of this BESS facility poses an immediate and severe wildfire risk. Lithium-iron phosphate batteries are known to ignite rapidly and release toxic gases if overheated, creating a catastrophic fire hazard. These fires burn hotter and faster than other fires and cannot be easily extinguished. They can reignite days or even weeks after being put out, presenting a persistent and terrifying threat. Imagine the chaos and destruction a battery fire would cause, given the natural vegetation, steep terrain, and surrounding landscape.

Recent Devastation and Personal Stakes

Just a month ago, Los Angeles was ravaged by massive fires, leaving a trail of destruction and heartbreak. The idea that such devastation could strike even closer to home is chilling. As a parent of children with autism and asthma, I am acutely aware of how dangerous and traumatic an evacuation would be for them. The exposure to toxic smoke would exacerbate their conditions and put their lives at risk.

Unacceptable Proximity to Homes

The proposed site is less than 1,500 feet from Laguna Niguel residences, exponentially increasing the danger to our community. In the last decade, there have been 23 wildfires within a five-mile radius of the proposed site. Firefighters are forced to take a containment approach with lithium battery fires. Should a fire break containment, all nearby homes and businesses would be in immediate peril. This imminent fire risk exacerbates the homeowner's insurance crisis, making it nearly impossible for residents to secure adequate coverage.

Severe Environmental and Health Risks

The environmental and public health risks are staggering. Lithium batteries emit toxic gases within seconds of igniting, leading to severe air pollution and public health dangers. Any fire would generate significant risk for our first responders, who would be exposed to hazardous toxic gases that cause debilitating health impacts. The toxic emissions would also pose a significant public health risk to surrounding communities. The potential contamination of water sources like the Oso and Arroyo Creek waterbed further exacerbates these risks, jeopardizing the San Juan Creek Watershed and ultimately the Pacific Ocean.

Community Disruption and Lack of Local Control

A major incident could disrupt the lives of nearby residents in unimaginable ways. The use of the California Energy Commission's "Opt-in" process could limit local authorities' ability to oversee and regulate the project effectively, leaving our community vulnerable.

Proven Risks and Urgency for Action

We cannot ignore the proven risks associated with lithium-ion BESS facilities. The convergence of flammable battery technology, inadequate first responder training, and proximity to residential areas creates a perfect storm for disaster. Recent incidents like the fires in Monterey County and Warwick, NY, highlight the urgency of addressing these dangers now, before tragedy strikes.

I implore the California Energy Commission to prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of California residents above all else. The proposed Compass Energy Storage project is a ticking time bomb waiting to go off. I respectfully but fervently urge you to reject this project application and prioritize public safety and community quality of life.

Sincerely,

Christel Pearson

Crystal Cay Resident

