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*Comment Received From: Tara Beier
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Urgent Concerns Regarding Proposed Compass Energy Storage Project

Dear [City Council Member/Mayor/City Manager],

I am writing as a concerned resident of Laguna Niguel to express my strong opposition to the proposed Compass Energy Storage Project in San Juan Capistrano. The facility's proximity to our community raises significant safety, environmental, and health concerns that cannot be overlooked.

Fire and Explosion Risks:

Lithium-ion battery energy storage systems (BESS) are known to pose fire hazards. In the event of thermal runaway, these batteries can release flammable and toxic gases, including hydrogen fluoride, which can cause severe respiratory issues and environmental contamination.

A notable incident occurred in January 2025 at the Moss Landing Energy Storage Facility, one of the world's largest lithium-ion battery storage plants. The fire led to the evacuation of approximately 1,500 residents and raised serious concerns about air quality and long-term health impacts due to the release of hazardous substances.

Environmental and Health Impacts:

The aftermath of lithium battery fires includes the release of toxic metals and chemicals that can contaminate soil and water sources. The Moss Landing incident, for example, resulted in elevated levels of heavy metals in nearby ecosystems.

Additionally, the cleanup efforts following such fires are extensive and costly. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has had to undertake major hazardous material removal operations in wildfire-affected areas involving lithium-ion batteries, underscoring the serious long-term consequences for public health and the environment.

Personal Experience:

I recently relocated from Los Angeles where I lived in Santa Monica, just 13 miles from the Pacific Palisades burn site because of the devastating wildfires that have affected that region and the broader Los Angeles area. The impacts of these fires have been profound, not just in terms of immediate destruction but in long-term environmental and health consequences.

In addition to the Pacific Palisades fire, the Eaton Fire has left behind toxic chemical residues in the soil. Chemical runoff has entered the ocean, killing marine life and washing up along the shores of Santa Monica, Malibu, and the surrounding coastline. Now, long after the fires, officials are finally beginning to test the soil in Pasadena and Altadena schoolyardsâ€”only to find dangerous levels of lead, asbestos, and other hazardous substances. These lingering toxins present serious long-term health risks, especially for children and vulnerable residents.

I chose to move to Laguna Niguel after extensive research because it is one of the cleanest and safest communities in Southern California. The prospect of placing a lithium battery energy storage facility just 1,500 feet away from our homes completely undermines that safety. Itâ€™s horrifying to think that the same dangers I moved away from could now follow us here.

Just recently, a major lithium battery plant in Moss Landing exploded and caught fireâ€”proving once again that these facilities pose real and present dangers. This is not something our community wants or needs.

Limitation of Local Oversight:

Itâ€™s also deeply concerning that this project is proceeding through the California Energy Commissionâ€™s Opt-in Certification Program, which limits local control and oversight. This process bypasses the voices of the residents and the jurisdiction of our local governments, leaving our community vulnerable to decisions made without our consent.

Conclusion:

Given the documented risks associated with lithium-ion BESS facilities, the potential for catastrophic fires, environmental contamination, and the limitation of local oversight, I urge the City of Laguna Niguel to take a firm stand against the proposed Compass Energy Storage Project.

Our communityâ€™s safety, health, and environmental integrity must be prioritized over industrial developments that pose significant risks.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,
Tara Beier