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Scare tactics

I am a member of the board of Save Porter Ranch and chair of its Science and Research Committee. My background is engineering and science, having studied physics at Caltech before going into a 35-year engineering career.

At the energy reliability workshop on April 8 in Warner Center, we were presented with scare tactics designed to make it look like we face potential blackouts if we don't get the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility restarted with new injection following the well blowout that has devastated Porter Ranch and much more of the San Fernando Valley. It simply isn't true.

We were told that we need 15 bcf of gas as reserve kept in storage at Aliso. That was a number that CPUC came up with for winter usage. We do not need nearly that much for the summer.

The report acknowledged the drastically smaller needs for summer, but it was treated like a footnote. After telling us about those smaller numbers, the report went on to use larger winter numbers that are irrelevant to our present needs.

We were warned of the possibility of planned shutdowns. Spring maintenance was given as an example. Irrelevant. We won't see peak summer usage in the spring. We won't see planned maintenance in the summer.

We were told how much storage capacity is available without Aliso, but then a lower number was used based on historical usage. Irrelevant. Of course the historical usage was less than the maximum capacity because Aliso made it unnecessary to use more. In no way does that suggest we can't use the full capacity.

The potential to use diesel backup for electricity production was completely ignored in the written report. Only in hearing testimony did we learn of this possibility. The report was extremely sloppy to ignore this, as it was extremely sloppy in so many ways.

Perhaps worst of all, the report based its warning of up to 14 days of potential blackouts on a quadruple system failure. As an engineer, I love working to design failsafe systems that can survive any two system failures at once. Presuming that a quadruple failure is realistic is absurd. In order to get to even one day of blackout, the report requires (1) the massive blowout we already had, (2) summer peak usage that far exceeds anything we have seen in summer before and which much more resembles winter usage, (3) some other unplanned shutdown in the natural gas system, requiring shutdown of some local electricity production, and (4) failure of the statewide grid to be able to provide us with electricity from more distant sources. This combination of events is extremely unlikely, and it is absurd to make this the basis of this warning.

We can get by this summer without any storage at Aliso. We must not restart injection until we are certain it is safe to do so. That is a no brainer. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out.