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Docket Number:	20-BUSMTG-02
Project Title:	Public Comment on California Energy Commission Business Meetings
TN #:	231640
Document Title:	Claire Warshaw Comments - 2020-01-22 Emergency Diesel Generator Backups - Emergency Definition
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Claire Warshaw
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	1/22/2020 7:49:37 PM
Docketed Date:	1/23/2020

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Submitted On: 1/22/2020
Docket Number: 20-BUSMTG-02*

2020_01_22 Emergency Diesel Generator Backups_Emergency Definition

January 22, 2020

Dear Commissioners:

Today's business meeting agenda item #3, Mission College Data Center (19-SPPE-05), reviewed another case where an applicant is asking to install backup emergency diesel generators for a data center in Santa Clara county. It seems to me, as a frequent business meeting attendee, that there have been a few of these, at other locations already approved. Mr. Kerr also suggested that there are three being considered - Welsh, Sequoia, and a San Jose data center. Because these are diesel generators, which might cause some unusual noise and smelly exhaust, there is likely heightened concerns. Remembering SMUD's 59th Street area generator, going off sometimes with a loud "boom" sound when SMUD experienced an internal outage, possible unannounced employee decision and/or mass safety exercise, I might suggest there be extra concern than the basic calculations and/or process that the CEC might do, when deciding how to handle and approve these cases.

It has not been clear at the business meetings as to what the CEC constitutes as an "emergency" worthy of using a bunch of diesel backup generators. I am guessing that this definition is defined in discussions with the various backup emergency diesel generator wanting entities. However, if it is possible, it might be worth CEC business commissioner time to review this definition with the public when approving some of these. The reasons seem obvious to a bystander. Diesel has been discussed as a bad emission type. Earthquakes and power system shutoffs, are entirely different kinds of emergencies. The Santa Clara public has likely not been asked what data center types are worth using if they have to endure days to weeks of data center emergency generator noise, and exhaust. Some residents might agree to a work and data break for a short amount of time, instead of enduring extra noise and pollution. It is hard to imagine what it would be like to live in Santa Clara county if all of these data center diesel generators had to be used at the same time, and for any length of time.

Glad my name is not Clara, right now. Not that that has anything to do with this. Let's hope not!!!!!! Branding, symbols and names have unfortunately trumped logic in some public minds.

Thank you all for your time, thoughts, and expressed opinions today.

Sincerely,

Claire Warshaw