



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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Adopt a resolution continuing for an additional sixty (60) days, the Proclamation of Local Emergency in response to a structure fire and hazardous materials incident at the Moss Landing Lithium-Ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Power Plant that started on January 16, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution continuing for an additional sixty (60) days, the Proclamation of Local Emergency in response to a structure fire and hazardous materials incident at the Moss Landing Lithium-Ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Power Plant that started on January 16, 2025.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

On January 16, 2025, shortly after 3:00 p.m. a fire began at the Vistra Energy ("Vistra") 300-MW Phase I battery energy storage facility located at the Moss Landing Power Plant. A Local Emergency was Proclaimed by the County Administrative Officer on January 17, 2025, and ratified by the Board of Supervisors on January 21, 2025. The Board further ratified the continuance of the proclamation on March 18, 2025 and May 13, 2025.

The Vistra operation is one of the largest lithium battery storage facilities in the world and the fire caused the lithium batteries to burn. Local fire officials could not extinguish the fire due to the extreme heat from the multiple lithium batteries burning, and as of January 17th the fire continued burning. Evacuation orders for the surrounding community were lifted on January 18, 2025. The evacuation orders were issued as a precaution due to the ongoing fire and concerns of exposure to hazardous materials. Air monitoring conducted by the United State Environmental Protection Agency began on January 17, 2025, within and outside the fence line of the facility indicated that particulate matter posed no risk to public health.

A state led Health Assessment Team comprised of local, state, and federal agencies began soil, dust, and water sampling on January 24, 2025. County, State, and Federal regulatory agencies have and continue to conduct environmental testing for levels of toxic metals, such as nickel, manganese, and cobalt, in the surrounding area. Data from sampling conducted by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) indicates there are not elevated metals associated with the fire in soil. DTSC obtained soil samples directly north from the location of the fire and up to four miles away, including at residences, schools, and community parks.

On February 18, 2025, a previously burned section of the Vistra Battery Facility in Moss Landing re-ignited resulting in conflagration and smoke; Unified Command indicated the fire was under control on February 19, 2025.

On February 22, 2025, Vistra Energy, under the direction of local, state, and federal regulatory agencies has initiated a lengthy and arduous hazardous material and structural debris removal process.

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 8630, subdivision (a), and Monterey County Code section 2.68.025 the County Administrative Officer may proclaim the existence of a local emergency when the County is affected by or threatened to be affected by a public calamity. The Government Code requires that an emergency proclamation be ratified by the Board of Supervisors within 7 days of its issuance and be reviewed at least once every (60) days until the emergency is terminated.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Numerous County departments and other state and federal agencies have participated in the response to the emergency including the Department of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, County Administrative Office, Public Works, Facilities, and Parks, and Housing and Community Development.

FINANCING:

The Finance Section of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated on January 17, 2025, and demobilized on January 24, 2025; Staff continues to compile costs associated with response and recovery related to this emergency. The costs and the impacts to the County will continue to be evaluated and presented under separate financial reports and request for funding augmentations to the Board by the EOC Finance Section.

Prepared by: Jackie Meraz, Management Analyst I

Approved by: Kelsey Scanlon, Director of Emergency Management, x1902

Approved by: Nicholas E. Chiulos, Chief Assistant County Administrative Officer, x5145

Attachments:

Attachment A: Resolution