

Acton residents battle

plans for lithium plant

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Acton residents concerned over lithium plants

LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Calif. - [Acton](#) residents are mobilizing and planning to fight several [lithium](#) battery storage facilities in their community, including one 68-acre system called BESS along Soledad Canyon and the 14 Freeway.

It would connect the Southern California Edison local substation with transmission lines for customers on the grid.

But recent fires and explosions at other lithium storage facilities nationwide have those living in Acton very concerned. Thermal runaway fires are particularly difficult to fight. One such incident in Arizona injured four firefighters after a huge explosion.

Another one kept the facility closed and forced evacuations around it for over a week.

Acton sits in a high-risk fire zone area and the 14 Freeway is a virtual wind tunnel. Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who represents the area, tells FOX 11 she is very concerned and planning on presenting a proposal at tomorrow's LA County Board of Supervisors meeting to address the issue.

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Residents in Acton are concerned about various lithium plant proposals in their neighborhood, saying the plants in such a high fire risk area could be extremely dangerous.

The state has authority for the placement of many of these facilities, she explains,

which often leaves local residents out of the mix when it comes to input.

Barger issued the following statement:

"I hear my constituents' concerns loud and clear.

New laws and policies grant the state authority to select sites and environmentally clear the development of clean energy solutions – like battery energy storage systems – circumventing local government and community input.

I support pursuing sustainable energy solutions. However, I believe the development of these solutions should balance community impact and concerns with the need to harden our energy infrastructure.

I am introducing a motion during tomorrow's Board of Supervisors' meeting to both identify best practices for these types of facilities and identify local regulations that could help us integrate input from necessary stakeholders. This will help these types of projects remain balanced and responsive to the communities where they will be anchored."

Representatives of SCE/Hecate – which is behind the Humidor project, a 15-acre facility planned off West Carson Mesa Road – tell us the project would be placed on private land that is used mostly for truck parking and staging.

They add that the facility would be monitored around the clock and that they are working with local fire officials to assure as much safety as possible.

One retired firefighter who worked hazmat says it's a very bad idea to put these in Acton. Stephen Brock explains that lithium fires cause by thermal runaway are incredibly difficult to fight. He adds that the water used to fight them seeps into the ground, laden with toxic materials, which would be particularly troubling in Acton where many of the homes get their water from local wells.

Finally, with insurance companies making it more and more difficult to get insurance in fire prone areas, many residents in Acton, who have already seen their rates more than double, fear they will not be able to get insurance at all.

At least seven projects are being considered in the area.