

Op-Ed: Stop these dangerous battery storage sites before it's too late

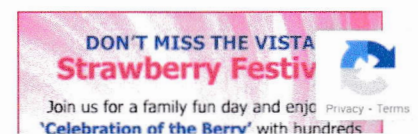
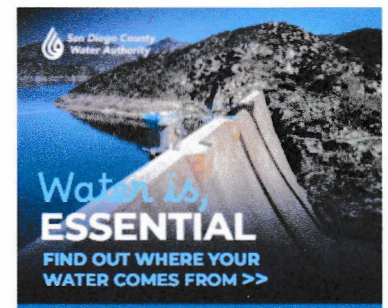
by Carl DeMaio • May 7, 2025 • 186

A dangerous threat is spreading across California neighborhoods and many residents don't even know it. Massive lithium-ion battery storage facilities are being fast-tracked into residential communities, often just feet away from homes, schools, and parks, with virtually no safety regulations in place.

These facilities have already proven to be ticking time bombs.

In just the past year, we've seen multiple large-scale battery fires with devastating consequences. In January 2025, the Moss Landing Energy Storage Facility in Monterey County erupted in flames, destroying 80% of its batteries and forcing 1,200 people to evacuate.

In May 2024, a similar fire in Otay Mesa, right here in San Diego County, burned for five straight days, sending toxic smoke into nearby neighborhoods. And in September 2024, another San Diego [battery storage site in Escondido caught fire](#), triggering a shelter-in-place order for surrounding communities.





These aren't isolated incidents; they're becoming disturbingly common. Lithium-ion battery fires are notoriously difficult to extinguish, prone to reignition, and can blanket entire neighborhoods in hazardous smoke for days.

California still has no uniform standards for where these facilities can be built, how they must be constructed, or what protections must be in place to prevent catastrophe. What we do know is that when one of these facilities catches fire, the consequences are severe: days of uncontrollable burning, chemical fallout, and mass evacuations.

Even worse, developers of these massive battery projects can currently bypass local governments by going directly to the California Energy Commission, which routinely rubber-stamps these dangerous projects with little or no public input. This fast-track process is reckless and undemocratic.

That's why I've introduced AB 434, the "Safe and Secure Battery Storage Act," to halt these developments until we can establish real safety standards and give local communities a voice.

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While I support innovative energy solutions, that doesn't mean we should blindly approve risky projects that put lives in jeopardy.

My legislation places a two-year moratorium on constructing new large-scale battery storage sites, extending through January 1, 2028. It mandates that the State Fire Marshal create long-overdue statewide fire safety standards, something shockingly missing from current law. And it restores local control by ensuring cities and counties, not unelected state bureaucrats, have the final say on whether a battery facility is approved in their own

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jurisdiction.

The placement of these sites is not energy innovation; it's negligence dressed up in green branding. In the name of "clean energy," Sacramento politicians are allowing hazardous infrastructure to be forced into residential neighborhoods while turning a blind eye to the very real environmental dangers these sites pose.

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The same lawmakers who constantly preach about protecting the planet are nowhere to be found when a battery fire blankets a community in toxic smoke.

AB 434 is about restoring common sense and prioritizing public safety.

We absolutely must modernize our energy grid and improve storage capacity, but that must be done without sacrificing lives or turning neighborhoods into hazard zones. We need to take the time to get this right by ensuring these facilities are built safely, emergency responders are trained and equipped, and the people who would live nearby get a say in the placement of these facilities.

It's not the bureaucrats in Sacramento or the executives at energy companies who are being put in harm's way. It's our families being treated as collateral damage in a deeply flawed energy experiment.

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I will not stand by while our communities are put at risk for the sake of political agendas. AB 434 puts people first, prioritizes safety over speed, and returns power where it belongs — to our local communities.

To my colleagues in the Legislature: Now is the time to act. We must take a step back, establish real safety standards, and ensure no community is placed in harm's way by reckless, fast-tracked projects with no proper oversight.

Public safety is not negotiable. No family should be forced to live in fear because of what gets built next door. It is time we put people before politics and protect our communities before it's too late.



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Assemblyman Carl DeMaio represents District 75 in California's state Assembly.



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