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EPA announces settlement over cleanup of 2024 Otay Mesa battery facility fire

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A Cal Fire robot checks for toxic fumes after the fire last year. (Photo courtesy of Cal Fire)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Monday it has reached a

settlement with the company that operates an Otay Mesa energy storage facility that caught fire last year.

The settlement with Gateway Energy Storage concerns cleanup efforts in connection with the lithium-ion battery fire that broke out on May 15, 2024, and lasted nearly two weeks due to flare-ups at the site. No injuries were reported in connection with the blaze.

The settlement does not involve a monetary component, but rather imposes requirements that Gateway take “comprehensive safety measures and monitoring to protect nearby residents and workers during the cleanup process,” the EPA said.

Cleanup efforts remain ongoing and are being overseen by the EPA, local firefighting agencies, and the San Diego County government.

Gateway will also be required to conduct environmental monitoring during its battery handling operations and submit progress reports to the EPA.

“Calling a technology ‘green energy’ does not mean there are no environmental impacts. This is an issue of growing concern,” EPA Pacific Southwest Region Administrator Josh F.W. Cook said in a statement.

“I am alarmed by the incidents and impacts of utility grade battery fires on first responders, specifically the professional firefighters who are exposed to horrible toxic conditions when batteries catch fire. This settlement action is a step in the right direction, but the broader battery storage fire issue requires additional attention and EPA enforcement.”