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## AES Rancho Viejo BESS & Solar Facility

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From Melissa Smock <mdsmock89@gmail.com>

Date Wed 6/11/2025 2:16 PM

To Dominic J. Sisneros <djsisneros@santafecountynm.gov>

### Warning:

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I recognize the need for reliable sustainable energy. The location of a lithium battery farm is of significant importance. **It certainly should not be anywhere close to residential areas.** New Mexico has ample land for this facility, minimizing impact on homes and environmental concerns.

Battery energy storage systems are known to cause thermal runaway, leading to fires, and toxic fumes. With the vast amount of battery cells planned for AES Rancho Viejo BESS & Solar Facility, the potential for disaster is enormous.

The technology for these facilities is relatively new, and rapidly evolving. There is not a well-documented history of impacts of these projects on local communities. Santa Fe County and City may face long-term health and safety risks, a negative impact on existing residential property values, and disincentives for employers and businesses considering relocation.

Santa Fe county is in a place that is subject to severe and potentially destructive wildfires. Residents of Eldorado and nearby communities are increasingly taking measures to protect their homes from wildfires. They face rising home insurance premiums and policy non-renewals due to fire risks.

The potential for ignition of fires, explosions, and thermal runaway events presents significant challenges, as these incidents are extremely difficult to extinguish once initiated. A major fire broke out at the 250-megawatt Gateway Energy Storage Facility in Otay Mesa, California, on May 15th, 2024, impacting the Gateway Energy Storage System. The fire, which involved lithium-ion batteries, was reported to have burned through the roof of the facility, leading to evacuation orders and road closures. The fire was particularly challenging due to thermal runaway, a phenomenon where excessive heat in lithium-ion batteries can lead to a chain reaction and fire. These fires must burn themselves out; they cannot be extinguished. These risks associated with battery storage technologies call for the need for robust fire protection measures. Residents should not be subjected to these risks. This would be the nail in the coffin to make sure you don't get insurance. Loss of a home without insurance, and now the lack of FEMA, leaving people homeless. And ...this doesn't even begin to address the ability for people to escape these fires, given the challenge to get people out of their neighborhoods quickly.

This risk is not if, but when the batteries fail.

Our community should not be put at risk for the sake of profit.

Either a safer location is in order, or this project should be scrapped for newer emerging technology with companies that are perhaps New Mexico based and concerned about the best places for a lithium battery facility to be located minimizing risk to the people that live here!

Thank you for your time to consider these immense concerns,

Missy & Ray

Residents of Eldorado