



Our Fire Departments Are Not Ready for AES

From Judy Walker <judywalker87508@gmail.com>

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Dominic Sisneros, Santa Fe County AES Case Manager- please include this letter in the AES case record and on the Santa Fe County website.

Our Fire Departments Are Not Ready for AES

Most people will say that they are very proud and appreciative of their fire departments. These are people, many who are volunteers, put their life on the line to save strangers and to protect their communities from dangers such as wildfires and other disasters. I am very grateful and proud of my local Eldorado Volunteer Fire Department. They have come to my house when there was a potential gas leak, and they came in minutes when my elderly uncle was having a serious medical incident. So, why are you even entertaining the idea of **allowing AES to build what is essentially a lit match--** the Rancho Viejo Solar Project?! Just so that the volunteer fire departments have to risk their lives for AES's profit?

From the county's own web site: *"The La Cienega Fire District is responsible for providing fire and emergency medical services to the communities of La Cienega, La Cieneguilla, Rancho Viejo, Valle Vista, Santa Fe Community College, and approximately 15 miles of Interstate 25. The district's two stations are located at 37 Rancho Viejo Boulevard and #18 Camino San Jose in the village of La Cienega. The stations collectively house two Class A engines, two pump & roll tankers, two brush trucks, two medical units, and a rescue with heavy extrication capabilities. The district responds to approximately 1100 fire and EMS calls each year protecting approximately 70 square miles of the county. This area includes a major interstate, many residential developments, and an ever-increasing commercial development area along State Highway 14"* (www.santafecountynm.gov).

That is not enough to contain a BESS fire that is so close to a school (Turquoise Trail) and several communities, i.e. Rancho Viejo, San Marcos, Eldorado, and the individual homes on

and near Route 14.

Many misinformed people in our county are of the opinion that BESS fires are non-existent. Well, **BESS fires are a very real** thing. Here are the most recent BESS fires which occurred in 2024:

- Otay Mesa: A fire at the Gateway Energy Storage facility in Otay Mesa, San Diego County, persisted for multiple days, highlighting the challenges of extinguishing lithium-ion battery fires.
- Escondido: A fire at San Diego Gas & Electric's (SDG&E) 30MW/120MWh BESS facility in Escondido which burned for 13 hours, triggered evacuations and prompted investigations into the causes and potential risks associated with such fires, according to a report from EticaAG.
- Santa Ana: A BESS fire incident was also recorded in Santa Ana, California, on July 17th, according to the EPRI Storage Wiki.
- San Diego: A separate incident involved a 250 MWh BESS fire in San Diego on May 15th.

These **fires triggered evacuations of nearby residents and required extensive efforts by fire departments** and other agencies to contain the fires and manage potential environmental hazards.

These fires are caused by manufacturing defects. A report from Clean Energy Associates, a solar engineering firm, highlighted that a significant portion of BESS units experienced quality issues related to fire detection and suppression systems, as well as faulty auxiliary circuit panels and thermal management systems.

Do you want to see "Santa Fe, NM" on this list in a few years?

Please, do the right thing and deny AES the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the AES/Rancho Viejo Solar application case #24-5200.

Don't be so cavalier with our firefighters' lives.

Thank you,

Judy Walker

Eldorado at Santa Fe

Kindest Regards,

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