

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON:

U.S., Chinese Competitors Battle for BESS Supremacy

Analyzing the Factors Shaping the US-China Battery Storage Race: Tariffs, Production, and Innovation

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM PRODUCTION GROWING IN BRAZIL AND U.S.

Australia is the world's top lithium miner at about 88,000 metric tons annually, while Chile and China ranked second and third, respectively, at 49,000 and 41,000 metric tons.

BY ROD WALTON — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED APRIL 8, 2025



he production of refined lithium, a key component in most electric vehicle and utilityscale battery storage systems worldwide, is on target to maintain a record volume needed to keep up with the pace of battery storage installation both in the U.S. and worldwide. Worldwide production of lithium topped an all-time high of 240,000 metric tons in 2024, according to various reports. Australia is the world's top lithium miner at about 88,000 metric tons, while Chile and China ranked second and third, respectively, at 49,000 and 41,000 metric tons.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

Chile's South American competitor Brazil is rising fast in mining and exporting lithium. Brazil may invest up to \$6 billion in scaling up lithium production five-fold this decade over its 2023 total of nearly 30,000 metric tons.

One of the growing producers in Brazil is Sigma Lithium Corp. which is producing a concentrate it calls "Quintuple Zero Green Lithium" and achieving the company's all-time best levels. In the first quarter of this year, Sigma Lithium reported some 68,000 tons of its lithium extraction mined from its Groto do Cirilo operation in the state of Minas Gerais.

Sigma Lithium began production at Groto do Cirilo in 2023 and hopes to generate 270,000 metric tons of lithium concentrate per year. The concentrate is extracted from ore and brine and eventually is delivered into the whole lithium supply chain.

"In the first quarter of 2025, we demonstrated our ability to maintain our operational cadence achieving both the targeted production levels of 68,000t and meeting our sales targets," Ana Cabral, CEO of Sigma Lithium, said in a statement. "Once again, we have proven our ability to deliver on our projection, remaining focused on the operational elements we can control."

For the first quarter 2025 production, the company has sold much of its capacity to minerals trading firm International Resource Holdings, which is owned by the Royal Group of Abu Dhabi.

Sigma Lithium's first quarter production did not mention exports to the U.S., which is limited

in its own lithium production capacity but is working to expand new mines. President Trump has levied a tariff on Brazilian imports into the U.S., but at a relatively low 10 percent compared with other nations.

The region where Sigma's Groto do Cirilo lithium mine resides reportedly holds close to 109 million metric tons of potentially recoverable lithium extract.

In the U.S., GeoFrame Energy announced this week it would break ground on a lithium extraction facility in east Texas beginning this summer. It would extract lithium carbonate from a limestone formation which holds volumes of brine (salty water mix). A large portion of the world's commercial-grade lithium production is collected via solar evaporation of element-rich brine, among other methods.

A 2020 report by the U.S. Geological Survey indicated that some 20 U.S. formations contain known capacity to produce at least 15,000 metric tons from past mining. North America's biggest known lithium deposit is the Thacker Pass mine in Nevada.

Lithium currently makes up to close to 90% of the key elements in utility-scale and EV batteries. Last year, a record of 12.3 GW of battery storage capacity was installed in the U.S., according to the American Clean Power and research partner Wood MacKenzie.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

TARIFF THREATS: ENERGY STORAGE PRICES COULD RISE 35% OR MORE IN TRADE WAR

The rising costs could prove even higher for the Chinese-based materials such as direct current (DC) blocks, the report forecasts. The Clean Energy Associates (CEA) study used a base case of Section 301 tariffs increased to 60% on these imported battery energy storage technologies.

BY ROD WALTON — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MARCH 27, 2025



B attery storage capacity has skyrocketed in the U.S. as energy transition developers seek balancing assets for renewables, but the near-term pricing dynamic may face increasing pressure on the political horizon.

If steeper tariffs are enacted on the global battery energy storage supply chain under the Trump Administration, the near-term impact could raise U.S. costs on battery technology by 35% or more, according to a new report by the group

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

Clean Energy Associates. Whether this impedes that multi-year growth pattern remains to be seen.

The rising costs could prove even higher for the Chinese-based materials such as direct current (DC) blocks, the report forecasts. The Clean Energy Associates (CEA) study used a base case of Section 301 tariffs increased to 60% on these imported battery energy storage technologies.

"Regardless of the level of exposure, tariffinclusive BESS prices will be above the typical prices in 2023 in the base case," reads the executive summary of the CEA's ESS Price Forecasting report. "While there is the possibility for lower Section 301 rates, there is also a potential for even higher tariff rates given additional avenues of trade law being pursued."

President-elect Trump has threatened higher tariffs on foreign markets even when what has been enacted under both President Biden and the previous Trump administration. Section 301 is the tariff authorization part of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974.

Recent data reported by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory indicated that costs for battery storage averaged \$477 per kWh for a 240-MWh system. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimated that energy storage installed capacity nearly doubled last year with more than 15 GW in projects installed.

RESHORING THE RARE EARTH AND CRITICAL ELEMENTS SUPPLY CHAIN

China currently dominates the global supply chain for lithium-ion battery technologies with a 70 to 90 percent share of the market, according to the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace website. The U.S. ranks fourth in world market share for lithium-ion, the foundation of chemistry which accounts for a sizable majority of electric vehicle and energy storage systems.

To that end, last month the U.S. Department of Energy recently awarded investments totalling \$17 million for 14 projects nationwide focused on improving the domestic supply for rare earth and critical materials in the battery storage and electrification supply chain. Among the recipients were research and development projects at Texas A&M, North Dakota University, ABB, Summit Nanotech and Ames National Laboratory, among others.

The U.S. is also working on potential lithium mines inside the country, including projects in Nevada and Tennessee.

Fortunately, the CEA report noted, lithium prices fell 69%, on average, from 2023 to 2024. The three-year outlook envisions only a slight, steady rise in lithium-ion market prices regardless of the tariff issue.

Seeking sourcing diversity also can help drive basic battery cost reductions, the CEA summary noted. The U.S. lately has worked to tighten the battery technology supply chain, both by bringing manufacturing home or seeking contracts elsewhere in Asia, Australia and North America.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
AGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
AGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

U.S. BATTERY STORAGE MANUFACTURERS COMMIT \$100B TO PRODUCTION IN U.S.

U.S. battery storage installation has expanded beyond 26 GW this past year by adding more than 12 GW, according to various reports, and provides the balancing complement to solar energy and microgrid projects.

BY ROD WALTON — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MAY 1, 2025



THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

.S.-based battery storage technology firms are uniting to commit to investing \$100 billion toward building and buying American-made energy storage.

This week, the American Clean Power Association announced the \$100 billion commitment on behalf of many of the nation's biggest energy storage companies. The arrival of new tariffs on China and other supply-chain factors has moved energy storage industry leaders in the U.S. to strengthen the domestic supply chain elsewhere, including at home.

U.S. battery storage installation has expanded beyond 26 GW this past year by adding more than 12 GW, according to various reports, and provides the balancing complement to solar energy and microgrid projects. Lithium-ion still dominates the battery chemistry landscape, but researchers and companies are advancing on alternatives such as zinc-based, iron flow and sodium-ion technologies.

"The energy storage industry is providing essential power when needed most while boosting domestic manufacturing and creating jobs across the country," Jason Grumet, CEO of the American Clean Power Association, said in a statement. The "historic commitment will invest billions of dollars into American communities and position the United States as a manufacturing leader in battery technology that is critical to national and grid security."

Among the major battery storage technology companies which have announced major manufacturing and supply moves back to the U.S. include Form Energy, Fluence, LG Energy Solution, FREYR and



A line of Fluence Cube battery modules at a factory. Image credit Fluence Energy

AESC. Last year, the U.S. Department of Energy announced more than \$3 billion in funding for 25 projects boosting domestic production of advanced energy storage and battery materials within the U.S. The Biden-era Infrastructure Law allocated nearly \$7 billion on strengthen the U.S. battery supply chain.

"Battery energy storage is keeping the lights on and costs low for consumers across the county. Developers are committed to sourcing batteries made in America to deploy this essential energy resource to more Americans for energy stability and cost savings in the face of increasing demand," said Stephanie Smith, chief operating officer of renewable energy investor Eolian. "As manufacturers begin ramping up domestic supply, streamlining federal and state policies and permitting processes will make the difference in getting this industry moving quickly and competitively."

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

Fluence Energy, for instance, has opened or is working to open manufacturing facilities in Utah, Texas, Tennessee and Arizona. LG Energy Solution is ramping up to begin production this year at its Holland, Michigan facility. Form Energy is starting its manufacturing at a plant in Weirton, West Virginia.

"Battery energy storage is key to meeting America's rapidly expanding electricity needs," said Craig Cornelius, President and CEO of Clearway Energy Group. "As we deploy energy storage at record pace, this investment reflects the industry's commitment to building these critical grid infrastructure projects with American-made batteries." Although China and Australia still dominate much of global lithium supply, other world leaders in LI production include Chile and Brazil. In the U.S., GeoFrame Energy announced earlier it would break ground on a lithium extraction site in east Texas this summer.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON



CATL: NEW EV BATTERY CHEMISTRIES DRIVING CHINESE ADVANCES IN E-MOBILITY RANGE

CATL recently unveiled three new products, including the Naxtra, which it called the world's first mass-produced sodium-ion battery. The other new CATL batteries are the Freevoy Dual-Power Battery and the second-generation Shenxing Superfast Charging Battery.

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BY ROD WALTON — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED APRIL 25, 2025

.S. companies and researchers are surely working intensely on alternatives to lithium-ion battery chemistries, but electric

vehicle producers are struggling in the current market where supply chains are stretched thin and impacted by tariffs and political strife.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

Half the world away, a leading Chinese energy storage manufacturer, meanwhile, says it is jumping even further ahead with multiple new EV battery chemistries, capacities and state of charge on a commercial level. CATL recently unveiled three new products, including the Naxtra, which it called the world's first mass-produced sodium-ion battery.

The other new CATL batteries are the Freevoy Dual-Power Battery and the second-generation Shenxing Superfast Charging Battery. The Naxtra reportedly has a lifespan of more than 10,000 charge cycles.

Lithium-ion chemistries currently dominate the U.S. EV battery market, but it lacks longer duration or has lesser range than other developing chemistries. An average lithium-ion EV battery, for instance, possesses only between 1,000 and 2,000 charge cycles.

The world's biggest EV and energy storage manufacturer, CATL is banking on marketing new commercial-scale battery chemistries and charging capacity regardless of challenges such as U.S. tariffs or extreme climate conditions.

The Naxtra will be offered in both passenger EV and 24V heavy-duty start-stop battery models.

"Both are capable of performing across the full temperature range from -40 degree Celsius to +70 degrees Celsius (158 degrees Fahrenheit), redefining the extreme temperature limitations of batteries," reads CATL's official release about the three new battery products. "The Naxtra passenger EV Battery retains 90% usable power at -40 C. In an extremely low state of charge with only 10% state of charge remaining, the Naxtra passenger EV Battery can still achieve no significant power degradation at a temperature of -40 $^{\circ}$ C."

CATL boasts that its Naxtra passenger EV battery can achieve an energy density of 175 watt hours per kilogram, whereas independent reports indicate that earlier versions of sodium-ion energy density was closer to 140. Lithium iron phosphates' energy density was around 160Wh/ kg according to a 2024 report on the Automotive Manufacturing Solutions website.



Naxtra exterior image. Credit CATL

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

5 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
5 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
56-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON



The new Shenxing battery, which is made up of lithium-iron-phosphate chemistry, could range 320 miles and charge at a rate of 2.5 kilometers per second.

The impact of President Trump's higher tariffs on many Chinese products will need to play out in global trading, but CATL already holds close to 37% of the world's EV and energy storage battery manufacturing market share.

The U.S. Department of Defense has listed CATL as a Chinese military company. The company has 13 battery manufacturing plants, most in China but two in Germany and Hungary. CATL's battery technologies are used in many Asian and European EV brands, including BMW, Daimler AG, Hyundai, Honda, Toyota, Volkswagen and Volvo. Tesla also uses CATL battery cells in many of its EV models produced at Tesla's Gigafactory in Shanghai.

Last year, the U.S. Argonne National Laboratory announced it had made a breakthrough on sodium-ion battery chemistry by changing design of the cathode.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM...PAGES 9-11CATL: NEW EV BATTERY ...PAGES 4-5TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY...PAGES 12-13U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY...PAGES 6-8U.S. BATTERY STORAGE...PAGE 14-16CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON...



U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY EXPANDED 12.3 GW IN 2024

Report by American Clean Power Association and Wood Mackenzie says commercial, industrial and community-scale sectors added some 145 MW of battery capacity to augment energy projects. California, Massachusetts and New York accounted for most of that.

BY ROD WALTON — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MARCH 21, 2025



B attery storage, seen by many as the bridge which makes intermittent renewable energies more resilient and longer duration, is expanding at a record pace in the United States regardless of charged political environments.

A new report indicates that the nation's energy storage market added 12.3 GW of installed battery capacity in 2024. The latest U.S. Energy Storage Monitor report was released this week by the American Clean Power Association (ACP) and research partner Wood Mackenzie.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

The previous year was itself a record in battery storage installation nationwide, but 2024 streaked right past that, according to the ACP and Wood Mackenzie. The 12.3 GW and 37.14 GWh in generation deployed last year basically leapt past 2023 by more than 33%.

"After another year of record deployment, energy storage is solidifying its place as a leading solution for strengthening American energy security and grid reliability in a time of historic rising demand for electricity," Noah Roberts, vice president of American Clean Power Association, said in the release. "The energy storage industry has quickly scaled to meet the moment and deliver reliability and cost-savings for American communities, serving a critical role firming and balancing low-cost renewables and enhancing the efficiency of thermal power plants."

The federal Energy Information Administration estimates that the U.S. now has close to 30 GW of utility-scale battery capacity alone, not counting other commercial, industrial and residential sectors. The utility-scale side of energy storage has tripled just in the past four years, according to the EIA data.

The ACP and Wood Mackenzie say that the residential storage market added more than 1,250 MW (1.25 GW) in 2024, a 57% rise over 2023 and another all-time high in annual installation for that category of batteries. A quarterly record of 380 MW in residential energy storage installed from October 1 to December 31, according to the monitor report.

The commercial, industrial and community-scale sectors added some 145 MW of battery capacity to

augment energy projects. California, Massachusetts and New York accounted for nearly 90% of commercial, community and industrial energy storage installed.

The ACP and Wood Mackenzie anticipate battery storage installation to outpace historic levels in 2025, but caution that the growth may be muted for policy and political changes. This year's forecast calls for 25% growth in battery storage installed capacity over 2024.

"Activity has been strong and our forecast for this year has expanded," said Allison Feeney, research analyst at Wood Mackenzie. "However, due to policy uncertainties, growth will likely slow down this year and in subsequent years. Growth will pick back up toward the end of the decade, with a projected 81 GW total installations from 2025 to 2029."

Despite the possible political headwinds to energy transition projects, some of the newest utility-scale battery storage installations are happening in so-called red states. For instance, earlier this year utility Alabama Power announced it was developing that state's first ever major battery storage project to up to 150 MW in battery storage atop a retired coal power plant site.

Texas is a leading state for battery storage market deployment. Along with California, the Lone Star state accounted for 61% of 2024 energy storage installed capacity.

Residential, commercial and industrial-scale batteries are often paired as part of a microgrid solution. Texas will be home to the Microgrid Knowledge Conference happening April 15-17 at the Sheraton Dallas.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON AUSSIE DC-COUPLED SOLAR AND BATTERY HYBRID SYSTEM

The Wärtsilä 64 MW/128 MWh battery storage system will be colocated at Octopus's 80-MW Fulham Solar Farm in Victoria. Octopus Australia is a renewable energy manager with more than \$11 billion in wind, solar, and battery storage assets in Australia.

BY KATHY HITCHENS — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED APRIL 11, 2025



ärtsilä and Octopus Australia have broken ground on one of Australia's first large-scale direct current (DC)-coupled solar and battery hybrid systems.

The 64 MW/128 MWh battery storage system will be co-located at Octopus's 80-MW Fulham Solar Farm in Victoria. Octopus Australia is a renewable energy manager with more than \$11

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON



billion in wind, solar, and battery storage assets in Australia. It is part of Octopus Group, a UK-based investment and energy company.

Wärtsilä will provide the DC-coupled battery system as well as the power plant controller technology.

"The system will enhance renewable energy efficiency, supporting the state of Victoria's ambitious target to achieve net zero emissions by 2045," said David Hebert, Director of Sales Management, Wärtsilä Energy Storage. "The Fulham Battery represents a significant step forward in integrating advanced energy storage solutions into the Australian grid."

DC-coupled systems are more efficient The co-located project highlights the trend of integrating renewable energy and storage to support grid stability. It also aims to demonstrate the value of DC-coupled technology at scale.

There are two types of electrical currents—direct current (DC), which flows in a single direction, and alternating current (AC), which switches directions 50 times per second in Australia (and 60 times per second in the U.S.).

While AC has been the grid standard for more than a century, DC's stock has risen in recent years, thanks in part to the growing adoption of DC-based renewable energy technologies. With an AC-coupled system, the DC energy generated by solar panels is converted to AC by an inverter.

Any excess solar that's generated is routed to a battery inverter where it's converted back to DC for storage. When the batteries are discharged, the power is converted back to AC. This DC-to-ACto-DC-to-AC conversion introduces energy losses and adds complexity, cost and latency.

DC coupling, on the other hand, enables solar energy to be delivered directly to the battery for storage, minimizing conversion losses when integrating energy storage with solar assets. Proponents say the technology is more efficient, less expensive, and can better support the grid.

The Fulham Solar Farm and Battery project, which is valued at over \$300 million, was funded with equity capital contributions from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, Westpac Private Bank and others. Octopus has also secured a power purchase agreement from the Victorian State Government.

The company is working on similar solar and battery projects in New South Wales and Queensland.

The "Fulham Solar Farm and Battery marks a major step forward in our mission to accelerate Australia's energy transition," said Sonia Teitel, co-managing director of renewables for Octopus Australia. "This project demonstrates our ability to bring together institutional capital, government support, and leading-edge technology to create renewable assets that provide long-term benefits to our communities and investors."

Project to be complete in 2027 The Wärtsilä intelligent power plant control software, known as GEMS, will coordinate between the solar farm, storage system and the grid, optimizing energy management operations and ensuring the hybrid plant meets grid requirements and response times.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

The company will also ensure the project's ongoing performance and reliability through a long-term service agreement.

"We chose to partner with Wärtsilä due to their strong track record as a global integrator, their innovative approach, and their proven ability to support complex projects. We are excited to work together on one of the first DC-coupled large-scale energy storage systems in Australia," said Sonia Teitel, Co-Managing Director of Renewables at Octopus Australia. The solar farm and battery storage systems are expected to be fully operational in 2027.

THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON



THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM PRODUCTION GROWING IN BRAZIL AND U.S.

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THE WORLD'S BATTERY STORAGE RACE IS ON

PAGES 2-3	THE TRUTH ABOUT LI: LITHIUM	PAGES 9-11	CATL: NEW EV BATTERY
PAGES 4-5	TARIFF THREATS : ENERGY	PAGES 12-13	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE CAPACITY
PAGES 6-8	U.S. BATTERY STORAGE	PAGE 14-16	CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON

