



Governor Hochul Convenes Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group Following Fires In Jefferson, Orange, And Suffolk Counties

DHSES-OFPC, NYSERDA, DEC, DPS, and DOS to Examine Energy Storage Facility Fires and Safety Standards

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Governor Kathy Hochul today announced the creation of a new Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group to ensure the safety and security of energy storage systems across the state, following fire incidents at facilities in Jefferson, Orange, and Suffolk Counties this summer. State agencies will begin immediate inspections of energy storage sites, and the Working Group will help prevent fires and ensure emergency responders have the necessary training and information to prepare and deploy resources in the event of a fire.

“Following multiple fire safety incidents across New York, I’ve directed State agencies to immediately form the Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group to mobilize the personnel and resources necessary to keep New Yorkers safe,” **Governor Hochul said**. “The Working Group will collaborate with first responders and local leaders to identify best practices, address potential risks to public safety, and ensure energy storage sites across New York are safe and effective.”

The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services’ Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) staff and the Department of Environmental Conservation’s (DEC) Emergency Response Unit responded to the Jefferson County incident on Thursday and supported emergency response partners with performing precautionary air monitoring tests in the surrounding area of the fire. OFPC is deploying additional personnel to Jefferson County today to assist local fire officials in their investigation into what initially caused the fire. The Division’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and DEC continue to monitor the situation and are prepared to provide additional support on the ground in Jefferson County. An additional investigation is underway in Orange County from fires earlier this month.

While **fires at energy storage facilities are exceedingly rare**, Governor Hochul has directed the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) Office of Fire Prevention and Control, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Public Service (DPS), and the Department of State (DOS) to lead the Working Group to independently examine energy storage facility fires and safety standards. The Group will leverage nationally renowned experts and national laboratories in energy storage root cause and emergency response analyses to independently assess and identify common causes, air monitoring results or other community impacts, and other factors involved with energy storage fires.

The Working Group will thoroughly investigate the recent energy storage fires in New York and will conduct a comprehensive fire safety review, including emergency response analysis, of energy storage projects that experienced thermal runaway events across New York. Findings will include a list of recommendations for stationary energy storage equipment and installations. The Working Group would review energy storage system operations and operators as they: examine the condition of their batteries to verify operation within design parameters; remedy any deficiencies identified; verify operation of on-site fire suppression; and confirm fire suppression plans with local fire departments, among other best practices.

The findings and resulting recommendations will also be shared with the New York City Fire Department, National Fire Protection Association, International Code Council, the New York State Fire Prevention and Building Code Council, and Underwriters Laboratories, establishing New York as a national and international leader in fire safety and stationary energy storage systems.

Energy storage facilities play a critical role in the state’s efforts to reduce the emissions that contribute to climate change and help the state achieve its ambitious climate goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said, “DEC applauds Governor Hochul for prioritizing New Yorkers’ safety and ensuring the growth of this critical industry is advancing in a manner that is protective of our communities and the environment. DEC stands ready to work with our partners to analyze current practices and find ways to improve operations at energy storage facilities to set the gold standard for safe and responsible clean energy future.”

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said, “The safety of our communities is paramount, and State officials are immediately commencing a multi-pronged initiative to address these concerns today with the formation of an Inter-Agency Working Group to focus on the strategic and safe deployment of energy storage across New York coupled with on-site inspections of energy storage facilities. NYSERDA looks forward to expanding our collaboration with other state agencies, local officials, host communities and first responders, as well as national laboratories and partners, to identify recommendations that can assist the State and industry in standardizing best practices.”

Department of Public Service CEO Rory M. Christian said, “The Department will work to ensure safety comes first as we continue to see more and more batteries going into service. We will join the effort to do root cause analysis and follow-up with recommendations on what needs to change to mitigate the occurrence and impact of such events in the future.”

Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray said, “Keeping New Yorkers safe is our number one job, and our team quickly responded to the fire in Jefferson County conducting air monitoring to ensure nearby residents were not in immediate danger. We remain on the ground to address this fire and assist the investigation. These sites are essential to securing our climate future and Governor Hochul is taking action to ensure they are operated safely. We are working with our agency partners on long-term solutions to mitigate future energy-related fires throughout the state.”

New York State Fire Administrator James Cable said, “The State Office of Fire Prevention and Control continues work alongside our local counterparts in Jefferson County to make sure residents are safe. While we work to assist investigations into recent fires, we are partnering with other agencies throughout the state to prevent these incidents from causing harm to New Yorkers.”

New York State Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez said, “The safety of our community is priority one for the State and we are working with our partners in government to ensure that energy storage facilities are safely maintained across the state. The Department of State stands ready to assist and support Governor Hochul’s Inter-Agency Working Group that will inspect energy storage sites in New York and make sure our communities are safe and served.”

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