



Vistra Makes Appearance at Emergency BoS Meeting 1/21/2025

Jan. 21, 2025

Salinas, Calif.

On Tuesday, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors held an emergency meeting regarding the Vistra Battery Energy Storage System Fire in Moss Landing, Calif.

The meeting began with a presentation from Marni Flagg of the Monterey County Environmental Health Department. Marni Flagg informed the board that the “priority continues to be the health and safety of the community,” and that “we remain compassionate and responsive to the concern for all of those who have been impacted.”

Supervisor Glenn Church who represents the district where the Moss Landing Power Plant is located asked if there was “any reason that we know why CTEH did not immediately put out these monitors out more into the Prunedale area and to the east?” Marni Flagg responded to Supervisor Church “I do not know the answer and will defer to Vistra.”

Chief Joel Mendoza of the North County Fire Protection District of Monterey County would step up to the podium next and report to the Board of Supervisors that “multiple batteries had burned and fire was actively propagating from battery rack to battery rack.” Mendoza added, “We could observe through closed circuit television that the batteries were on fire and it was several different batteries but they would catch the adjoining batteries on fire as time progressed.”

Chief Mendoza described thermal runaway but would not say outright what he witnessed was thermal runaway.

Sheriff Nieto also spoke before the Board of Supervisors and said “We weren't sure what the levels were in the air. We weren't sure what, we knew it was being released because it was a lithium battery fire.” Sheriff Nieto added, “We couldn't make decisions based on maybes.” Sheriff Nieto would further state that “obviously, the HF was a concern to both myself and Chief Mendoza, and our evacuation decisions were based on the possibility that these could be released to our public.”



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Richard Stedman of the Monterey Bay Air Resource Board (MBARD) was also present and reported to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors that individuals, including the local news, “were using some of our data and of the EPA's regular smoke data and improperly and erroneously reporting that air quality throughout the Monterey Bay region was hazardous or unhealthy. We did talk to the news media about this and they said they would retract but they continued to attribute moderate air quality conditions around the Monterey Bay to the Vistra fire, which was not appropriate.”

“We did not test for hydrofluoric acid. That also is very expensive and EPA seemed to have a handle on that,” Richard Stedman added. “We're willing to work with Vistra and perhaps establish a more secure or better tighter net monitoring system around the facility for particulate matter and we could look into HF sensors as well. So that's a possibility going forward. But it's important also to recognize that we don't directly regulate Vistra and that's because they have no emissions.”

Richard Stedman ended his report to the board by saying, “We feel very confident that there have not been any adverse impacts associated with exposure to PM2.5 is what we're measuring at our monitors and sensors.”

Members of the public took to the podium during open comment. One concerned citizen asked the Board of Supervisors, “Did you take any money from them?” However, this question is not reflected in the meeting transcript. Other concerned residents expressed their concerns and fears regarding the impact on our health, the environment, and wildlife. One member in particular said repeatedly, “We need answers.” Many residents in attendance said they felt unwell and were experiencing symptoms such as a metallic taste, sore throats, and other respiratory issues.

Peter Ziegler the Vice President of Operations for Vistra also took the opportunity to make a public comment. Peter Ziegler of Vistra told the board that, “air monitoring conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, an independent third-party quality experts, continues to demonstrate that the site and surrounding area is safe and does not pose a risk to the public.”



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Brad Watson the Senior Director of Community Affairs at Vistra would also take up 2 minutes of public comment to apologize again and to remind us that Vistra considers Moss Landing to be their home too.

Dawn Addis did not appear and sent a staff member on her behalf to provide a brief statement that, “We urgently need climate solutions, they must be safe for our communities and environment. For the past four days, my full attention has been on the battery energy storage system fire at the Moss Landing Power Plant. I’m calling for an independent investigation asking Vistra and its vendors to share critical data and information with our community, and for the facility to remain closed until they can guarantee this will never happen again.”

Every single community member that spoke during open comment expressed concerns and demanded answers, however, the Board of Supervisors would largely remain silent except for District 2 Supervisor Glenn Church and his one question to the Monterey County Environmental Health Department that was answered with a terse response of “will defer to Vistra.”