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Residents concerned after battery plant in Moss Landing reignites

Moss Landing residents are concerned after the battery plant reignited Tuesday night. That led to a warning from the county to close all doors, vents, and windows.

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Brooke Kinebrew

Reporter

MOSS LANDING, Calif. — Neighbors in Moss Landing are worried for their safety after the power plant reignited Tuesday night, just over a month after the fire in mid-January.

"It's definitely a concern because we don't know if it's going to keep on reigniting like it did last night," Moss Landing resident Derek Sousa said. "It's going to be on everyone's minds if we have to keep on evacuating. We don't really know what fresh air we're breathing in right now, so we just still try to keep everything closed [windows and vents] until we get a better answer."

Officials warned that heavy rain and moisture could cause the batteries to catch fire after the initial fire. This could happen again in the future.

"My main concern is our welfare. The welfare of the community, the welfare of the businesses, and the people who live there," Nancy Russell, a Moss Landing resident, said. "We're concerned about the soil. We're concerned about the water and air, and our neighborhood has not been tested."

Supervisor Glenn Church says the county is still asking Vistra to keep the plant offline.

Air quality is a major concern for residents, and Church says the Environmental Protection Agency has been and is still testing for gases and particulate matter. The county is continuing to monitor heavy metals.

Church says the county's control is limited to water testing, as they rely on the state for soil and ground testing because they don't have a toxicologist.

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"We know in the smoke that there's heavy metals that are going to fall to the ground, and that's a totally different issue, and that testing is going to be ongoing at this point," Church said.

Neighbors are calling on the county to take stronger action. They want the county, not Vistra, to take control of the situation.

"Anything that dangerous [the powerplant] that could be located so close to a sanctuary is really surprising, and the county needs to care about what happens to the community," Russell said. "I would like to see the county and other related people be more forceful in making sure that this doesn't happen again."

Russell says she still has unanswered questions, including what specifically caused the fire, how it's going to get cleaned up, who is handling the investigation, and what steps, if any, will be taken to prevent future incidents.

Supervisor Church says Vistra is in control of the cleanup because the plant is on private property. Cleanup will take a while.

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