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Vistra prepares for toxic cleanup of Moss Landing storage facility after fire

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MOSS LANDING, Calif. — This weekend will mark a milestone for the Vistra energy storage facility that was severely damaged in last month’s dramatic fire at the former Moss Landing power plant.

Beginning tomorrow, crews will begin the process of disconnecting batteries which could soon be followed by the demolition and removal of toxic materials, a move that is raising concerns as to where all that debris will be dumped.

“ I've had quite a few questions people asking where's the cleanup going to go, obviously there’s concern it might happen here in Monterey County or neighboring counties,” said Monterey County supervisor Glenn Church.

A valid question following the fire that has left tons of debris polluted with toxic metals, lithium-ion, not to mention asbestos from the 75-year-old building, gutted in last month's fire.

“There's locations throughout the state that those that have been identified with remote areas and, you know, those would seem to be the prime areas that you'd be looking at,” said Church.

The county supervisor is also a member of the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority and is confident none of the Moss Landing debris will end up in either of the two south county landfills; Johnson Canyon landfill and Jolon Road landfill.

The Marina landfill is a level 3 site and won't take hazardous industrial waste, the same for the Buena Vista landfill in Watsonville.

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A spokesperson for San Benito County did not respond to KSBW's media inquiry.

“Vistra's going to have to find a location that fits this and we do not have those type of landfills here because this is really a specialized substance, lot of toxic materials into there and we're not going to take something that hazardous,” Church said.

What to do with hazardous waste touches a nerve with many. Recently in the Los Angeles area, dozens of protestors blocked dump trucks from dumping debris from the Los Angeles fires at a local landfill.

As for the Moss Landing debris the Environmental Protection Agency is working with Vistra on a demolition and removal plan but so far no disposal site has been identified.

“It is, you know, a lot of fire debris there's a lot of building debris in there that you know, the concrete, you know, we'll see where all that stuff goes but the lithium-ion batteries the chemical side of that, we're going to do our best to recycle and recover as much of that as possible for reuse at some point,” said Eric Sandusky, spokesman for the EPA.

Not until Vistra applies for a demolition permit will a final dump site be revealed but Action News is told the energy company may apply for an emergency permit.

Either way, the cleanup at the plant is expected to take months.

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