



COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health

Administration Animal Services Behavioral Health Clinic Services
Emergency Medical Services Environmental Health Public Administrator/Public Guardian Public Health

Health Advisory for Medical Providers

February 13, 2025

From: Edward L. Moreno, MD, MPH
Health Officer & Director of Public Health
831-755-4585

Kristy Michie, MS
Assistant Director of Public Health
831-755-4503

Guidance for Health Concerns Related to January Vistra Energy Storage Facility Battery Fire

Current Situation

On January 16, 2025, the County of Monterey Health Department was notified of a battery fire at the Vistra energy storage facility located in Moss Landing. Smoke was visibly emitting from the facility from January 16 through January 19. Because the smoke's composition was unknown, the County of Monterey Emergency Operations Center issued guidance to residents in the area who could see or smell smoke that included staying indoors and wearing a well-fitting respirator. Due to the composition of batteries located at the facility, immediate air quality concerns included particulate matter, hydrogen fluoride gas, and nickel, manganese, and cobalt dusts.

Early air monitoring data by the US EPA indicated that levels of hydrogen fluoride gas did not exceed air quality standards outside of the facility's perimeter during the fire. Monterey Bay Air Quality District (MBARD) particulate matter monitoring sensors near Moss Landing in Castroville, Watsonville, Prunedale, and Aromas showed good to moderate air quality during the fire. County of Monterey Health Department's Environmental Health Bureau (EHB) collected samples from drinking water systems in the Moss Landing area. The reported levels for manganese, copper, aluminum and nickel in the samples did not exceed the associated regulatory maximum contaminant level (MCL) or Public Health Goal (PHG) for drinking water. Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) testing indicated there are not elevated metals associated with the fire in soil from sampled areas within four miles of the facility.

While progress is being made by multiple agencies on additional air, soil, and water testing to better characterize what, if any, exposures may have occurred, patients may have ongoing questions and concerns about their health. County of Monterey Health Department consulted with subject matter experts from the California Department of Public Health and compiled the below information for health care providers.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

- **Take a detailed risk history.**
 - Patients presenting with symptoms possibly related to exposure to contaminated air, water, and/or soil should be evaluated with a thorough history and physical.
 - History should include all pertinent details of symptoms onset and evolution, potential exposures including occupational, and additional symptoms.
 - Ingesting, breathing, and/or having skin or mucous membrane contact with heavy metal dusts and other particulate matter from smoke may result in symptoms such as itchy rash, watery eyes, runny nose, metallic taste in mouth, sore throat, and difficulty breathing, as well as exacerbation of underlying medical conditions like asthma and COPD.

Health Alert: Warrants immediate action or attention. **Health Advisory:** Provides information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action. **Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

- Providers may consider using ICD10 codes "Z77.110" for contact with and (suspected) exposure to air pollution, "Z77.111" for water pollution, and "Z77.112" for soil pollution.
- **Disposition should be tailored to the clinical evaluation.**
 - Treatment should be supportive and symptom based.
 - Testing for heavy metals like cobalt, copper, manganese, and lithium is generally not clinically useful. These tests cannot predict whether a person will experience health effects or determine if current health symptoms are related to exposures. However, should a medical provider wish to order such testing, tests for nickel, cobalt, and manganese levels must be ordered individually because they are not usually included in commercial laboratories' standard "heavy metals" panel. Providers can check individual laboratories for more information.
 - Environmental cleaning in and around the home may be beneficial for individuals with ongoing symptoms.
 - Patients can engage deep cleaning services to remove fine dusts and debris that may not be visible to the eye but are causing or exacerbating symptoms.
- **Consult with California Poison Control for advice on clinical cases.**
 - To speak with a poison information provider or physician specializing in poisoning care, call 1-800-222-1222. Services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year.
- **Providers may voluntarily report fire-related illnesses using a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) form.**
 - Use the "Other/Unusual Disease" category and attach chart notes.
 - Blank CMR forms are available for download at:
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ControlledForms/cdph110a.pdf>
 - Fax completed forms with chart notes to 831-775-8076.
- **Patients can file a fire-related complaint with the County of Monterey Health Department, if they choose to do so.**
 - Concerns may be submitted via the Internet at
<https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/government/departments-a-h/health/environmental-health/general/environmental-health-concern-form>.

For More Information

- County of Monterey's incident website: <https://www.readymontereycounty.org/emergency/2025-moss-landing-vistra-power-plant-fire>
- US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsLanding.aspx>
- Monterey Bay Air Resource District (MBARD): <https://www.mbard.org/>

Health Alert: Warrants immediate action or attention. **Health Advisory:** Provides information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action. **Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.