

Anonymous

I am a resident of Snoqualmie Ridge, Washington, and I am writing to raise serious concerns about battery energy storage system (BESS) facilities being sited close to residential neighborhoods, schools, and parks — specifically in reference to the proposed Cascadia Ridge Resiliency Energy Storage project near Fisher Creek Park and Snoqualmie Ridge. I urge Ecology to ensure the PEIS thoroughly studies the following:

1. Fire and thermal runaway risk. Lithium-ion BESS fires can burn for hours to days, release toxic gases (including hydrogen fluoride), and are difficult for local fire departments to suppress. The PEIS should require rigorous, enforceable setback distances from homes, schools, and other sensitive receptors based on documented BESS fire incidents nationwide, not industry-proposed minimums.
2. Proximity to schools and residential density. Facilities should not be permitted near schools, daycares, or high-density residential areas without a clear, science-based buffer standard. The scoping should evaluate cumulative risk to nearby populations, including evacuation feasibility.
3. Emergency response capacity. The PEIS should assess whether local fire departments have the specialized training, equipment, and mutual aid agreements needed to respond to a BESS fire, and require project sponsors to fund necessary training and equipment upgrades before permits are issued.
4. Water and soil contamination. Firefighting runoff from a BESS fire can contaminate soil and water. The study should address containment and remediation plans for facilities sited near watersheds and residential wells.
5. Air quality impacts. Off-gassing during a fire or thermal event poses respiratory risks to nearby residents. The PEIS should model worst-case air dispersion scenarios for facilities near populated areas.
6. Property values and quality of life. Noise (from cooling systems), visual impact, and stigma associated with a fire hazard facility can materially affect nearby property values; this should be studied as a socioeconomic impact.
7. Meaningful local input. Because BESS siting decisions may bypass local jurisdictions entirely (as with the shift to EFSEC review for Cascadia Ridge), the PEIS should recommend a formal mechanism ensuring affected cities and residents have real influence over site selection — not just comment opportunities after a site is chosen.

Given the scale of growth expected in BESS deployment statewide, I ask that Ecology adopt precautionary, health-protective standards now, rather than after an incident occurs near a community like mine.

Thank you for considering these comments.