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# BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS WORKGROUP MEETING

## Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, January 7, 2026

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### Committee Members Present

Tim Spears, CAL FIRE, Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Brian Marshall, California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services  
Robert Chun, California Energy Commission (virtual)  
Ryan Hart, California Public Utilities Commission (virtual)  
Jennifer Hogan, CalRecycle (virtual)  
Steve Guarino, University of California Campus Fire Marshal (virtual)  
Travis Tyler, California State University Campus Fire Marshal (virtual)  
Jason Nailon, California Fire Chiefs Association (virtual)  
Jeff Gilbert, Fire Districts Association of California (virtual)  
Brad Driscoll, California Training Officers Association (virtual)  
Todd LaBerge, California Fire Prevention Officers Association  
Mostafa Kashe, California Building Officials (virtual)  
Chris Ochoa, California Building Industry Association  
Rex Pritchard, California Professional Firefighters  
Todd Braverman, California Firefighters Joint Apprenticeship Committee  
Eddie Sell, California State Firefighters’ Association (virtual)  
Rob Rezende, FIRESCOPE  
Adam Barowy, Fire Safety Research Institute (virtual)  
Scott Murtishaw, Storage Alliance  
Stanley Greshner, TESLA

### CAL FIRE Staff in Attendance

Vickie Sakamoto, CAL FIRE, Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Chris Fowler, CAL FIRE, Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Crystal Sujeski, CAL FIRE, Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Jillian Fisher, Supervisor I  
Carrie Lewis, Analyst II  
Danh Dao, Analyst I  
Brendan Lewis, CAL FIRE

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

**Tim Spears**

#### A. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 2:05.

#### B. Roll Call – Carrie Lewis

There was not a quorum with 9 committee members present in-person and 11 attending virtually.

#### C. Approval of the January 7, 2026, meeting agenda (Motion Required)

**Tim Spears**

**The meeting agenda was not approved as there was not a quorum.**

## 2. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. Vickie Sakamoto Comments - This working group came about through legislation related to Battery Energy Storage Systems. This workgroup was approved by the State Board of Fire Services a couple years ago but has been pending until this last legislative session. It's important that we get started on addressing things like PPE, first responders, training, updating regulations, and other items that Chief Spears will address. There will be a lot to cover, some with shorter deadlines than others, so we'll create sub workgroups that will report back to this larger group, in an effort to get everything done on time.

## 3. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Charter

- i. The charter was approved by the State Board of Fire Services in August 2025.
  - Establishes the purpose, scope, and structure of the workgroup
  - Identifies the key responsibilities of what the workgroup is tasked with
    - a. Reviewing data-related to battery fires
    - b. Looking at proposed code changes to standards
    - c. Training recommendations
    - d. Supporting public education and fire service response
    - e. Serving as a collaborative form by bringing everyone together for discussion
  - Gives the ability to establish subgroups.

#### Discussion

- i. It was suggested that International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) be included in this workgroup or subgroups. All batteries coming from overseas and the issues in port (how they're loaded, stored and transported) are handled by the ILWU. It was noted that the charter says "the State Fire Marshal may decide to add other appropriate stakeholders".
- ii. It was suggested that the US EPA be involved related to emergency response and recovery.
  - Tim Spears to bring the suggestions of adding additional members to the workgroup roster to the State Board of Fire Services (SBFS) meeting in Feb.
- iii. Involve some level of law enforcement as they will benefit from training on this topic.
- iv. Regarding the "goal" – most of this section is about response but nothing about post-incident, operation procedures, etc.
  - This could be a subgroup as there's legislation that requires discussion about prevention, response, and recovery measures.
- v. Consider someone from CalOES Recovery if post-incident will be discussed

### B. AB 1285 State Fire Marshal: Lithium-Ion Battery Facilities: Guidance

- i. Requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal, in consultation with CalOES, to develop fire prevention response and recovery measures to specific utility-grade lithium-ion battery storage facilities.
- ii. These measures are required to address best practices for emergency service personnel, as well as help facility operators share timely and accurate information with public safety officials.

## Discussion

- i. We need to make sure that we are all-encompassing of emergency response and not just focusing on the fire department response. There are a lot of industry emergency responders that are going to be involved in these types of incidents including professional private fire brigades, fire departments, and agencies like the EPA, CalEPA, DTSC, etc. Best practices need to apply to this group as well. Best practices should consider these agencies as well.
- ii. It's important to prioritize short-, medium-, and long-term items that need to be done. An Immediate item would be getting firefighter department information and how to best deal with incidents that are occurring every day, right now.
- iii. Though the charter mentions different types of smaller devices, this legislation is focused on utility-grade lithium-ion batteries. But we do need to take a look at power mobility and other lithium-ion battery devices as well. This item doesn't have a deadline so some of those additional topics may be able to be addressed in that subgroup.
- iv. Good idea to go in parallel with the Go Business process and developing a model ordinance that pertains more on the planning side, helping planning departments, counties, and cities have ordinances in place at that stage of permitting, to also have some model SOPs that might be developed by this group that can then be disseminated, and then have training based around those SOPs. The most critical steps that all fire departments should be aware of, should be prioritized. Then those steps should be put in place with a program to educate the fire departments across the state.
- v. Some standards have already been identified so existing documents need to be identified. For example, Firescope is published in ICS1150, which are the operational guidelines for fire departments. SOPs can be built directly from that document. Maybe a subgroup can identify documents before this group publishes anything.
- vi. SOPs should help ensure consistency of application of those codes and standards throughout different jurisdictions, which is problematic right now because it's new and people are still learning. There are different interpretations and applications, so this group can come out with standardized applications so there is consistency throughout the state.
- vii. One of the things that SB 283 will require is that all projects going forward go through the pre-operation, pre-construction consultation and then post-construction checklist and consultation. Some districts, like Kern County, have developed checklists with very extensive pages of documentation where others have nothing. What are fire district staff looking for when they arrive on site? What are they trying to validate?
- viii. LA County Fire has developed a checklist for submittal documents as well as for emergency response plans. It's extensive because there's a lot of information that is sent in during the submittal process that needs to be vetted before it can be incorporated into an emergency response plan. The hazards that have been found vary significantly between the size, scale, design, and chemistry of the individual make and model of the battery energy storage system under review. The document is organized so that first responders can turn to the pertinent checklist and contains vetted information for the Health Hazardous Materials Division and other entities to help guide the cleanup process. For utility-scale, the information regarding the trigger temperatures and other indicators can be monitored remotely with the telemetry data. This is useful so that first responders and public agencies can

identify the what the trends are in terms of temperatures and if the incident is going to become an extended incident.

### **C. SB 283 Energy Storage Systems**

- i. Also known as the Clean Energy Safety Act, this bill requires the State Fire Marshal to review and consider proposing new standards in the Building Standards Code that would restrict the location of large-scale energy storage systems.
- ii. The bill focuses on requiring installations either in dedicated-use, non-combustible buildings, or outdoor locations. It also establishes the consultation and inspection requirement prior to system operation.
- iii. This group would convene a subgroup for discussion, and their findings would be brought back to the larger workgroup.

#### Discussion

- i. Would this group make recommendations regarding having annual or biannual inspections or facilities?
- ii. Currently, within Title 24, Part 9, there is a requirement for an operational fire code permit that would trigger inspections but it's unclear if it was adopted. If not, local jurisdictions could adopt that in their model, in their ordinance as part of their adoption procedures.
- iii. Consider inviting some of the planning professional organizations to participate in the working group as they have a separate process through their conditional use permit that overlaps with the application and post-applications.
- iv. Is this legislation talking about restricting locations, discuss zoning and areas where applications should be restricted?
- v. It does require us to look at whether or not it would be in dedicated-use buildings, not necessarily zones and zoning as it relates back to planning but trying to look at either outdoor or dedicated-use buildings is the wording in the legislation.
- vi. They all have predominant fire detection systems. Depending on how they do the explosion protection, you may have an MPA69 with gas protection and fans. Those require annual inspections.

### **D. AB 841 State Fire Marshal: Personal Protective Equipment: Battery Fires**

- i. AB 841 requires a personal protective equipment review. It directs the State Fire Marshal's office to convene a workgroup to develop recommendations for personal protective equipment (PPE), decontamination practices, for instance, that involve lithium-ion battery fires and then include reviewing PPE limits to exposure to lithium-ion or lithium and heavy metals, decontamination technologies, and whether equipment needs to differ by battery type.
- ii. The legislation requires specific membership, making sure to include more code professionals and others. It requires members of the State Board of Fire Services, but also academia, health and safety experts, and representatives from the Division of Occupational Health and Safety, along with labor organizations representing the utility workforce.
- iii. There will need to be a subgroup, which will require adherence to Bagley-Keene.

#### Discussion

- i. There's been a lot of misinformation round this so it would be helpful if the subgroup the currently known information, studies done to date, and put out an information sheet as the first step. Something that fire districts, and city/local officials could reference to see what we do currently know. There were some references in a

house subcommittee hearing where they discussed contamination of turnouts. But that was in a very defined space where they responded to a fire at e-scooter shops, etc.

- ii. This is a space that we have to be very careful in as we communicate back to folks with certain expectations of this workgroup. Academic research takes a long time and there's stuff that's currently in process, but it will take a long time before we have enough studies and data to conclusively make recommendations. There's also a gap of knowledge to even know if it's misinformation or not. It's important to bring very reputable folks that are in the scientific community doing the work so they can bring the latest information that is factually correct.
- iii. It does require the subgroup to produce a report and have it reviewed by the larger workgroup. The legislation gave a deadline of September 1, 2026.
- iv. Over the last 3 years FSRI has done 18 full-scale vehicle fires but recognizing that the chemistry of the packs is often similar to the chemistries of the energy storage systems. There were a couple journal articles published recently, and there are 2-3 more coming out, some in partnership with NIOSH, and they may not say exactly everything needs to be known about energy storage but it's certainly a step in the right direction. There's guidance on how to reduce firefighter exposure to battery smoke during EV fires.
- v. We shouldn't forget that other professional responding to emergencies have different PPE requirements at different phases of the emergency.
- vi. Include longshoremen in these conversations as well as there have been incident at ports as well.

#### **E. Stakeholder Presentations – Identifying Topics and Speakers**

- i. As mentioned in the charter, we need to make sure we hear from experts that are impacting the industry, academia, or even partner agencies.
- ii. Presentations can be from this membership or outside the workgroup.
  - a. Establish a baseline of everyone's knowledge. Everyone on the workgroup to present a minimum of a 20 minute presentation to present where there expertise lies.
  - b. Generate a list of topics that should be covered and by whom. Send topic ideas to [Carrie Lewis](#).
    - How to handle incidents based on location (in a facility, on the road, in a port, on a bridge, in a tunnel, etc.)
    - How to better prepare the entire state for incidents vs. having some fire departments better prepared.
    - Energy stranded inside containers.
    - Battery manufacturers

#### **F. Discuss 2026 Meeting Frequency and Dates/Times**

- i. All meetings must have an in-person quorum
- ii. There will also be three subgroup meetings
- iii. Can the meeting meet in two locations and have both locations count toward the quorum?
- iv. The PPE subgroup needs to be established and start meeting immediately
- v. An "organizational session" should be part of the next meeting to discuss subgroups and create a list of objectives and deliverables.
- vi. May need to add more people to the membership for the workgroup or subgroups
- vii. It is acceptable to bring people to attend the meetings beyond the membership, they are open to the public.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

A. There was no public comment

**5. UPCOMING MEETING DATES FOR 2026**

B. Thursday, February 12  
3:00-5:00pm

**6. MEETING ADJOURNED 3:43 PM**