

An Urgent Appeal: Remove the Beach Haven BESS Facility

Dear Officials, Residents, Visitors, and Business Owners of LBI

We write to express our deep concern regarding Atlantic City Electric's (ACE) installation of a lithium-ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on 2nd Street in Beach Haven in the heart of The Queen City.

This facility, set to begin operation on August 15, contains an estimated 10,000-24,999 pounds of lithium-ion batteries, according to Community Right-to-Know disclosures. While BESS technology can support grid reliability and sustainability, its placement in a densely populated, environmentally sensitive area is extremely inappropriate and dangerous.

The Risk Is Real

Lithium-ion batteries carry the potential for catastrophic failure through a phenomenon known as thermal runaway—a self-sustaining reaction that can result in intense fires, toxic gas releases, explosions, and long-lasting contamination. Alarmingly, ACE did not disclose to the Beach Haven Land Use Board that this facility contains lithium-ion batteries or that thermal runaway is a known risk associated with such systems.

In the past two years, California and New York have experienced at least seven thermal runaway events at BESS facilities. One of the most serious occurred on January 16, 2025, in Moss Landing, CA, where residents reported serious health issues (e.g., eye irritation, respiratory problems, and rashes) miles from the fire and have filed a lawsuit against Vistra seeking long-term medical monitoring. Researchers detected heavy metal nanoparticles—nickel, manganese, and cobalt—at hundreds to thousands of times normal concentrations, with unknown long-term impacts to public health and the local ecosystem, Elkhorn Slough (similar to our Barnegat Bay).

LBI Cannot Afford to Be a Test Case

This is the first BESS facility in ACE's service area, and LBI is being treated as a test subject. Yet our community presents unique risks:

- Only one evacuation route-severely congested in summer and on holiday weekends.
- Proximity to homes, businesses, restaurants, and outside activities, making shelter-in-place or evacuation plans nearly impossible to execute efficiently.
- High winds and shifting weather, which could spread toxic gases unpredictably.
- Critical drinking water sources (Kirkwood-Cohansey and Atlantic City 800-ft sand aquifers) lie beneath the island, vulnerable to contamination from fire runoff, leaching, and explosion debris.
- Environmentally sensitive Barnegat Bay and its susceptible fish and wildlife could be jeopardized.

Even under normal conditions, thermal runaway fires can take days or weeks to extinguish-often by letting the batteries burn themselves out. Water can worsen the situation by increasing toxic runoff. Battery cleanup at Moss Landing is still ongoing and expected to take at least 12 more months.

Where Is the Oversight?

Westfield, MA rejected a proposed BESS to protect its Barnes Aquifer. Shouldn't we afford the same level of protection to our residents, environment, and drinking water supply?

We strongly support clean energy and a resilient grid-but not at the cost of public safety. The location of this facility in the center of town, on a barrier island community is reckless, especially without full transparency or meaningful input from residents and local officials during the approval process.

Our Call to Action

We call on Atlantic City Electric to immediately remove the BESS facility from LBI to a remote, properly engineered site where it poses minimal risk to life, property, and natural resources. Long Beach Island should not be an experiment. Our families, businesses, wildlife, and future are too important.

Sincerely,

Concerned Residents of Long Beach Island

Bob Jacobson, Matt Gideon, Jim Ciulla