



GOVERNOR
KATHY HOCHUL

Attachment #9.1
Return to Agenda

 [Government \(/keywords/government\)](/keywords/government)

 [Public Safety \(/keywords/public-safety\)](/keywords/public-safety)

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Governor Hochul Announces Release of Initial Findings From Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group on Emergency Response

Available Analyses Find No Reported Injuries, No Harmful Levels of Toxins Detected at Sites of Battery Storage Fires

Draft Fire Code Reviews Recommendations Expected to be Released for Public Comment in First Quarter 2024

Statewide Battery Storage System Inspections Expected to Conclude by the Second

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Governor Kathy Hochul today released initial findings from the Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group, which was convened following fires at battery energy storage systems at facilities in Jefferson, Orange and Suffolk Counties this summer. The Working Group has made significant progress in evaluating both preventive and reactive standards and practices for battery system fire safety, in addition to analyzing the impacts of the fires. Based on available analyses of air quality, soil, or water data collected in the days following the incidents, the Working Group concluded that there were no reported injuries and no harmful levels of toxins detected. Additionally, statewide battery system project assessments and fire code reviews are currently underway with draft recommendations expected to be released for public comment in the first quarter of 2024.

“New York State is grateful to the first responders who were on the scene at these fires, and we are taking this opportunity to ensure they can continue to do their jobs safely and effectively,” **Governor Hochul said.** “As we continue to advance New York’s clean energy transition, maintaining this safety is of the utmost importance. Thankfully, the Working Group’s analysis shows no notable lasting impacts on the health or safety of the first responders or the communities they serve.”

The Working Group includes representatives from the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of Public Service (DPS), and the Department of State (DOS). The group was convened in August 2023 and has gathered data and worked diligently with project developers, equipment manufacturers, and government officials to learn as much as possible about the fires at the three battery system sites.

The data assembled and analyzed by the Working Group includes:

- An air monitoring report from the OFPC, and soil and water sampling data received from DEC from the Chaumont site.
- On-site air monitoring results collected from the Warwick sites and relayed to the Working Group by local officials.
- On-site soil sampling results from the East Hampton site relayed to the Working Group by a project developer.

- An independent third-party site inspection report consisting of air monitoring and surface sampling at school buildings in the vicinity of the June 27, 2023, fire at the Warwick site.

Based on the information available to date, there is no evidence of significant off-site migration of contaminants associated with the fires.

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said, “NYSERDA remains committed to working with our state agency partners, project developers and local communities to ensure a responsible transition to a zero-emissions grid and making available the data and resources needed to facilitate that transition in a safe and responsible manner.”

New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray said, “Battery energy storage sites are essential to securing our climate future. As these technologies continue to be implemented throughout the state, we will work closely with our partners to ensure they are operated safely.”

Department of Public Service CEO Rory M. Christian said, “The Department is pleased that the Working Group has made significant progress in evaluating both preventive and reactive standards and practices for battery system fire safety, in addition to analyzing the impacts of recent battery storage fires. Kudos to Governor Hochul for creating the working group. The Department will continue working to ensure safety comes first as more and more batteries come into service.”

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said, “DEC applauds Governor Hochul for prioritizing New Yorkers’ safety and taking the lead to ensure energy storage deployment projects continue to be protective of our communities and the environment. DEC experts assisted the Fire Safety Working Group by analyzing current practices, assisting in site testing, enhancing emergency response measures, and identifying improvements in operations at facilities with vital roles in building a safe and responsible clean energy future for our state. We look forward to working with our partner agencies in continuing to advance this important work.”

In addition to the air, soil, and water quality analysis described above, the Working Group has partnered with subject matter experts to inspect all operational battery systems above 300 kW in New York, which accounts for the majority of commercial battery systems in service across the state. Inspections are currently underway and are slated to be complete by the second quarter of 2024. The goal of these inspections is to revise the current evaluation checklists and best-practices available for use by NYSERDA and others prior to energizing the systems, and to incorporate lessons learned from the battery fires while enhancing emergency response measures.

Battery energy storage systems are a critical component to achieving a reliable, zero-emissions grid. New York is taking the lead in addressing the incidents head on by forming the inter-agency fire and safety working group. The conclusions and recommendations will improve the way energy storage projects are deployed in New York and across the country. New York's Working Group has drawn national attention from other states as the industry is strongly invested in improving energy storage deployment best practices on a broader scale.

The Working Group is concluding negotiations with the impacted facilities' battery manufacturers and utility companies to secure Root Cause Analysis (RCA) reports for the Warwick, East Hampton, and Chaumont fires. Subject matter experts will review and analyze the reports once they are made available.

Additionally, the Working Group has been collaborating with national labs and other nation-leading subject matter experts to review all existing codes and testing procedures pertinent to the development and electrification of battery energy storage systems. The Working Group is actively assessing all relevant codes and standards and will make recommendations to ensure building and fire codes are adequate and appropriate. Draft recommendations will be available for public comment in the first quarter of 2024.

Following the fires, the OFPC has made a Lithium-Ion Battery Awareness training course available on the [DHSES E-Learning Management System](#) for all first responders. According to the OFPC over 2,000 participants have taken the course to date.

New York State's nation-leading climate agenda calls for an orderly and just transition that creates family-sustaining jobs, continues to foster a green economy across all sectors and ensures that at least 35 percent, with a goal of 40 percent, of the benefits of clean energy investments are directed to disadvantaged communities. Guided by some of the nation's most aggressive climate and clean energy initiatives, New York is on a path to achieving a zero-emission electricity sector by 2040, including 70 percent renewable energy generation by 2030, and economywide carbon neutrality by mid-century. A cornerstone of this transition is New York's unprecedented clean energy investments, including more than \$52 billion in 118 large-scale renewable and transmission projects across the state, \$6.8 billion to reduce building emissions, \$3.3 billion to scale up solar, nearly \$3 billion for clean transportation initiatives, and over \$2 billion in NY Green Bank commitments. These and other investments are supporting more than 165,000 jobs in New York's clean energy sector in 2021 and over 3,000 percent growth in the distributed solar sector since 2011. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality, New York also adopted zero-emission vehicle regulations, including requiring all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks sold in the State be zero emission by 2035. Partnerships are continuing to advance New York's climate action with nearly 400 registered and more than 100 certified Climate Smart Communities, nearly 500 Clean Energy