



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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California's Emergency Proclamation Shows Need for Investments in Clean and Resilient Energy

EJ Advocates call for the state to invest in resilience centers, demand response, and other clean energy solutions

August 5, 2021 - On Friday, the state of California issued an emergency proclamation that removes environmental restrictions and allows more fossil-fuel powered backup generators to run. The proclamation orders existing fossil fuel plants to disregard permit limits and run at a higher power. It also requires the State to pay large users like refineries, data centers and manufacturers, when they run diesel back-up generators to reduce their grid use during extreme heat events.

The proclamation comes as the Dixie Fire continues to devastate Northern California communities and just a week before the Legislature returns to session to consider a climate resilience package championed by environmental advocates to protect working class communities of color.

“Our communities are already creating the building blocks of a new energy economy and creative and transformative solutions to the climate crisis, but they need support and resources. Friday’s proclamation only affirms the urgency for State leadership to look to frontline communities’ needs and priorities and create plans that address us immediately and for the long haul,” **said Alexis Sutterman, CEJA Energy Equity Associate.** “The climate crisis, fires, rolling blackouts and heatwaves are here to stay. Environmental justice communities can’t afford to disproportionately swallow California’s pollution from dirty backup generators every year as a response to an emergency we already know is coming. We need to prepare better.”

According to a [recent analysis by the Gender Equity Policy Institute](#), the funding for climate resilience in the draft of California’s state budget is allocated in a “radically unbalanced, unfair, and unequal way,” with the majority of the \$3.7 billion - unless other action is taken by lawmakers - expected to flow to white communities.

“As the Legislature returns next week, we urge Lawmakers to fully fund community resilience centers in the state budget,” **said Ameer Raval with APEN.** “Community resilience centers would offer immediate-term respite and relief at trusted buildings such as libraries, health clinics, or places of worship in the face of intensifying climate disasters. They champion the kind of community-driven model we need, especially given such precarious times. California should take our current energy emergency as a wake up call and double down on these investments for long-term resilience.”



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The proclamation comes as the CPUC opened up a new phase of its rulemaking to address electricity service in extreme weather events, where it is considering CEJA's proposal for a demand response program that would pay environmental justice communities to reduce their energy use during peak demand times.

"If we plan ahead, the state of California can protect the health and wellbeing of overburdened communities while making the grid safer and more reliable for everyone," said **Shana Lazerow with Communities for a Better Environment**. "This proclamation highlights the need to retire the fossil-fueled power plants and diesel generators that pollute our communities and choose cleaner options. Right now, the California Public Utilities Commission can prioritize and incentivize the placement of demand response programs in fenceline communities while also providing them financial relief and assistance. The development of community microgrids based on renewable generation and integrated programming would also reduce demand on the grid while giving more communities access to clean and reliable backup power. Generating, storing and distributing clean power locally will allow us to keep the lights on as blackouts and wildfires continue, and it will keep our communities healthy, safe and resilient."

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