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City of Hayward to oppose application to restart power plant following explosion and fire

HAYWARD, Calif., June 28, 2021—The City of Hayward announced today it will oppose a request by Calpine to restart its Russell City Energy Center until the cause of a recent explosion at the power plant is known, and an assessment and public review of potential environmental and health impacts of the proposed resumption of operations is complete.

Shortly before midnight on May 27, the Hayward Fire Department responded to a major fire at the power plant following the catastrophic failure and explosion of a steam turbine at the facility, which is located at 3862 Depot Road in Hayward.

Though no injuries were reported from the explosion and fire, the debris field from the blast was extensive with pieces and chunks of metal propelled hundreds of feet—including one weighing 15 pounds that crashed through the roof of an unoccupied trailer at the City’s Housing Navigation Center at Whitesell Street and Depot Road, some 1200 feet away. The Navigation Center provides transitional shelter for people experiencing homelessness. Another piece, weighing 51 pounds, landed on the City’s Water Pollution Control Facility.

“Given what transpired, we believe it would be premature to proceed with a restart until we understand the root cause of the turbine failure and whether facilities in place to contain the explosion performed as intended,” Mayor Barbara Halliday said. “It also is essential that we understand the potential environmental and health impacts to our community of Calpine’s proposal to resume plant operations,” Mayor Halliday added.

Calpine’s Russell City Energy Center, which began operations in August 2013, generates electricity from natural gas and generally is relied upon to deliver power during peak periods of demand primarily in summer months. The steam turbine that experienced the catastrophic

failure is associated with cooling and heat and carbon containment aspects of plant operations and is not essential for electricity generation.

On June 3, Calpine, a publicly held Houston-based corporation that bills itself as the nation's largest generator of electricity from natural gas and geothermal resources, submitted an application to the California Energy Commission (CEC) to restart the Russell City Energy Center at a reduced energy-generation capacity by by-passing the steam turbine.

The application to restart the plant received provisional CEC staff-level approval on June 18, and a 14-day public comment period prior to a final decision by CEC commissioners closes on Friday, July 2.

To read the Calpine's application to restart the power plant and CEC staff-level statement of approval of the application go [here](#) on the CEC website. To provide public comment to the CEC on the application, use [this](#) CEC online form or mail written comments to:

California Energy Commission Docket Unit, MS-4
Docket No. 01-AFC—07C
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA, 95814-5512

According to the CEC, questions about the matter can be directed to John Heiser, Compliance Project Manager for the Office of Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement, at (916) 628-5566 or via email at John.Heiser@energy.ca.gov.

For more information on public participation, the CEC says to contact the Public Advisor at (916) 654-4489 or (800) 822-6228 (toll-free in California), or by email to publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov.

For news media inquiries, the CEC says to direct them to the Media Office at (916) 654-4989, or by email to mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.