

MOTION

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

On June 17, 2026, a fire broke out at a nearly 500,000-square-foot cold storage warehouse operated by Lineage Logistics in Boyle Heights. The 5-day-long fire forced evacuations, prompted state and local emergency declarations, covered the surrounding neighborhoods in smoke, and left residents confronting the stench of rotting food for weeks afterward. While the exact cause for the fire remains under investigation, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) has indicated that the fire started on the warehouse roof in connection with the rooftop solar array.

Reporting by the Los Angeles Times has raised additional concerns about the adequacy of existing safety mechanisms and oversight for rooftop solar installations. Their reporting explored the effectiveness of a rapid shutdown switch, which is a safety device required under the California Electrical Code that allows firefighters to de-energize solar panels during an emergency. After the fire, city officials reported that even after using the rapid shutdown switch, the solar panels remained energized for several days afterward.

The Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety's (LADBS) own guidance underscores how consequential these mishaps can be. LADBS Information Bulletin P/GI 2023-027, "Guidelines for Plan Check and Permit Requirements for Solar Energy Systems," requires that an electrical permit for a solar photovoltaic system receive LAFD approval before it can be issued, and specifies that solar panels must carry an appropriate fire rating classification. The bulletin also makes the distinction about who inspects a completed installation. They claim that LADBS inspects systems on one and two-family dwellings, while systems installed in all other types of structures, such as large commercial and industrial buildings, are inspected by LAFD rather than LADBS. The same bulletin states that, solar energy devices are not subject to the same ongoing maintenance requirements once installed, unlike general mechanical equipment.

Based on the events surrounding the Boyle Heights warehouse fire, there is an evident need for clarity as to which department is responsible for overseeing and approving the installation of a solar energy system on a large commercial or industrial building, and whether the current division of labor between LADBS and LAFD leaves gaps in that oversight. As the City expands rooftop solar as a means to meet its climate and clean energy goals, it is essential that Angelenos have confidence that solar installations are permitted, enforced, installed, and maintained in a manner that does not compromise health and safety.

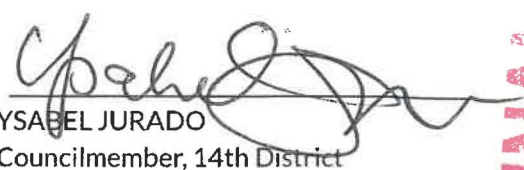
I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Chief Legislative Analyst, with the assistance of the Los Angeles Fire Department, the Department of Building and Safety, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and any other relevant department, to report on the following:

- The City's current permitting, inspection, and enforcement requirements for rooftop solar installations on commercial and industrial buildings, including rapid shutdown systems and other fire and electrical safety mechanisms required under the California Electrical Code and Los Angeles Municipal Code.
- Existing safety mechanism requirements, such as rapid shutdown switches, and how the City tracks and verifies ongoing compliance over the life of a solar installation.

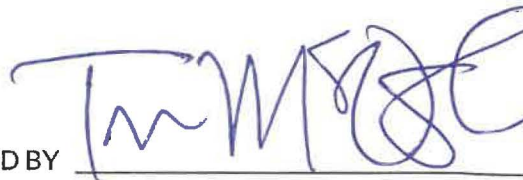

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- The adequacy of current protocols for de-energizing rooftop solar arrays during a fire, including why panels may remain energized for an extended period after a shutdown switch has been activated, and what additional measures or technologies could reduce risks to firefighters and surrounding communities.
- Any gaps in interagency coordination between the Department of Building and Safety, the Los Angeles Fire Department, and other relevant agencies regarding the permitting, inspection, and emergency response for buildings with rooftop solar systems.
- Recommendations for any changes to City ordinances, permitting procedures, inspection protocols, or interagency practices necessary to strengthen solar panel safety citywide, along with an estimated timeline and cost for implementation.

PRESENTED BY


YSABEL JURADO
Councilmember, 14th District

SECONDED BY



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