

Hail cripples massive solar farm, sparking resident concern about vulnerable 'green' tech

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An onslaught of hail in southeastern Texas that destroyed large portions of a massive solar farm is highlighting the perils of trading traditional power sources for vulnerable "green" alternatives and sparking concern about the potential for chemical leaks from the broken panels.

Aerial footage captured the significant damage suffered by the Fighting Jays Solar farm in Fort Bend County, Texas. The March 15 storm shattered hundreds of panels and prompted a nearby resident to question if the solar panels were leaking chemicals such as cadmium telluride, which is linked to serious health risks in humans.

"My concern is the hail damage that came through and busted these panels – we now have some highly toxic chemicals that could be potentially leaking into our water tables," Needville resident Nick Kaminski told Fox affiliate KRIV-TV. "I have a family — two children and a wife. My neighbors have kids and a lot of other residents in the area who are on well water are concerned that the chemicals are now leaking into our water tables."

TEXAS GOVT PUSHING ACTION THAT COULD 'KNEECAP' NEW FOSSIL FUEL GENERATION, DESTABILIZE GRID, EXPERTS WARN



Images captured by Fox affiliate FOX26 Houston KRIV show extensive damage to Fighting Jays Solar in Fort Bend County, Texas. (FOX26 Houston KRIV)

The Fort Bend County Environmental Health Department is investigating the incident and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has also been contacted regarding any potential chemical contamination, Needville Mayor Chad Nesvadba told Fox News Digital. Fort Bend County officials didn't respond to multiple requests for comment.

Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, represents the community surrounding the solar farm and is engaged with those whose homes, businesses and property were destroyed by the storm, according to spokesperson Emily Matthews, who noted the incident underscores the importance of an "all-of-the-above" approach to energy policy.

CALIFORNIA'S GRID FACES COLLAPSE AS LEADERS PUSH RENEWABLES, ELECTRIC VEHICLES, EXPERTS SAY

"As far as solar farms being damaged where hail and tornadoes are common, those companies knowingly run the risk of building solar panel farms in these areas," Matthews told Fox News Digital. "Events like this underscore the importance of having an all-of-the-above energy approach to meet our energy needs and showcase how our country cannot solely rely on or fully transition to renewable energy sources like this."

Denmark-based Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, the parent company of the Fighting Jays Solar project's developer, AP Solar Holdings, confirmed the storm had taken out much of the farm, but there was currently no risk to the nearby community of chemical

exposure.



Local resident Nick Kaminski is interviewed by Fox affiliate FOX26 Houston KRIV. (FOX26 Houston KRIV)

"On March 15th, a hailstorm caused solar panel damage to Fighting Jays Solar, a 350 MW project located in Fort Bend County, Texas," CIP told Fox News Digital in a statement. "We are currently assessing the extent of the impact of the storm on the generation of the project, while the plant continues to safely operate at a reduced capacity."

It added: "The silicon-based panels contain no cadmium telluride and we have identified no risk to the local community or the environment."

BERKELEY ABANDONS LANDMARK NATURAL GAS BAN AFTER COURT BATTLE

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which oversees the state's power grid, said it was aware of the situation, but had not identified any grid reliability concerns. The Texas Public Utilities Commission added that it has yet to receive any reports about the incident.

Still, Daniel Turner, the executive director of energy watchdog group Power the Future, said the storm's impact could foreshadow future threats to the U.S. power grid if the nation transitions to a heavy reliance on solar energy.



Rep. Troy Nehls, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, appears during a hearing on June 6, 2023. (Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images)

"There's this enormous shell game happening by the Biden administration, by the environmental left, presenting wind and solar as perfectly green, clean, and carbon-neutral," Turner told Fox News Digital. "They use all of these buzzwords. But they're none of that and they also have enormous drawbacks. And it's doing the American people a great disservice to obfuscate these very obvious shortcomings."

He noted that, because solar panels are largely manufactured in China, the destruction of solar farms could be leveraged in geopolitical disputes between the U.S. and China.

"Why would we expect them to race to our aid when our grid is down nationwide, and they are the ones holding the goods that we need to get back up?" Turner said.

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Fighting Jays Solar came online in July 2022 and spans more than 3,000 acres, according to AP Solar Holdings. It is located about 40 miles from downtown Houston.

The destruction of the project, meanwhile, comes as the nation broadly races to replace existing fossil fuel power with green energy alternatives. But those plans have been criticized by experts who warn of those energy sources' reliance on certain windy and

sunny weather conditions.

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