

3.12 Public Services

This section includes an evaluation of potential impacts for identified public services that could result from implementation of the proposed project. Public services typically include fire protection, law enforcement, schools, and other public facilities such as parks, libraries, and post offices. Each subsection includes descriptions of existing facilities, service standards, and potential environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project, and mitigation measures where appropriate. Section 3.15, Utilities/Service Systems, of this EIR evaluates impacts related to water supply, wastewater, and other utilities. The impact assessment provides an evaluation of potential adverse effects to public services based on criteria derived from the CEQA Guidelines in conjunction with actions proposed in Chapter 2, Project Description.

The IS/NOP prepared for this EIR determined that the project would not result in impacts on schools, parks and other public facilities (libraries and post offices). Therefore, these issue areas will not be discussed further and are included in Chapter 6, Effects Found Not Significant, of this EIR. The IS/NOP is included in Appendix A of this EIR.

3.12.1 Existing Conditions

The project site is located in unincorporated County, approximately one mile north from the City of Brawley's jurisdictional limit. The project site is located within the Imperial County Fire Department (ICFD)/Office of Energy Services (OES) and the Imperial County Sheriff Department's areas of service.

Fire Protection Services

The project site is located within the ICFD/OES area of service. ICFD/OES currently has nine fire stations and six contracting agencies serving the entire 4,500 square miles of unincorporated Imperial County. The nine ICFD stations are located in the communities of Heber, Seeley, Ocotillo, Palo Verde, Niland, Winterhaven, Salton City, and the City of Imperial (ICFD 2019). Each of the county fire stations is staffed with a Captain, Firefighter, and Reserve Firefighter with the only exception being the Palo Verde station that is staffed with a Firefighter and Reserve Firefighter. Every fire station has a Type I engine as its primary apparatus. The City of Imperial and Heber stations also house a Ladder Truck along with the Type I engine. The Seeley and Heber stations also house Type III engines. The ICFD Emergency Units strive to respond immediately after receiving the initial tone for service. The actual response time would be determined by the area of response throughout the vast response area covered.

The closest fire station to the project is site is the Imperial station located at 2514 La Brucherie Road in Imperial, California. This station is located approximately 13.5 miles southwest of the project site.

Police Protection Services

Imperial County's Sheriff's Department is responsible for police protection services in the unincorporated areas of Imperial County and the City of Holtville. The patrol function is divided between North County Patrol, South County Patrol, East County Operations, and City of Holtville. Deputies assigned to the Patrol Divisions are the "first responders" to a call for law enforcement service. The main patrol station is located in El Centro on Applestill Road. Sheriff substations are located in the communities of Brawley, Niland, Salton City, and Winterhaven with resident deputies

located in the unincorporated community of Palo Verde. Under an existing mutual aid agreement, additional law enforcement services would be provided if and when required by all of the cities within the county, as well as with Border Patrol and the California Highway Patrol. The California Highway Patrol provides traffic regulation enforcement, emergency accident management, and service and assistance on state roadways and other major roadways in the unincorporated portions of Imperial County.

The closest sheriff's station to the project site is located at 220 Main St #207 in Brawley, California. This station is approximately 3 miles southwest of the project site.

3.12.2 Regulatory Setting

This section identifies and summarizes federal, state, and local laws, policies, and regulations that are applicable to the project.

State

Fire Codes and Guidelines

The California Fire Code (Title 24, Part 9 of the CCR) establishes regulations to safeguard against hazards of fire, explosion, or dangerous conditions in new and existing buildings, structures, and premises. The Fire Code also establishes requirements intended to provide safety and assistance to firefighters and emergency responders during emergency operations. The provisions of the Fire Code apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure throughout the State of California. The Fire Code includes regulations regarding fire resistance-rated construction, fire protection systems such as alarm and sprinkler systems, fire services features such as fire apparatus access roads, means of egress, fire safety during construction and demolition, and wildland-urban interface areas.

Local

Imperial County General Plan

The Imperial County General Plan Seismic and Public Safety Element contains goals and objectives that relate to fire protection and law enforcement pertinent to the proposed project. An analysis of the project's consistency with the applicable goals and objectives of the Seismic and Public Safety Element is provided in Table 3.12-1.

Table 3.12-1. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Seismic and Public Safety Element

Applicable General Plan Goals/Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p><i>Goal 1:</i> Include public health and safety considerations in land use planning.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The project's CUP application and site plan will be reviewed by the Imperial County Fire Department to ensure that the facility complies with state and local fire codes and fire safety features are met. Additionally, the project applicant has included site design measures that</p>

Table 3.12-1. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Seismic and Public Safety Element

Applicable General Plan Goals/Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<i>Objective 1.8:</i> Reduce fire hazards by the design of new developments		meet the County Fire Department’s standards which would reduce the potential for fire hazards. This includes constructing a secondary emergency access road, providing all-weather surface roads, and locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders.
<i>Goal 2:</i> Minimize potential hazards to public health, safety, and welfare and prevent the loss of life and damage to health and property resulting from both natural and human-related phenomena.	Consistent	See response above for a discussion on how the project would implement all state and local fire codes and provide site design measures to reduce the potential for fire hazards. With regards to public safety and security, the project would include 6-foot tall perimeter security fencing with barbed wire and a motion detection system and closed-circuit camera system. In addition, the points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders.
<i>Objective 2.5:</i> Minimize injury, loss of life, and damage to property by implementing all state codes where applicable.		

Source: ICPDS 1997

CUP = conditional use permit

Imperial County Office of Emergency Services – Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The ICFD is the local Office of Emergency services in Imperial County. Imperial County has developed the multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan (MHMP) to create a safer community. The purpose of the MHMP is to significantly reduce deaths, injuries, and other disaster losses caused by natural and human-caused hazards in Imperial County. The MHMP describes past and current hazard mitigation activities and outlines goals, strategies, and actions for reducing future disaster losses. The Imperial County MHMP is the representation of the County’s commitment to reduce risks from natural and other hazards and serves as a guide for decision-makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of natural and other hazards. The jurisdictions included in the MHMP include the cities of Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmoreland, the IID and the Imperial County Office of Education. The MHMP complies with all federal, state, and local laws guiding disaster management.

County Evacuation Plans

The Imperial County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) provides guidance and procedures for the County to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The EOP designates the Sheriff’s Department as having jurisdiction in an emergency involving evacuation within the unincorporated areas of the county and within contract cities.

3.12.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents the significance criteria used for considering project impacts related to public services, the methodology employed for the evaluation, an impact evaluation, and mitigation requirements, if necessary.

Thresholds of Significance

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, project impacts related to public services are considered significant if the project would result in the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

- Fire protection
- Police protection
- Schools
- Parks
- Other public facilities

As mentioned previously, it was determined through the preparation of an IS/NOP that the project would not result in impacts on schools, parks, or other public facilities. Therefore, those issue areas will not be discussed further and are included in Chapter 6, Effects Found Not Significant, of this EIR.

Methodology

Evaluation of potential fire and police service impacts of the proposed project was based on consultation with the ICFD, Sheriff's Department and review of other development projects in the area.

Impact Analysis

Impact 3.12-1 *Would the project result in the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection?*

The project would result in a minor increase in demand for fire protection services over existing levels. No operation and maintenance (O&M) buildings are being proposed. Additional auxiliary facilities would include lighting, grounding, backup uninterruptable power supply (UPS) systems and diesel power generators, fire and hazardous materials safety systems, security systems, chemical safety systems, and emergency response facilities. The project also includes a battery energy storage system (BESS), located near the proposed substation. The proposed project's BESS component would be placed on a 54,000 square-foot concrete pad. The BESS would consist of 12 banks of batteries totaling up to 432 enclosures. Each of the enclosures would utilize self-contained liquid cooling systems and include built-in fire suppression systems.

The project site is located in the unincorporated area of Imperial County. According to the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the potential for a major fire in the unincorporated areas of the County is generally low. As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, primary access to the project site would be located off N Best Avenue. A secondary emergency access road would be located in the northwest portion of the project site. An all-weather surface access road would surround the perimeter of the project site, as well as around solar blocks no greater than 500 by 500 feet. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Although the proposed project would be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable fire protection and other environmental, health, and safety requirements (e.g., CPUC safety standards), the project applicant will be required to consult and coordinate with the Fire Department to address any fire safety and service concerns (i.e., BESS) so that adequate service is maintained. While the proposed project may result in an increase in demand for fire protection service, with installation of internal fire prevention systems and ICFD consultation, the project would not result in an increase in demand that would, in turn, result in a substantial adverse physical impact associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities; the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services. Based on these considerations, the project would not result in a need for fire facility expansion and a less than significant impact would occur.

Imperial County requires payment of impact fees for new development projects. Fire Impact Fees are imposed pursuant to Ordinance 1418 §2 (2006), which was drafted in accordance with the County's TischlerBise Impact Fee Study. The ordinance has provisions for non-residential industrial projects based on square footage. The project applicant will be required to pay the fire protection services' impact fees. These fees would be included in the Conditions of Approval for the CUP. No new fire stations or facilities would be required to serve the project. Impacts would therefore be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.12-2	<i>Would the project result in the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for police protection?</i>
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The project does not include a residential component; therefore, it would not result in a substantial addition of residents to the Sheriff Department's service area. Although the potential is low, the proposed project may attract vandals or other security risks and the increase in construction related traffic could increase demand on law enforcement services. Six-foot high chain link fencing topped with barbed wire would be installed around the perimeter of the project site at the commencement of construction and site access would be limited to authorized site workers. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates. In addition, a motion detection system and closed-circuit camera system may also be installed. The site would be remotely monitored 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. In addition, periodic on-site personnel visitations for security would occur during operations and maintenance of the proposed project, thereby minimizing the need for police surveillance.

The proposed project may result in a temporary increase in demand for law enforcement service due to the presence of construction equipment and material being stored on-site. With installation of the proposed security features on the project site, the proposed project would not result in an increase in demand that would, in turn, result in a substantial adverse physical impact associated with the provision of new or physically altered sheriff facilities; the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services. As conditions of approval of the project, the project applicant will be required to participate in the Imperial County Public Benefit Program for the life of this CUP and shall at all times be a party to a public benefit agreement in a form acceptable to County Counsel in order to pay for all costs, benefits, and fees associated with the approved project, and the applicant will be required to reimburse the Sheriff's Department for any investigations regarding theft on the project site and related law enforcement. Approval of this public benefit agreement will be by the Board of Supervisors prior to the issuance of the first building permit. These potential impacts are less than significant.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

3.12.4 Decommissioning/Restoration and Residual Impacts

Decommissioning/Restoration

If at the end of the PPA term, no contract extension is available for a power purchaser, no other buyer of the energy emerges, or there is no further funding of the project, the project will be decommissioned and dismantled. Decommissioning and restoration of the project site would occur and would not result in an increased need for fire and police protection services. Decommissioning of the project would occur through implementation of a required Reclamation Plan. These activities would be in the form of disassembling project components, including the BESS, and then restoring the site to pre-project conditions, both of which would not create an increase in demand for police or fire service beyond the level required for the proposed solar operations. Therefore, no impact is identified and no mitigation is required for this phase.

Residual

With payment of the development impact fees for fire and police protection services, project impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required, and no residual significant and unmitigated impacts would result.