MASSIVE WILDFIRES IN SOCAL MONTHS AHEAD OF SEASON, BUT AL GORE IS STILL FAT

I remember moving to Pasadena in September of 1979. I was told that our cheap student apartment had a good view of Mount Wilson out the living room window, but smoke and smog obscured it until nightfall, when flames on the ridge brought it into view. That was actually a very small fire, but the memory of those flames and the falling ash persist as my introduction to living in California. Throughout my years in California (we moved to the northern part of the state in 1983 and stayed there for ten years), I recall the rhythm of reliable late winter storms and spring showers giving way to dry summers that eventually turned into wildfire season late in the summer as the spring flush of growth in the hills dried out.

But that reliable rhythm in California faces serious disruption. The state is in its third year of extreme drought and fires are raging several months ahead of schedule. Consider this from the Governor's Office, published on May 5, before the current outbreak of severe fires:

> It is dry in the foothills and southern California as during a typical July or August, the peak of the fire season. Even in a region used to wildfires, *this* year appears poised to be especially destructive. California is facing its third dry year; thirsty grasses, parched brush and trees are more susceptible to burn, so fuel is ready.
>
> /snip/
>
> "The historic drought that is upon us makes Wildfire Preparedness more

> critical than ever,' said Cal OES Director Mark Ghilarducci. "There's a very high likelihood of well-above-normal fires and perhaps a chance of longer-lasting fires, which require more resources in order to fight them."

But it's not just the current drought that is causing fires in California to be worse than ever:

> So far this year, California has already experienced more wildfire activity than normal. As of April 26th, the state has recorded more than 1,100 fires; that's more than double the average of the previous five years. Even before this year's drought, forest officials were reporting a longer fire season and more catastrophic mega-fires in California and other western states. More than half of California's worst fires in recorded history have occurred since 2002.

Think about that. The state's list of worst fires can be found here (pdf). The records go back to 1932, but in the more than 80 years of those records, 11 of the worst 20 have occurred in the 11 years from 2002 to 2013.

The current outbreak is worst around San Diego. From CNN:

> San Diego County is hoping for a break Thursday, a day after wildfires ravaged the landscape, threatening homes, universities, a military base and a nuclear power plant.
>
> "Let's hope for a calm day," said County Supervisor Dianne Jacob, who marveled at the outbreak that saw San Diego go from one wildfire to nine, charring more than 9,000 acres.

That hope for a calm day is unlikely to be met, as forecasters are saying today will be the hottest day this week. And yesterday was a flurry of activity for emergency services:

> Alert San Diego, a countywide notification system, sent out nearly 122,000 emergency telephone notifications on Wednesday as the wildfires sprang up.
>
> Carlsbad alone issued 23,000 evacuation notices. Thousands of students won't have classes on Thursday due to the continuing threat; California State University-San Marcos canceled all activities through Friday, including commencement. Students in the San Diego Unified School District will also get a break from the books.
>
> Numerous roads have been shut down while others have become clogged with people trying to escape.
>
> /snip/
>
> Another fire ignited around Camp Pendleton, a mammoth Marine base and training facility for multiple military branches, prompting evacuations of the O'Neill Heights Housing, the De Luz Child Development Center and Mary Fay Pendleton Elementary School, the Marines said.
>
> Another blaze burned in the community of Fallbrook, adjacent to the military post, which is the West Coast boot camp for enlistees.
>
> Cal Fire said the wildfire charred 6,000 acres around the military facilities.
>
> A precautionary evacuation was ordered at the nearby San Onofre nuclear power plant, which has been offline for two years because of another wildfire. Southern California Edison spokeswoman

> Maureen Brown said “there is no safety threat,” though.

Isn’t that something? San Onofre got knocked offline over two years ago by another wildfire and is under attack again before it can get back up and running.

But don’t you dare blame these developments on climate change. Don’t you know how fat Al Gore is?