



UPDATE: June 19, 2014

The San Diego Fire Situation

We met this week with policymakers to talk specifically about the fire conditions in San Diego County.

The word we got back is that the conditions are not only severe for fire season in general, but the excess fuels, dry landscape, intemperate weather and continuing drought have created unprecedented risks.

Consider this: on one day in the middle of May there were five fires burning in San Diego County with more than 20,000 acres going up in flames. We heard from those on the frontline fighting these fires who claimed it was like working inside a tinderbox. Their concern was that these fires are a precursor of what to expect over the next several months.

The idea of another year of drought is something that takes our policy concerns to an entirely new level.

As the season progresses, we may experience one of the worst fire seasons in recent history. The economic and societal impacts could be staggering. If you recall, the 2003 wildfires cost San Diego County nearly \$2.5 billion, with the Cedar Fire still the largest fire in California's history. Suppression costs during the incident were roughly \$46 million; that's less than 2% of the total economic impact. San Diego saw a similarly devastating fire season in 2007, with nearly \$2 billion in losses. Those areas that did burn have been rebuilt and the vegetation has regrown.

The outcome of any incident depends on four factors: the environmental conditions, prior land management,



The picture is PhotoShopped but the situation is real.

firefighter staffing and firefighting resources. We cannot control the environment; and managing hundreds of thousands of acres is nearly insurmountable. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to ensure that we protect California as best we can by providing the staffing and resources necessary.

One of the fires in San Diego County grew so intense, so fast that all the firefighting resources were in place in a little more than three hours. It was a unified command situation and all the firefighters available were at the scene.

The message is simple and direct.

We need to make a concerted effort to educate the public on how to prevent fires from victimizing entire communities.