

‘Armageddon’



By: Peter Pan

Thousands of people are evacuated in parts of Southern California after dozens of fires spread throughout the area, destroying thousands of homes. After the blaze, many are left with nothing but the debris.

During the fire

By Pauline Arrillaga
The Associated Press

ABOVE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA — Just after 7 a.m. the helicopter lifts off and we head east over San Diego into a blood red sun and a sheen of smoke so thick the horizon seems to have vanished.

We are 12 miles north of the Mexico border, at the edge of the first of more than a dozen fires that have turned much of Southern California into a hellish inferno — “Armageddon,” as one firefighter described it.

Armageddon, on this Tuesday morning, is Sweetwater Reservoir reflecting a fiery orange sky in its once pristine blue waters. A snake of flames curling its way around Mount San Miguel, deserted of the hikers and bikers who would usually dot its slopes. Columns of smoke painting the sky an alarming rainbow of colors, jet-black turning to white and finally gray, even green.

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After the fire

By Martha Mendoza
The Associated Press

RUNNING SPRINGS, Calif. — Serious drought, tree-killing bark beetles and truck-flipping winds. Southern Californians have known for years they were living with the ingredients for devastating wildfires, but this time they are mixing with such violence it shocks people who thought they had seen it all.

More than 350,000 homes had been evacuated by Tuesday. There is so much fire, moving so fiercely, that firefighters often had to throw out their playbook and let the blazes burn.

In the San Bernardino Mountains east of Los Angeles, Running Springs firefighter Steve Dvorak rubbed smoke-sore eyes as he watched a crew spray water on a small wooden home they were not going to save. Around him dozens more were in flames or already reduced to smoldering foundations.

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The Facts:

Evacuated: More than **528,000** people

Homes destroyed: At least **1,356**

Homes threatened: At least **22,000**

Acres burned: At least **412,458**

Number of fires: **22** fires

Casualties: One dead, at least **40** injured



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The new 90: 100-mph speeders plague police on I-5

State police records show an increase in super speeding along the interstate between Eugene and Cottage Grove

By Andrea Damewood
The News

The guy on the motorcycle thought he was in for a good race.

He'd been cruising at about 100 mph on Belt Line Road for a

few miles, and stopped in front of a 2002 Camaro at a red light at Roosevelt Boulevard. After checking for cops, he revved his engines and sped off, hoping the Camaro would give chase. It did.

But inside the unmarked sports car was state police Senior Trooper Jamin Van Meter, whose radar clocked him going 110 mph.

Matching the man's speed to catch him was a bit of an adrenaline

rush, Van Meter said, and it's a feeling that's become more common over the past decade. Police say 100 mph has become the new 90.

Officers say they've seen speeds in the area go up by about 15 mph in the past 15 years.

72.6 mph

Average speed on I-5 south of Eugene, the highest in the state; the speed limit is 65

137 mph

The record speed recorded on radar by state police from the Springfield bureau

537

Number of people caught going 100 mph or more in 2006, up 16 percent from 2005