

## CA Electricity Flame Out

La La Land is getting a disastrous dose of reality. Wildfires sparked by utility lines have ravaged the state, forcing California's largest utility to announce it is filing for bankruptcy. Pacific Gas & Electric's wildfire liabilities could be as high as \$30 billion, triple its market value. Predictably, PG&E, state politicians and activist groups have been quick to point the finger at man-caused climate change. That excuse may be convenient, but it's far from accurate.

University of Washington climate scientist Cliff Mass told the Daily Caller that climate change had little to do with the state's massive wildfires. A 2016 National Academy of Sciences paper agrees with that assessment. The NAS concluded, "The risk of any individual fire depends on forest management, natural climate variability and human activities in the forest."

Consider that for decades California's restrictive zoning laws in urban areas have incentivized people to build millions of homes in fire-prone regions. PG&E couldn't keep up with the enormous amount of work needed to be done in replacing old and poorly maintained infrastructure while trimming millions of trees in a service area the size of Florida.

State leaders should have allocated a lot more money to reduce the fire danger risk, but PG&E customers are already paying about 65 percent more than the national average for electricity, largely because of the state's love affair with wind turbines and solar panels. PG&E has signed \$34 billion dollars in renewable energy contracts to buy power from wind and solar installations well above current market rates.

The political pressure to embrace all things renewable while not fully facing energy reality is a script for a disaster movie. But this horror flick is real, and ultimately the citizens of California will be picking up most of the tab for their state's energy mismanagement. Unfortunately, the scripts for more California wildfire disaster sequels are still being written, but man-caused climate change is not the villain.

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis. Power On.