

Oct. is Calif.'s most dangerous month for wildfire

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Every October in California, leaves and temperatures fall, pumpkins dot the fields and college football season takes stride.

But despite the trappings of autumn, October is California's most dangerous month for wildfires, posing a deadly mixture of heavy seasonal winds, unpredictable weather patterns and bone dry vegetation.

If history is a guide, the Loma Fire, which began burning through a remote corner of the Santa Cruz Mountains on Sept. 25, may not be the end of the Bay Area's fire threats for the year. It may just be the beginning.

Five of the six most destructive wildfires in state history, ranked by the number of homes burned down, have occurred in October. Chief among them is the Oakland Hills Fire, which destroyed 2,843 homes and killed 25 people on a blustery day in 1991.

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