



Wildfires in Uttarakhand

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Why in News

With rising mercury levels, **Uttarakhand's forest fire** season has now reached its peak.

Key Points

- A wildfire is an **unplanned fire** that is often caused by **human activity** or a **natural phenomenon** such as lightning, and they can happen at any time or anywhere.
- Wildfires occur in every continent **except Antarctica**.
- There are **two primary causes** of wildfires, viz. Human and Natural.
 - **Human Causes**
 - 90% of all wildfires are caused by humans.
 - Human acts of carelessness such as leaving campfires unattended and negligent discarding of cigarette butts result in wildfire disasters every year.
 - Accidents, deliberate acts of arson, burning of debris, and fireworks are the other substantial causes of wildfires.
 - **Natural Causes**
 - **Lightning:** A fairly good number of wildfires are triggered by lightning.
 - **Volcanic Eruption:** Hot magma in the earth's crust is usually expelled out as lava during a volcanic eruption. The hot lava then flows into nearby fields or lands to start wildfires.
 - **Temperature:** High atmospheric temperatures and dryness offer favourable conditions for a fire to start.
 - **Climate Change** is causing a gradually increasing surface air temperature, which can propagate forest fires.
 - **Weather Components:** Warmer temperatures and lower humidity cause vapour pressure deficit to increase which can dry fuels rapidly and allow fires to grow very fast

- There are **three basic types of forest fires**:
 - **Crown fires** burn trees up their entire length to the top. These are the most intense and dangerous wildland fires.
 - **Surface fires** burn only surface litter and duff. These are the easiest fires to put out and cause the least damage to the forest.
 - **Ground fires** (sometimes called underground or subsurface fires) occur in deep accumulations of humus, peat and similar dead vegetation that become dry enough to burn. These fires move very slowly, but can become difficult to fully put out, or suppress.

Forest Fire Prevention and Management in India

- Forests are a subject in the **concurrent list (brought under this list through 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976)** of the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- **National Action Plan on Forest Fires (NAPFF-2018)** of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
 - MoEFCC also provides forest fire prevention and management measures under the **Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management (FPM) scheme**.
 - The FPM **replaced the Intensification of Forest Management Scheme (IFMS)** in **2017**. By revamping the IFMS, the FPM has **increased the amount dedicated for forest fire work**.
 - Funds allocated under the FPM are according to a center-state cost-sharing formula, with a **90:10 ratio of central to state funding** in the Northeast and Western Himalayan regions and a **60:40 ratio for all other states**.
 - It also provides the states the flexibility to direct a portion of the **National Afforestation Programme (NAP)** and **Mission for Green India (GIM)** funding toward forest fire work.

Way Forward

- Forest fires are among major disasters faced by India leading to massive loss of life and property and impact on the environment.
- A holistic approach of management of forest fires through prevention, mitigation and control can lead to better outcomes saving natural resources and loss of life and property.

Source: Tol