

Not just Uttarakhand, Uttara Kannada has had 83 forest fires in 2016 already - Environmentalists say that many cases go unreported.

[Sarayu Srinivasan](#) | Wednesday, May 4, 2016 - 20:14



Image for representation/ PTI



Uttarakhand forest fires have captured the media attention in the last few days, but down south, one of the most forested districts in Karnataka- Uttara Kannada, has recorded at least 83 incidents in 2016 until May 4.

The district fire department says that there has been an average of 75 forest fires every year in the last three years.

However, NGO Vruksha Laksha Andolana Karnataka unit president and environmentalist Anant Hegde Ashisara, says that many cases go unreported.

“Based on data from Fire Information Resource Management System developed by NASA, on April 24 alone, over 80 forest patches of Uttara Kannada district caught fire,” he said.

Forest fires in Uttara Kannada district from 2013- 2016(May 4)

↕	↕ 2013	↕ 2014	↕ 2015	↕ 2016 (May)
Karwar	20	12	15	18
Sirsi	24	16	17	22
Bhatkala	22	24	17	11
Kumta	9	17	12	15
Haliyal	1	2	1	1
Mundgod	1	1	1	1
Honnavar	4	7	7	4
Ankola	2	2	4	10
Yellapur	-	-	-	2

According to Ashisara, who was also a part of the wildlife task force said that forest fires continue to happen because of lack of awareness among the local people and ineffective functioning of district forest and fire departments.

Excess heat and lack of preparedness has resulted in an increasing number of forest fires this summer, says a fireman (on condition of anonymity) from Karwar fire station.

“Many cases are reported during summer. But more than fires caused by trees rubbing together, fires are caused when people throw lit cigarettes into the forest areas,”he said.

The fireman adds that no major fire has taken place in the district or the fire department has been informed of it before it could get worse. "There haven't been case where people and animals have been majorly affected," he said.

According to the data given by the fire department, the number of incidents have been high in Sirsi, Karwar and Bantwal taluks and while there are fewer cases report from Mundgod and Haliyala taluks where, according to a study by Indian Institute of Science researchers, the forest cover has reduced considerably over the last 3 decades.

The [study](#) undertaken by Dr. TV Ramachandra from Indian Institute of Science shows that in 2013 only 32.08 percent of the district has evergreen forests as compared to 57 percent three decades ago.

Ashisara also says that there have been cases where people have set fire to the forest in order to encroach into forest land.

"The government should treat forest fires seriously and ensure different departments work together to tackle the problem. Locals should be encouraged to be more proactive," Ashisara said.

The environmentalist also says that the reduction in rainfall in the past decade is also a reason for the region to have witnessed so many incidents.

The rainfall region has also considerably come down over the last few decades.

"It wasn't like fewer incidents occurred a few decades ago, but the occasional rains used to help in dousing off the fires that occur naturally," he said.