



Social Development
for Communities
FOUNDATION

December 2025

Uttarakhand Disaster and Accident Analysis Initiative - UDAAI



Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation
Dehradun, Uttarakhand
www.sdcuk.in

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SDC Foundation is a Dehradun based environmental action and advocacy group committed to make a positive impact and secure a sustainable future for our home state Uttarakhand, the Himalayas and beyond.

Material from this publication can be used with due acknowledgement.

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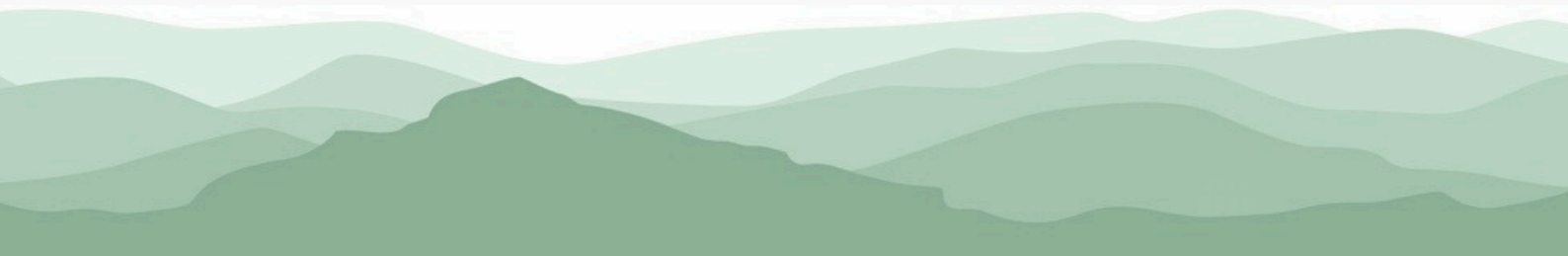


About UDAAI Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster and Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAAI reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAAI is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAAI neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We therefore see UDAAI as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need for a holistic disaster management and accident minimisation policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAAI will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.



SUMMARY OF UDAAI REPORT - DECEMBER 2025

December 2025 presents a deeply concerning picture of Uttarakhand's environmental fragility, compounded by governance, regulatory, and disaster-management challenges. A recurring theme across incidents is the interaction between ecological degradation, climate change, and an inadequate enforcement of precautionary and mitigation frameworks.

The rapid expansion of Bhilangana Lake, driven by accelerated glacial melt, highlights an imminent glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) risk. Despite classification as "highly dangerous" by the NDMA, the absence of robust early-warning systems and adaptive risk governance exposes downstream populations to catastrophic harm, raising serious questions about the State's duty of care under disaster management and environmental protection laws.

Equally alarming is the stress on Himalayan rivers due to unregulated sand mining. The scientific evidence produced has demonstrated that not only is there existing irreversible geomorphic damage being done, but also that there is an increased risk of flooding and ecological collapse as well due to failure to implement principles of sustainable mining, the precautionary principle, as well as intergenerational equity, which form the very bedrock of environmental law in India.

At the same time, the seismic vulnerability in the Doon Valley has now rendered it in Zone-6 (the most sensitive zone) with 31 active faults located within this area, which require both land use regulations and building code enforcement to be instituted immediately. The continual delay by the State of Uttarakhand in implementing its GIS-based Master Plan continues to show evidence of regulatory inertia, especially in such an area that poses a high risk due to seismic activity.

Disaster response narratives, from the Dharali tragedy to repeated road accidents and vehicle mishaps, expose gaps in accurate reporting, victim compensation, rescue coordination, and infrastructure safety. These events raise constitutional concerns under Article 21, encompassing the Right to Life, Safety, and Dignified Living conditions. Moreover, the unprecedented rise in winter forest fires signals climate-induced ecological stress, threatening biodiversity, livelihoods, and air quality. All of this underscores the urgent need for integrated environmental governance, science-based policymaking, legal accountability, and proactive disaster preparedness to safeguard Uttarakhand's people and fragile Himalayan ecosystems.

In sum, December 2025 stands as a stark warning that Uttarakhand's environmental crisis is no longer episodic but systemic. The convergence of climate change, ecological degradation, and administrative inertia has transformed natural hazards into foreseeable disasters. Without immediate enforcement of environmental laws, precautionary planning, and accountability-driven governance, the State risks perpetuating irreversible ecological loss and constitutional violations. Sustainable development, rooted in science and intergenerational equity, must now shift from rhetoric to urgent, enforceable action.

1. December 03, 2025: Study: The Growing Size of Bhilangana Lake in Ghansali Has Increased Concern

Dehradun: Bhilangana Lake, formed by the melting of the Dudhganga Glacier in the Himalayan region of Ghansali in Tehri, is steadily increasing in size. Originating around 1980, the lake has grown to 1.204 kilometres in length and 528 meters in width in just 45 years.

Scientists estimate that the lake holds 10 million cubic meters of water. Located at an altitude of 4,750 meters, the lake has been classified as highly dangerous by the National Disaster Management Authority. If it is damaged, the population and resources in the lower areas will be badly affected.

When scientists from the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, along with four major institutions of the country, studied the speed of melting of glaciers in this area, a worrying picture of Bhilangana Lake emerged. After studying the data from 1968 to 2025, it was found that the glacier present in this area is melting at a rate of 0.7 meters per year.

As the speed of melting of the glacier increased, the expansion of the lake also accelerated. Millions of cubic meters of water can wreak havoc in low-lying areas in a moment.

अध्ययन: घनसाली में भिलंगना झील के बढ़ते आकार ने चिंता बढ़ाई

विशेष

दौलतपुर सेनावाला

देहरादून। टिहरी में घनसाली के हिमालयी क्षेत्र में दूधगंगा ग्लेशियर पिघलने से बन रही भिलंगना झील का आकार लगातार बढ़ रहा है। 1980 के करीब अस्तित्व में आई झील महज 45 साल में 1.204 किलोमीटर और चौड़ाई 528 मीटर लंबी हो चुकी है। वैज्ञानिकों का अनुमान है कि झील में 10 मिलियन क्यूबिक मीटर पानी है। 4750 मीटर की ऊंचाई पर स्थित झील को नेशनल डिजास्टर मैनेजमेंट ऑथोरिटी ने भी सर्वाधिक खतरनाक श्रेणी में शामिल किया है। यदि झील को नुकसान पहुंचता है तो निचले इलाकों में आबादी और संसाधन बुरी तरह प्रभावित होंगे।

वाडिया हिमालय भू-विज्ञान संस्थान के वैज्ञानिकों ने देश के चार बड़े संस्थानों के साथ मिलकर इस क्षेत्र में ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने की रफ्तार का अध्ययन किया तो भिलंगना झील की चिंताजनक तस्वीर सामने आई। 1968 से 2025 के आंकड़ों का अध्ययन करने पर पता चला कि इस क्षेत्र में मौजूद ग्लेशियर 0.7 मीटर प्रति वर्ष की रफ्तार से पिघल रहा है। ग्लेशियर के पिघलने की रफ्तार बढ़ी तो झील का फैलाव भी तेज होता गया। लाखों क्यूबिक मीटर पानी निचले इलाकों में पल भर में तबाही मचा सकता है।

झीलों की संख्या भी बढ़ी

- भिलंगना नदी बेसिन में छोटे बड़े 36 ग्लेशियर हैं, जिनका कुल क्षेत्रफल 78 वर्ग किलोमीटर है
- बेसिन में 11 अन्य ग्लेशियर झीले भी हैं, जिनका कुल क्षेत्रफल 0.61 वर्ग किलोमीटर है
- ग्लेशियर पिघलने से 2000 से 2020 तक झीलों की संख्या में 47 फीसदी बढ़ोतरी हुई

झील का आउटब्रेस्ट 30 मीटर प्रति सेकंड की रफ्तार से 3645 क्यूबिक मीटर पानी छोड़ सकता है।

- अमित कुमार, वरिष्ठ वैज्ञानिक, वाडिया हिमालय भू-विज्ञान संस्थान

उपग्रह से ली गई तस्वीरें दिखाती हैं कि 1994 से 2025 तक झील का दायरा इस तरह बढ़ता गया।

भिलंगना झील

HINDUSTAN
DECEMBER 3,
2025

2. December 04, 2025: Himalayan Rivers Under Severe Stress From Rampant Sand Mining, Says Study

Dehradun: Unregulated riverbed sand mining has become a "rapidly intensifying geohazard" in the Himalayan region, triggering "profound and potentially irreversible changes to river morphology, sediment dynamics and ecological health", a new scientific study published in Springer's "The Himalayan Dilemma" has warned. Led by researchers from IIT-Kanpur with international collaborators, the research is said to be "one of the most comprehensive assessments yet" of how excessive

extraction is destabilising some of India's most sensitive mountain rivers. With sand demand soaring, the authors cautioned that "Himalayan rivers may be approaching critical geomorphic threshold points beyond which degradation can become abrupt and irreversible" and warned that "without urgent, science-based sediment management, the region faces long-term ecological decline, heightened flood risks and the loss of vital riverine functions."

The research's most detailed findings come from a 32-km stretch of the Upper Ganga between Raiwala and Bhogpur areas in the state, once the region's most intensively mined stretches before restrictions were imposed. Analysing nearly five decades of Landsat imagery, the researchers tracked steep declines in channelbelt width, centreline shifts, sharp reductions in vegetated and fresh sand bars and an overall loss of geomorphic diversity. While the Ganga segment has shown some recovery since mining was curbed, the authors noted that legacy impacts persist, underlining how slowly Himalayan rivers heal.

The researchers recommended "avoiding ecologically-sensitive zones, aligning mining volumes with natural replenishment rates, adopting patch-based rather than continuous excavation, and managing paleochannel deposits carefully to safeguard groundwater systems."



3. December 04, 2025: 31 faults in the Doon Valley, Need for Vigilance After the New Seismic Zone-6

Dehradun: The Doon Valley region is no longer in Zone 4 or 5 in terms of earthquakes, but in the even more sensitive Zone 6. The story of surface sensitivity in

the Doon Valley, included under the Himalayan Arc, has already been written in the new Seismic Hazard Map of the Bureau of Indian Standards. This is the reason that when the Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) prepared a GIS-based master plan for the year 2041, the seismic fault was not ignored in it. Rather, strict provisions have been made for building construction in the fault zone. It is another matter that even after a long time, the new master plan has not been implemented on the ground.

Implementing this master plan in its current form is essential because the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT) and the Himalayan Frontal Thrust (HFT), two historic faults that emerged during the origin of the Himalayas, pass through here. Additionally, 29 other faults, both large and small, are active in Doon. This means that the entire region could be vulnerable to a major earthquake at any time.



4. December 06, 2025: Govt Clarifies Death Toll & Missing Persons Count In Dharali Disaster

Dehradun: Days after BJP member Col Ajay Kothiyal (retd) claimed that 147 people were still trapped under the debris that wiped out large swaths of Dharali village, the Uttarkashi district administration on Friday clarified that only 52 individuals were reported missing, while four deaths had been confirmed. Of the 52 missing, 12 were later declared dead after cross-checking with families, taking the official toll to 16.

The administration also addressed confusion regarding Nepali labourers initially listed as missing. Four workers from Pauri Garhwal, earlier believed untraceable, were found safe. Another seven labourers were confirmed to be in Nepal following coordination with authorities there, and one labourer's name had mistakenly appeared twice in the original list. Three of the four confirmed deaths were Nepali workers whose bodies were recovered on Aug 11 during road clearance near Dharali.

The state govt said over 1,000 personnel from the police, SDRF, ITBP, Army, NDRF, BRO and other agencies were deployed for the search and rescue operation after the disaster. A total of 634 helicopter sorties were conducted by the Air Force and private operators, evacuating 1,386 residents and pilgrims to Harsil and Bhatwari

In Aug, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama had announced immediate assistance of Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin of those killed and to families who lost their homes.

Officials added that any new information on casualties will be verified as per norms, and compensation will be provided to eligible families. In August, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama had announced immediate assistance of Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin of those killed and to families who lost their homes.

However, residents had claimed the amount was grossly inadequate given the scale of destruction. With no official action yet to recover the remaining missing, villagers have begun digging on their own, and some have managed to retrieve cash, jewellery, utensils, earrings and cooking gas cylinders from the debris.

Govt clarifies death toll & missing persons count in Dharali disaster

16 Dead, 40 Still Missing 4 Months After Deluge That Buried Village

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Cong seeks ₹50L relief each to kin of victims, flags rescue op gaps

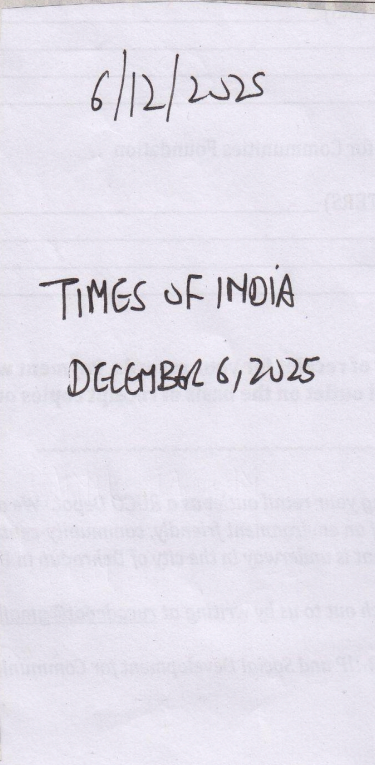
Kautilya.Singh@timesofindia.com

Dehradun: A Congress delegation which visited disaster-hit Dharali in Uttarakashi on Thursday has demanded compensation of Rs 50 lakh each for the affected families. The delegation has accused Uttarakhand govt of sharing "misleading" information and failing to conduct a "proper" rescue operation. It added that the Rs 5 lakh relief announced so far was "far too little".

The party also sought an extensive rescue effort and a detailed plan for the 250-naali (1 naali is equal to 240 square yards) stretch impacted in the Aug 5 disaster. Congress state chief Ganesh Godiyal said a lake formation near Harsil has posed a serious threat. "It is crucial to channelise the water. Heavy rain in the next monsoon could submerge the main highway to Gangotri Dham," he said. "The govt is delaying action and trying to hush up the issue without acknowledging that the entire region is sensitive and close to the China border."

Godiyal said Col Ajay Kothiyal has pointed out that 147 people are still trapped under the debris. "While govt claims there were 52 deaths, the disaster management department has stated that 67 people have died or are missing," he said. "A clear timeframe must be fixed, for finally declaring the missing dead so their families can receive compensation." He said 112 people have received Rs 5 lakh compensation each, but the list excludes 33 residents with kutcha houses. "These homes are built in the traditional manner using wood. Their owners should also receive compensation," he said. Godiyal added that unregistered homestays should not be denied compensation. "During PM Modi's visit to Mukti Ba village, officers stayed in these homestays, and no one questioned their registration then," he added.

He said the delegation will submit a report of its Dharali visit to the governor, requesting directions to the state govt to launch a large-scale rescue operation.



5. December 06, 2025: The House Where the Shehnai was Supposed to Resonate, is Now Filled With Mourning After the Accident

Ganai Gangoli (Pithoragarh): The house in Kilota village of the area where the wedding shehnai resounded, is now filled with mourning. The joy of the wedding turned into an unforgettable grief in a moment. A terrible accident put an end to the happiness of the wedding procession. Many families were plunged into grief. The groom's elder sister, six-year-old nephew, younger sister's husband and brother-in-law died in the vehicle accident, while the younger brother is battling for life. This incident has created an uproar in the entire village.

Preparations for the wedding of Bablu Panda of Kitila village had been underway for a long time. Family and relatives also arrived to attend the wedding. On Thursday morning, the groom prepared to bring the bride. The wedding procession departed with drums and trumpets. The family and wedding party danced to the beats of drums and the Chholiya dance.

They set off for Balatari village in Lohaghat. The bride and groom took seven vows, and late at night, all the wedding guests returned. Little did anyone know that a terrible event awaited them along the way. A vehicle carrying wedding guests near Ghat. The groom met with an accident. In the accident, he lost his elder sister, Bhavana Choubey, his six-year-old nephew, Priyanshu, his younger sister's husband, Prakash Chandra Uniyal, and his brother-in-law, Kewal Chandra Uniyal.



6. December 26, 2025: State tops with 1,900 winter forest fire warnings since Nov

Dehradun: Uttarakhand has received the highest number of winter forest fire alerts in the country this season, with around 1,900 alerts issued by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) since the onset of the winter wildfire period in November. Madhya Pradesh (940), Maharashtra (883), Chhattisgarh (822) and Karnataka (544) also reported high figures.

Loss of forest cover due to wildfires has also heightened concerns regarding long-term ecological damage in the fragile Himalayan region. Residents of Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Nainital, Almora, Pauri, Tehri, and some other hill districts have reported thick plumes of smoke from wildfires drifting through settlements, choking the air and sharply reducing visibility. They also flagged a rise in cases of wildlife straying closer to human habitation, which they attribute to fire disturbances and smoke inside forest zones.

In Uttarkashi, fires are reportedly burning in various pockets of Mukhem, Dunda and Dharasu forest ranges. Similarly, in Bageshwar district, extensive fires in Garur, Bageshwar and Kanda have reduced the once lush forests to ashes, creating an acute

shortage of fodder for livestock-dependent communities. The situation is no better in the neighbouring Almora district. On Wednesday, a forest fire in the Kathpudhiya beat of the Almora range damaged almost one hectare of reserved forest land.

The state forest department's forest fire portal shows that from Nov 1 to December 14, only 19 forest fire incidents have been recorded, out of which 18 have happened in the reserved forests. Field forest staff, meanwhile, said that monitoring has been intensified as winter fires, once considered rare, are becoming more frequent due to prolonged dry spells and changing climatic conditions.



7. December 31, 2025: 7 Killed After Bus Falls into Gorge in Almora

Dehradun: Seven people were killed, and 12 were injured after the bus they were travelling in fell into a gorge in Almora's Bhikiyasen on Tuesday morning, a police officer said.

The bus belonging to Kumaon Motor Owners Union (KMOU) Limited was en route from Dwarahat to Ramnagar when it lost control near Sirkon Bend, 8 km from Bhikiyasen, on the Vinayak-Dwarahat road at around 8.23 am.

Teams from the district administration, police and state disaster response force (SDRF) were rushed to the spot following the accident for relief and rescue operations. Meanwhile, two critically injured persons were airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh, for further treatment.

According to officials, the exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained.

Every year, over 1,000 road accidents are reported in the state, with the treacherous, winding, and narrow roads on the mountainous terrain often exacerbating the danger. This issue is particularly acute during the monsoon and winter seasons, when poor visibility makes already challenging journeys even more hazardous.

With the goal of reducing road accidents by 50% by 2030, the Uttarakhand cabinet in February approved the Road Safety Policy, 2025.

The primary objective of the policy is to ensure the safety of road users, raise awareness among the public, develop safer infrastructure, enforce compliance with road safety and traffic regulations, strengthen emergency medical care for accident victims, and promote qualitative research on road safety by identifying the roles of various stakeholder departments in achieving these goals.

7 killed after bus falls into gorge in Almora

HT Correspondent
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Senior superintendent of police (SSP) Devendra Pincha said, "At around 08.23 am, Bhatrojkhan Police Station received information regarding a bus falling into a gorge near the Sirkon Bend within the revenue area. Upon receiving the information, SHO Bhatrojkhan Avneesh Kumar, informed senior officers and rushed to the spot with police personnel, stretchers, ropes, and other necessary rescue equipment."



Relief and rescue operations being carried out by police, SDRF personnel at the accident site on Tuesday. HT PHOTO

as Govind Ballabh (80), Parvati Devi (75), Subedar Nandan Singh (65), Govindi Devi (58), Tara Devi (50), Ganesh (25), and Umesh (25), residents of Almora.

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"It came to light when the bus was enroute from Dwarahat to Ramnagar, lost control and fell into a 50-metre-deep gorge. A total of 19 people, including the driver, were on board the bus. Under the supervision of senior police officials, a rescue operation was carried out with the assistance of local residents. The injured were rescued and shifted to the Community Health Centre, Bhikiyasen, for treatment. The deceased were recovered from the gorge, and panchayat-nama proceedings were carried out," he said.

Meanwhile, two critically injured persons were airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh, for further treatment.

The deceased were identified

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About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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PS: Errors or omissions in UDAAI documentation, if any, are purely unintentional. In case any errors or key omissions are detected or any fresh updates are available for events that are already documented, SDC Foundation may kindly be notified at the email address contactsdcuk@gmail.com. We shall make the necessary corrections in subsequent versions of the monthly reports of UDAAI.

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