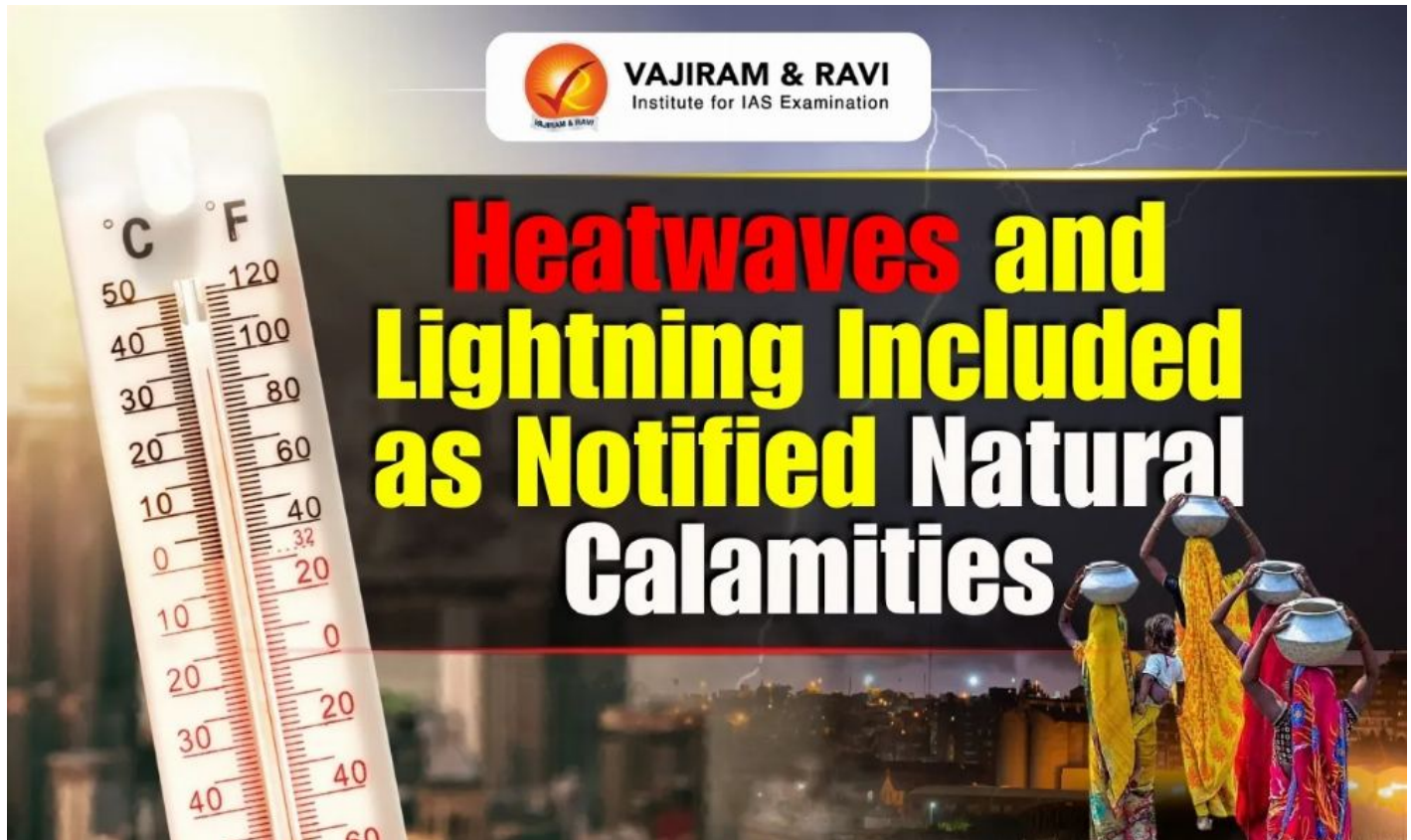


Heatwaves and Lightning Included as Notified Natural Calamities

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Based on the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, the **Union Government has officially recognised heatwaves and lightning as notified natural calamities** under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) guidelines for the period 2026-2031, enabling affected states to provide financial relief and assistance from disaster response funds.

What is Heatwave?

According to the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, a **heatwave** is a **period of abnormally high temperatures over a region compared with its normal climatic conditions**. In India, it is declared when the maximum temperature reaches **at least 40°C in the plains or 30°C in hilly regions** and meets the prescribed IMD criteria based on temperature departure from normal or actual maximum temperature.

What is Lightning?

According to the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, **lightning is a sudden, high-voltage electrostatic discharge** occurring within a cloud, between clouds, or between a cloud and the ground, accompanied by a bright flash of light and thunder.

It is one of the most dangerous weather hazards and a major cause of weather-related deaths in India.

What are Notified Natural Calamities?

Notified natural calamities are disasters officially recognised by the Government of India for financial assistance under the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** and **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)**.

- States affected by these disasters **become eligible to receive central assistance for relief, rehabilitation and response measures**.
- Before this decision, the **notified list included 12 disasters** – cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, and frost/cold wave.

Heatwaves and Lightning Included as Notified Natural Calamities

Reasons

Extreme weather events such as heatwaves and lightning have become more frequent and severe due to climate change, causing rising human, economic and livelihood losses across India.

- Between 1 March and 26 July 2026, **India reported 4,853 heatstroke cases and 20 confirmed deaths**, with the highest number of cases recorded in Telangana (915), West Bengal (733) and Chhattisgarh (660).
- Earlier, heatwaves were treated only as a local disaster, allowing **states to use only up to 10% of their annual SDRF allocation for relief**, while lightning was not recognised as a notified natural calamity under the SDRF–NDRF framework.
- Recognising these gaps, the **16th Finance Commission** recommended including heatwaves and lightning as notified natural calamities for the 2026-31 award period.

Their inclusion **enables states to access SDRF and NDRF assistance for relief, compensation, rehabilitation and disaster response, strengthening India's climate resilience**.

Significance of Recognising Heatwaves and Lightning as Notified Natural Calamities

The inclusion of heatwaves and lightning as notified natural calamities marks a major shift in India's disaster management framework by aligning disaster financing with the growing risks posed by climate change.

- **Enables access to SDRF and NDRF assistance for relief, rehabilitation and response** measures in heatwave- and lightning-affected areas.
- **Removes the earlier restriction** under which heatwaves were treated as a local disaster, limiting states to using only up to 10% of their annual SDRF allocation.

- **Strengthens financial preparedness of states** to respond quickly to the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme heat and lightning events.
- **Improves support for vulnerable groups**, including outdoor workers, farmers, the elderly and economically weaker sections affected by heat-related disasters.
- **Promotes better implementation of Heat Action Plans** and other disaster preparedness, early warning and public health measures.
- **Recognises heatwaves and lightning as national disaster** management priorities, reflecting their rising human and economic impacts due to **climate change**.
- **Aligns India's disaster relief framework with emerging climate risks**, ensuring disaster funding keeps pace with changing hazard patterns.

Other Government Measures to Reduce Heatwave Impacts

The Union Government has already introduced several measures to reduce heat-related illnesses and deaths.

- The **National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH)** implements heat-health interventions across the country.
- The **National Action Plan on Heat-Related Illness (NAPHRI)** guides states on preparedness, early warning, and medical response.
- The **National Heat-Related Illness and Death Surveillance (NHRIDS)** monitors heat-related cases through more than 51,000 health facilities, including Primary Health Centres and hospitals.
- States are also implementing **Heat Action Plans** to improve early warning systems, public awareness and emergency response

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