



Public participation and awareness plays a pivotal role in controlling forest fires: CS



SHIMLA-24th May, 2024-Chief Secretary Prabodh Saxena today here chaired a review meeting focused on enhancing forest fire prevention measures across the state. While emphasizing the invaluable importance of forests, Chief Secretary underscored the collective responsibility to safeguard this natural wealth.

Chief Secretary highlighted the pivotal role of public participation and awareness in controlling forest fires. He urged local communities to actively engage in extinguishing fires promptly and advised them to report any signs of smoke or fire to the nearest forest department office or emergency services via toll-free numbers 1077 and 1070.

He also stressed the need to avoid activities that could trigger fires, such as discarding burning cigarettes, unauthorized campfires and fireworks near forested areas. He called upon the general public to collaborate closely with forest department officials and firefighting efforts to effectively manage forest fire incidents in their areas. He has urged the public to report any instances of illegal setting of fires by anti-social elements to the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and law enforcement agencies for swift action. Shri Saxena informed that Himachal Pradesh has approximately 27.73 percent of forest area and due to forest fire hectares of forested land have been affected during the 2023-24. He acknowledged the vulnerability of pine forests, covering 2,759.62 square kilometers in the state, and their heightened sensitivity to fire incidents.

He said that in response to these challenges several proactive steps have been undertaken by the department. These include the provision of multi-utility vehicles,

blower bags and the deployment of drone surveillance in critical forest areas. Additionally, the state has registered volunteers and members of NGOs to bolster early response efforts against forest fires. State Nodal officer Nishant Mandhotra gave a detailed presentation highlighting the preventive measures to protect forest from fire on the occasion. Director General of Police Dr. Atul Verma, PCCF (HoFF) Rajiv Kumar, ADGP & Director Fire Services Rajesh Aggarwal, Director Rural Development Raghav Sharma, Special Secretary D.C Rana, Director Public Relations Rajiv Kumar and other senior officers from Forest Department were present in the meeting.