

Rescue Services in Sweden



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The rapid technological development of modern society has led to society being more vulnerable, and to an increased demand for protection from personal injury and damage to property and the environment as a result of unforeseen and undesired events. We can never completely protect ourselves from accidents and emergencies, but the rescue services through their emergency preparedness can prevent and limit personal injury and damage to property and the environment.

Rescue services

The Civil Protection Act differentiates between the national and municipal rescue services.

There are six national rescue services; the responsibility for which is divided among the following government authorities:

Mountain rescue	The police
Air-sea search & rescue	Swedish Civil Aviation Administration
Maritime search & rescue	Swedish Maritime Administration
General missing persons searches	The police
Maritime environmental protection	Swedish Coast Guard
Emergency service for emissions administrative board of radioactive substances from nuclear energy establishments	The relevant county

Each municipality is responsible for all other rescue services within its borders.



In the event that extensive emergency operations are required of a municipal rescue service the county administrative board has the power to assume responsibility for the rescue services in the municipalities affected by the operations. In such circumstances the government can task another national authority to assume responsibility for the rescue services.

All emergency operations must be lead by an incident commander who has the requisite level of competence. If the incident commander so demands, national and municipal authorities are obliged to provide personnel, matériel and property, on the condition that the authority has access to the resources required and that their use does not seriously obstruct the normal working of the authority.

In addition, the incident commander can requisition private property and order all citizens between the ages of 18 and 65 to assist in the emergency work, to the extent that their skills, health and physical strength permit.

National rescue services

Mountain rescue

In mountainous areas the **police** shall carry out search and rescue operations for missing persons, in those cases where there is a threat to a person's life or where a person's health is seriously threatened. And in mountainous regions the police are also responsible for rescuing accident victims and people who need immediate medical treatment.

Air-sea search & rescue

The **Swedish Civil Aviation Administration** is responsible for air-sea search & rescue in the event of aircraft crashes in Swedish territorial waters, on the lakes Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren, and within Sweden's economic zone. In addition, the Swedish Civil Aviation Administration is responsible for those operations required to prevent injury and damage when an aircraft is in distress or when a hazard threatens air traffic.

The Swedish Civil Aviation Administration is also responsible for searches for missing aircraft. Through an international agreement Sweden is connected to an international



monitoring system via satellite. The system, which provides an estimated geographical position, is part of the equipment fitted in most Swedish aircraft.

Maritime search & rescue

Within Swedish territorial waters, on the lakes Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren, and within Sweden's economic zone the **Swedish Maritime Administration** is responsible for maritime search & rescue when a vessel is in distress; they are also responsible for medical transport from said vessels.

Emergency operations on waterways, canals and rivers, in harbours and on lakes other than Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren are the responsibility of the municipal rescue services and municipalities in question.

In addition to its own vessels, the Swedish Maritime Administration can also employ resources from other authorities and from voluntary organisations, such as the Swedish Society for the Saving of Shipwrecked Persons.

Maritime environmental protection

Within Swedish territorial waters, on the lakes Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren, and within Sweden's economic zone the **Swedish Coast Guard** is responsible for emergency operations when there has been an emission of oil or other harmful substances into the water or when there is imminent danger of such an emission.

Emergency operations in the event of emissions of harmful substances into waterways, canals and rivers, in harbours and in lakes other than Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren are the responsibility of the municipal rescue services and municipalities in question.

The Swedish Coast Guard also maintains emergency preparedness for and can respond to emergencies requiring air-sea and maritime search & rescue operations.



Emergency service for emissions of radioactive substances from nuclear energy establishments

The relevant **county administrative board** is responsible for the rescue services when there is a need to take specific civil protection measures in the event of an emission of radioactive substances from a nuclear energy establishment or when there is imminent danger of such an emission.

In addition to its responsibility for the rescue services in the event of such an emission, the county administrative board in question is also responsible for subsequent decontamination.

Municipal rescue services

In each municipality there shall be one or more committees responsible for the municipal rescue service.

Each municipality shall have a plan of action for the rescue service, which has been approved by the municipal council. The plan shall state the objective for the municipality's activities, and the risks present in the municipality that could give rise to the need for emergency operations. The plan shall also state what capabilities and what resources the municipality has or intends to obtain in order to execute emergency operations. Details of capabilities for both peacetime and for when there is a state of reinforced alert shall be provided.

Each county administrative board is responsible for the supervision of the municipal rescue services within its county.

Swedish Rescue Services Agency

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA) shall work for the prevention of accidents and emergencies and a limitation of the injury and damage they cause; by, for example, imparting information, running training courses and exercises, and through monitoring and supervision. The objective of the municipal rescue services nationwide is to ensure that the general public is afforded a reasonable degree of safety in relation to local risks.

The SRSA is the central supervisory authority for the municipal rescue services. Its tasks also include the supervision of co-ordination between the various national rescue services, as well



as the supervision of planning by the county administrative boards for the rescue services in the event of an emission of radioactive substances.

The SRSA shall also collate experience from major emergencies that have occurred in Sweden and overseas.

It also develops methods and equipment for use by the rescue services, and is responsible for the trade training of all personnel in the municipal rescue services and in the chimney sweeping service.

The SRSA also implements rules for safety in relation to the transport of dangerous goods by road and rail, and co-ordinates the work of the supervisory authorities in that field.

Extra resources for the rescue services

In the event of emergencies involving oil, equipment from one of the SRSA's five oil-combating depots can be used. The SRSA also has seven depots holding equipment and trained personnel for response to chemical emergencies. In addition, the state has an agreement with six municipalities, which states that they are to assist the Swedish Maritime Administration and the Swedish Coast Guard with emergency operations at sea.

Overseas rescue operations

The SRSA maintains a state of emergency preparedness to assist, as and when required, other countries with rescue operations. The majority of personnel employed on these operations are recruited from the municipal rescue services.



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