



Swedish Civil
Contingencies
Agency

Strengthening civil preparedness

Based on the Swedish Civil Contingencies
Agency (MSB) National Risk and
Capability Assessment 2021



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We must strengthen the civil preparedness now!



Sweden's civil preparedness must be further strengthened in order to manage the wide range of serious threats and risks facing our society. The strains that society must be able to deal with include climate change, health threats, cyber attacks, disinformation and the consequences of international conflicts and destabilisation. The challenges are many where knowledge, collaboration and proper assets are required to increase Sweden's capability.

In *Strengthening civil preparedness*, MSB highlights several societal challenges as well as the greatest threats and risks that Sweden face. We address the areas of development where stakeholders in civil preparedness need to consolidate their efforts in the coming years. We also present some of the experiences from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that we have been able to garner to date. The perspectives of some of the stakeholders are highlighted through interviews. This publication is based on MSB's National Risk and Capability Assessment 2021, which adopts a collective approach to Sweden's civil preparedness.

For each and everyone, it is crucial that we strengthen our preparedness for disasters, crises and war. These efforts will require the commitment of national government agencies, county administrative boards, regions, municipalities, trade and industry, other organisations and ultimately, private individuals such as yourself. The preventive and preparatory measures that must be taken will demand considerable efforts and difficult prioritisations. Government agencies must lean on each other in understanding and preventing threats and risks. Individual preparedness – in terms of both being mentally prepared and in safeguarding our homes – provides an essential foundation for resilience and for the willingness to defend our society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put us to the test and it is once again clear that Sweden needs to have a well-functioning system for civil preparedness in place. Our capability to manage a range of possible crises and in the worst case, the consequences of war, must be developed at all levels of society and within all sectors.

In summary, the situation demands an increased awareness of security and preparedness already in our everyday lives. This will bring on a societal reform to improve our preparedness that requires the commitment of each and everyone of us.

I hope that this publication will be the piece of the puzzle that sparks your interest in and commitment to civil preparedness!

June 2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Camilla Asp". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Camilla Asp
Acting Director General
Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency



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Threats and risks

Threats and risks

What are the challenges?

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most wide-ranging and prolonged crisis in Sweden in modern times. However, there are also many other threats and risks that could have serious impact on Sweden and its population, and for which the society needs to be prepared. The ability to respond to several difficult threats and serious events simultaneously should be enhanced. For example, the society needs to be able to manage both the effects of climate change and the consequences of conflicts and destabilisation abroad. The society must also be prepared for the possible consequences of war. It is also important that society's stakeholders are flexible in their preparedness for both known and unforeseeable threats and risks. The system for civil preparedness in Sweden has needed development for some time, where the recently increased investments in total defence will improve the overall preparedness.

In this section, we present a selection of particularly serious societal challenges, as well as threats and risks highlighted by MSB's National Risk and Capability Assessment 2021. The sometimes rapid development of threats and risks call for a robust, flexible and well-equipped civil preparedness system.



Hostile threats must be dealt with in peacetime and in states of heightened alert

Hostile threats need to be addressed more. The security situation in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood and in Europe has deteriorated and according to the government, an armed attack on Sweden cannot be ruled out. Nor can it be excluded that military force or threats of this might be used against Sweden. Sweden will inevitably be affected if a security policy crisis or armed conflict should arise close to our borders.

Due to the global situation, Sweden must rapidly construct a comprehensive and resilient civil defence system that can help to keep us out of war. An armed attack is the ultimate threat to our society, which requires a total defence system, including civil defence, that is able to respond to acts of war against Sweden. Planning how to face an armed attack is an extensive task that requires the consolidation of our resources.

Hybrid threats may involve a combination of different means, both military and non-military, in both peacetime and during heightened alert. A hybrid threat may include hostile acts such as an intrusion into or an attack on IT infrastructure or information management systems, information influence campaigns, active support to extremist movements, sanctions, strategic acquisitions, border provocations and sabotage. It is often difficult to perceive and isolate who or what is directly behind the action, which affects the efficiency of the response to these hybrid threats. Space has become increasingly important to defence and security policy and the risk of conflicts in space and in relation to space is increasing. Hybrid threats must be managed vigorously already in peacetime and it requires strong cooperation between various government agencies.

CBRNE threats include chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear or explosive substances. CBRNE incidents can cause serious damage to humans, animals and environment and put considerable strain on society's economy, assets and critical infrastructure. The potential use of weapons of mass destruction by foreign powers is a particularly serious threat.

Society also needs to be able to prevent, detect and respond to other hostile threats, such as comprehensive cyber attacks or terrorist attacks. The overall terrorist threat against Sweden is currently on the level "elevated". An individual, organisation or state that perform such an act may do so for their own gain, because of ideological or religious zeal, or for wanting to inflict harm in order to gain political or economic advantages.



Lena Hallin, Head of the Swedish Military Intelligence and Security Service, on threats

What is the change in threats in recent years?

– The security policy situation is characterised by a hardening superpower rivalry – primarily between the U.S., China and Russia. Threats against Sweden have become broader and increasingly complex and they are both political, military and economic. Although the pandemic has accelerated the trends affecting Sweden's security, it has not changed their direction. The EU neighbourhood is unstable, which has an impact on Europe's security. The economy and new technologies are considered a component of national security by many states.

What are the consequences for total defence planning and Sweden's preparedness?

– In this security policy environment, the vulnerability of small nations such as Sweden increases, and thus the risk that we may be subjected to strong pressure. Foreign powers are conducting broad searches for vulnerabilities in our open and digitalised society. The threats are challenging notions of boundaries between war and peace, civil and military, our external and internal security, and between the physical world and the cyber domain. The threats increase the demands for adaptability, robustness and resilience within total defence and society as a whole.

What can we do together to meet these threats?

– Sweden is still not sufficiently prepared to meet these threats and we need a comprehensive national approach from authorities and society in general. Together, we must assume responsibility and become better at sharing the right information. This requires knowledge as well as safe and robust means of communication. Sweden's overall ability to prevent, detect and manage hostile cyber threats was strengthened through the recently established National Centre for Cyber Security (CFCS). The centre is an example of how government agencies can work together. By cooperation and solid security initiatives, we can increase the capability to protect ourselves against those who wish us harm.



Climate change and new technology put increased pressure on our preparedness

Sweden's present-day society was established and adapted to a specific climate. However, with the change in climate and the increased probability of extreme weather events, Sweden's preparedness is under pressure. Climate change causes, among other things, an increased average temperature leading to heat waves and droughts, severe forest fires, increased and intensified precipitation, floods, landslides and storms. Elevated sea levels, thawing permafrost and changes linked to the Arctic region must also be taken into account.

Future natural disasters may become far more serious and then threaten infrastructure, environment, life and health. Higher temperatures and changed precipitation patterns affect, among other things, access to potable water, cultivation seasons, eco system services and plant health. This could in turn lead to changed conditions for food production and effect our self-sustenance. Sweden also faces the impact of climate change in other countries, such as changing migration patterns and security policy tensions. Climate change makes it more difficult to combat poverty and entails a risk of new health challenges and increased pressure on ecosystems. These changes call for adaptation and an efficient civil preparedness.

An increasingly digitalised information society brings great advantages but also an increased vulnerability to cyber attacks, undue influence, information theft and the consequences of failed or damaged technical systems. Digitalisation also have an impact on methods of psychological influence.

Society's increasing dependence on technological systems in space unveil further vulnerabilities. For example, satellite systems critical for civilian communications, navigation and earth observations could be adversely impacted by solar storms or collisions with objects. Major solar storms could also cause serious damage to electronics and other technical infrastructure on earth, which needs to be factored into business continuity management for critical infrastructure.

There are areas that provide us with opportunities to strengthen our preparedness but in the long run also with uncertainties or new risks, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the expansion of 5G, increased use of cloud infrastructure, quantum computers and so forth. Digitalisation and new technology also increase the risk of unintentional disruptions, as devices and systems are increasingly interconnected.



Carl Granström (Crisis Preparedness) and Aino Krunegård (Sector Manager, climate change adaptation at the Swedish National Knowledge Centre for Climate Change Adaptation) at Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI), on climate change and civil preparedness



How does climate change impact preparedness efforts?

Aino: – Public planning must always include a climate perspective. Climate change has an impact on all parts of society, but the consequences differ for different actors and activities. The effects may manifest themselves at other locations than before and they may hit harder. Climate change is already here and we need to adapt our society for it to be robust in the future as well.

What challenges do you see in terms of cooperation and priorities?

Carl: – There is a need for a consensus on how to securely store and share sensitive information about risks, measures and critical functions. Some stakeholders are well ahead while others have just begun this work and therefore everyone works in slightly different ways.

Aino: – Capacities at municipal level are limited and it may be difficult to prioritise climate-change adaptation. However, preparedness and climate-change adaptation are intertwined and analyses, preventive measures and investments made today often pay off in the end.

What can we learn from previous extreme natural events?

Carl: – Each such event makes us better prepared, even if we've planned for something slightly different. Training is essential, and we need to share knowledge and experiences with one another.

Protection against major accidents needs to be strengthened

Sweden must also be prepared for accidents with severe consequences, such as major fires in buildings and other infrastructure, massive disruptions to information systems or major accidents during public events, causing injuries and death. Authorities also need to be able to deal with dam failures and industrial and transport accidents with severe consequences for human lives and health, the economy and the environment. There are also risks associated with radioactive and contagious substances, and poisons. Accidents with these dangerous substances could occur on a scale from an accident during transport of dangerous goods to a severe nuclear power plant incident.

Serious cross-border incidents such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis could also have significant consequences for critical infrastructure in Sweden and for Swedes abroad.



Trust in society is challenged

Public attitude and will to contribute in crisis and to national defence is fundamental for resilience in crises and ultimately, war. Key to this will is high level of societal trust. Segregation, marginalisation, an eroding overall trust and solidarity combined with a lack of trust in authorities put both crisis management and the will to defend at risk.

Sweden has a longstanding democratic tradition, with interpersonal trust and trust in crisis management authorities remaining high in international comparison. However, safeguarding democracy and societal trust is a rising challenge where it is increasingly evident that a vigorous defence of democratic values is at core in civil preparedness.

Freedom of speech and open debate are key components of a well-functioning democracy. Access to information and platforms for democratic participation and thereby exposure to different perspectives and opinions are the fundamentals for a thriving democracy.

However, democracy and human rights are continuously subjected to undue influence. Democratic values can be attacked by the use of fabricated news or through false claims or deliberately misleading arguments. This could happen, for example, through disinformation by foreign powers or attempts by violent extremists to cause disruption and change in society. Disinformation can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from free and public expression of opinions.



Read more

- About Total defence in “Totalförsvaret 2021–2025”, Prop. 2020/21:30: www.regeringen.se
- About the national security strategy in “Nationell säkerhetsstrategi”: www.regeringen.se
- Swedish Military Intelligence and Security Service’s annual overview 2020: www.forsvarsmakten.se
- Swedish Security Service 2020 Yearbook 2020: www.sakerhetspolisen.se/en
- National Defence Radio Establishment’s yearbook 2020: www.fra.se
- Government information on climate-change adaptation: www.klimatanpassning.se/en

A silhouette of a person wearing a cap and looking through binoculars against a sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The person's face and hands are in shadow, while the sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds.

**Areas of
development
for enhanced
capability**

Areas of development for enhanced capability

In this report, MSB presents seven prioritised areas of development around which to consolidate efforts to strengthen the overall capability. They were singled out by weighing the needs of civil preparedness against possible threats and risks. Below we describe these prioritised areas and what needs to be achieved in each of them.

Current development

There is considerable development in these areas, which will determine the overall future development in civil preparedness. In addition, several government-appointed commissions of inquiry are under way, some of which are nearly completed. For example, one government inquiry has proposed a new structure for civil defence whereas another examines health care preparedness before and during severe incidents both in peacetime and during heightened alert. Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic will also influence our future civil preparedness.



Collaboration and command needs to be strengthened

Collaboration and command between authorities aim at cooperation, direction and achieving consensus when managing a crisis. This method of pushing work forward is based on the principle of responsibility. For collaboration and command to work well, the agencies involved need to share information and experiences with each other not only in times of crisis but also in their day-to-day work. This creates a better understanding of each other's tasks and responsibilities in order to decide on the joint way forward. For example, it is important to agree on a common situational picture and to make decisions and prioritisations about how assets such as staff and equipment can best be put to overall use. Collaboration and command are key abilities in every organisation and government agency for them to manage crises and war efficiently.

Collaboration and command have been enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic, but need to be further strengthened in civil preparedness and its various actors. In any new major crisis, it becomes clear that previous experiences and operational expertise among authorities vary largely. These differences affect the swiftness of joint response and how well various authorities can cooperate, and thus also the joint ability to take action. There are also challenges related to the structure of the civil preparedness system, such as mandates of the government agencies involved. All combined, this can impede government agencies' opportunities to respond accurately to crises. Lessons learned from exercises and previous crises point to the need of further development of joint response in terms of methodology and technology for government agencies to better command and collaborate in times of crisis and war.

Since most crises hit several different geographical areas or sectors of society simultaneously, national level crisis coordination is essential. It is important that authorities have well-established structures combined with a responsibility to analyse the overall consequences of a crisis in order to determine the measures needed. It is also important that they collectively can solve any problems where various actions are at odds with each other, for instance when actions to solve problems in one field could undermine important actions in another field. To ensure an all-encompassing approach, cross-sector coordination must be at heart of the joint response.

War imposes special demands on endurance and resilience in the chain of command from national to local level. To strengthen collaboration and command, it is important to establish in peacetime, as far as possible, who will do what during war. Responsibilities and roles need to be clarified in the Emergency Preparedness Ordinance (Beredskapsförordningen), and then tested in exercises. This will reduce the risk of measures being delayed or being based on incomplete information.



Maria Bergstrand, Head of Section at the Response and Operations Department of MSB, on collaboration and command

Why do we need to collaborate and how does it work?

– In a crisis, a sole organisation can rarely resolve the crisis on its own. Society is intertwined and we depend on each other and on the continuous function of, for example, electricity, electronic communications and transport at all times. Collaboration is needed to solve problems, to allocate tasks and to determine the way ahead, for instance on how to most efficiently mobilise society's collective means.

– An important platform are the collaboration conferences, where MSB gathers up to several hundred participants from various authorities, organisations and other actors involved. The conference may focus on, for example, an ongoing forest fire, on public crisis communication or on ensuring that everyone knows what is being done and by whom. The participants vary depending on this focus, where collaboration conferences at managerial level direct the onwards work. Collaboration must take place on a regular basis. If it works well in everyday life, chances of coping successfully with a crisis are higher.

What are the challenges of collaboration?

– Understanding different perspectives is the major challenge. When one government agency takes action in one way, it can affect another agency's work and area of expertise. Therefore, understanding each other's responsibilities and points of view is crucial. Another challenge is the lack of an overall perspective and this is where MSB can contribute. We invite several parties and set up a focus-driven agenda in order to achieve results. Then we push the work forward, follow up on ongoing actions and search for available support (e.g. staff and equipment) from others parties. We must help stakeholders to move forward together – and at all times focus on the overall aim – to safeguard our national security interests.



Critical infrastructure and security of supply need to be robust

One of the most important tasks during crisis and war is to protect and maintain the functionality of society. Critical infrastructure¹ such as energy and food supply must function at all times. Identifying the nation's essential activities and operations is a prerequisite for knowing what is required in terms of maintenance, protection and prioritisations. Critical infrastructure must therefore be identified. Stakeholders responsible for critical infrastructure need to analyse existing risks and must have a back-up plan, should these risks become reality. However, requirements are yet to be determined regarding which particular activities should be maintained within the identified critical infrastructure. Furthermore, regulated obligations regarding risk- and business continuity management are not comprehensive enough.

An important part of our security of supply is to ensure access to goods and services. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when, for example, there was a shortage of protective equipment. Manufacturing preparedness, mechanisms for flexibly adjusting production and other activities, as well as stock-piling are examples of measures to safeguard necessary goods and services. The business community has a key role in our security of supply; for meeting an urgent demand and for operating despite disrupted trade flows in the event of crisis or war. Civilian government agencies, regions and municipalities in cooperation with the business community and the Swedish Armed Forces, need to prioritise building a robust security of supply for necessary goods and services.

Access to staff is crucial for security of supply and the maintenance of critical infrastructure. Vulnerabilities due to an everyday shortage of specialised skills is even more evident during a crisis. It is important to adopt a wide perspective on staffing in the everyday operations in order to be adequately staffed also in times of crisis and war. This includes considering possible options in terms of additional staffing from volunteers and the business community. Following a feasibility study on staffing supply, MSB has alerted the government on the need for government inquiries on this subject, with the reintroduction of civil conscription being one key component. It is also important to clarify the responsibilities between government agencies involved, both in terms of planning and during crisis or war. This includes the balance and priorities between military and civil defence. Several future inquiries and assessments will clarify what needs to be done and the division of tasks in doing so.

1. Critical infrastructures are activities, services or infrastructures that maintain or safeguard functions essential for society's basic needs, values, safety or security.



Read more

- MSB's compilation of security of supply: www.msb.se/forsorjningsberedskap
- MSB's compilation of critical infrastructure: www.msb.se/samhallsviktigverksamhet
- MSB's compilation of voluntary defence organisations: www.msb.se/ffo
- FOI's analysis on security of supply "Nationell försörjningsberedskap" (FOI-R--5174--SE): www.foi.se
- How companies can strengthen their preparedness for crises and war: www.msb.se/beredskapforforetag



Johan Belfrage, Innovation & Business Development, Saab AB, about the 'Flexible preparedness' joint initiative with the companies Volvo, ABB and Mölnlycke

Four companies have joined forces in the initiative 'Flexible preparedness'. What is this initiative?

– The initiative stems from the experiences with lack of protective equipment at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we could quickly adjust parts of our operations, we soon realised that collaboration with other companies – also willing to help – would bring much greater results since we could benefit from our different specialised skills.

– Our mission is to have innovative, digital and scalable preparedness, and to pursue flexible production with hubs in several parts of the country specialising in different goods or services. The hubs in question must be flexible and able to be up and running quickly since production must be adapted to both upcoming shortages and the nature of the crisis.

– What we need now is a well-established structure where companies know which public authority is responsible for what and how to get in touch with them. We also need to sign agreements beforehand and we must be coordinated, prepared and well trained. For companies to be active part of crisis preparedness we need to get started with training and exercises and therefore we must get access to crisis scenarios developed in the public realm. Companies cannot and should not pursue this on our own. This is a joint effort between the private and public sector where the latter set the requirements before we develop the concept further together. Cooperation is a massive force to be reckoned with and thanks to our unique industrial base; Sweden can spearhead the security of supply.



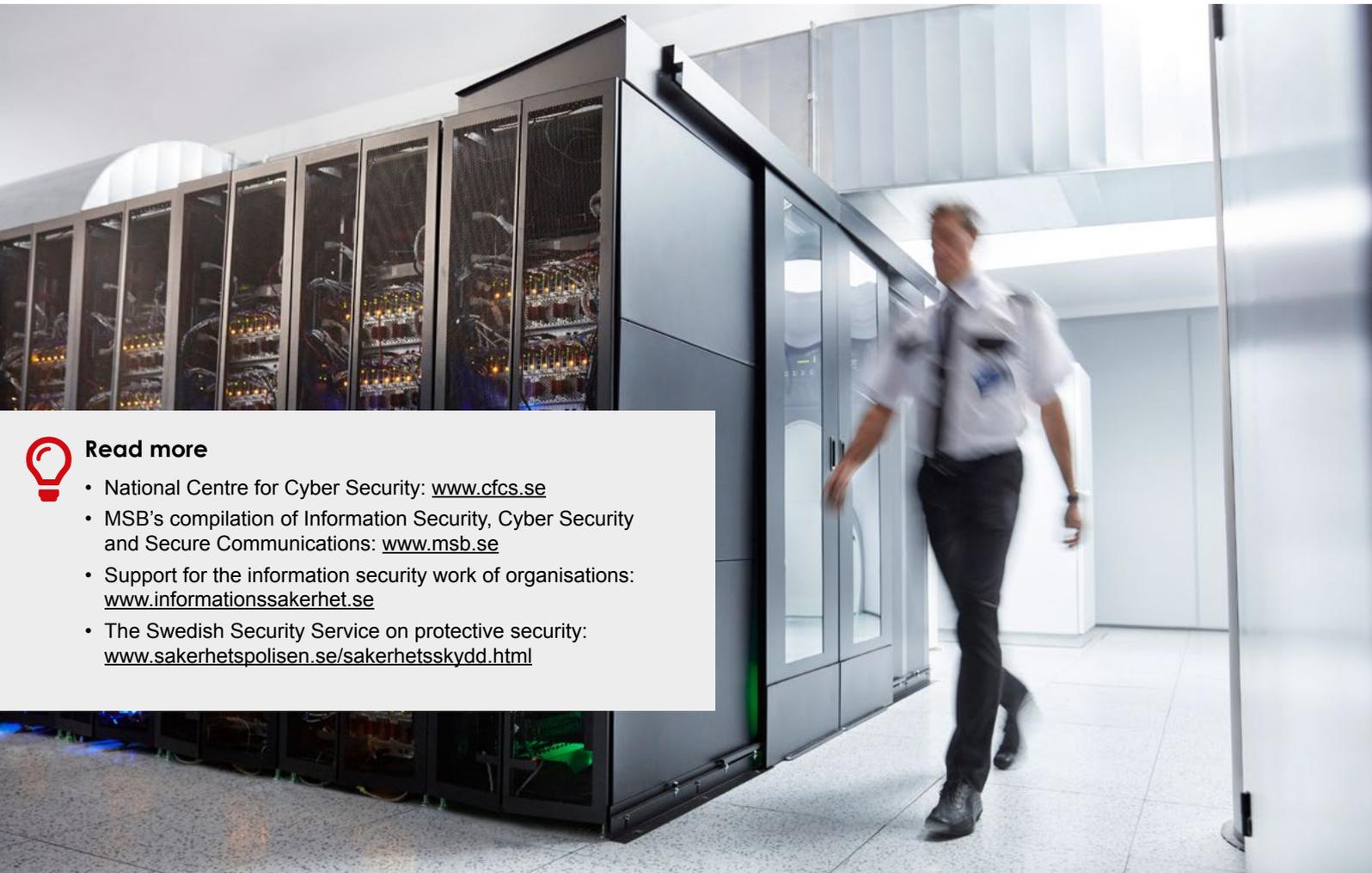
Information and cyber security, and protective security need to be given higher priority

Systematic information security work needs to be strengthened throughout society, particularly to address the growing cyber threat and new vulnerabilities due to digitalisation and technological developments. All actors involved need access to secure and robust communication systems for total defence planning in peacetime and when dealing with crises or war.

Investments in this area are cost-intensive and demand constant adaptations to technical developments and modern needs of command. Who needs to communicate, when, in what manner and with whom are basic requests that need to be met for development to be successful in the area of information security.

Protective security is another prerequisite. The starting point is that all end-users must have trust in the system along with the ability to share sensitive threat information, to carry out protective security analyses, and ultimately: to prioritise investments in practical protective security.

A National Centre for Cyber Security (CFCS) is being established. The centre includes the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Security Service, the National Defence Radio Establishment and MSB. The centre shall pool tasks and efforts in order to strengthen Sweden's capability to prevent, detect and respond to hostile cyber threats. The centre will support private and public entities in protecting themselves against cyber attacks. The centre will work closely with the Police Authority, the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration and the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority.



Read more

- National Centre for Cyber Security: www.cfcs.se
- MSB's compilation of Information Security, Cyber Security and Secure Communications: www.msb.se
- Support for the information security work of organisations: www.informationssakerhet.se
- The Swedish Security Service on protective security: www.sakerhetspolisen.se/sakerhetsskydd.html



Read more

- Emergency information from Swedish authorities: www.krisinformation.se/en
- Video clips about home preparedness: www.msb.se
- MSB podcast: "Om krisen kommer" (In the event of a crisis) is about the protection of society and your own preparedness.

The general public's preparedness and willingness to defend itself must continue to be strengthened

The population's interpersonal trust and trust in crisis management authorities are crucial for all crisis management. A high level of trust is fundamental for a well-functioning democracy, an open and scrutinising media, and a public discourse allowing individual responsibility. Coordinated, accessible and clear-cut communication from government agencies is important for creating trust. Efficient crisis communication also creates will and possibilities for the public to join in on the crisis response. During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication with the general public has been particularly important but also challenging. One of the challenges is that the population is not only a passive recipient of public information, but also affects the spread of infection through their actions. It is important to learn from the pandemic and to achieve more long-term and cross-authority communication planning. Public communication aimed at different groups and parts of society should be developed in future work.

Antagonists for the purpose of undue influence can exploit the absence or lack of public communication. Active psychological defence must therefore entail support to public entities in communicating in a robust, efficient and balanced manner. In the face of crisis and war, well-established media preparedness is at core. This includes robust broadcasts of public service announcements and news coverage both in print and in digital channels, including social media, with the objective to secure a persistent will to defend the nation and to establish a solid psychological resilience.

During the pandemic, public interest in crisis preparedness and in particular, home preparedness, have increased – a positive trend that needs to be built on. Many households have in fact strengthened their home preparedness, but more needs to be done. Preparations in everyday life are important since they make society more resilient.

Local preparedness needs to be reinforced

Society's resilience starts in everyday life and in our municipalities with their important and all-encompassing responsibilities. In addition to responsibilities for childcare, schools and elderly care, municipalities are also responsible for supplying water, sewage and waste management, as well as the rescue services. Existing everyday challenges in society are often amplified in times of crisis. For example, the pandemic has highlighted shortcomings in elderly care such as insufficient staffing mechanisms and lack of skills development and coordination. Local level preparedness needs to be reinforced and municipalities must be given the appropriate tools to solve their tasks also in times of crisis. Contingency plans and the requirements of total defence must be taken into account when municipalities engage in community planning of land and water zones.

Municipalities have a mandated responsibility in crises and during heightened alert. This responsibility vis-à-vis county administrative boards and other central government authorities is not evident to all municipalities, which could make it difficult for actors involved to jointly manage a crisis. Municipalities may also have different views on how the business community and other external stakeholders should be involved.

The ongoing work to build up civil defence in Sweden is also adversely impacted by the fact that many municipalities need to make tough decisions on priorities and have not been able to allocate sufficient personnel and resources for this task. Some municipalities already have strained finances, which may also have worsened during the pandemic. This can undermine continued and new investments in crisis preparedness and civil defence. For the necessary development of civil defence to take place, it is therefore important that municipalities receive economic compensation based on agreed development needs.



Read more

Handbook for municipal emergency preparedness: www.msb.se/handbokikommunalkrisberedskap

Gabriella Andersson, specialist in emergency preparedness, Kungsbacka Municipality, on efforts in local crisis preparedness

How do you work on strengthening the public's preparedness and what challenges do you face?

– We focus on confidence building measures and on increasing the knowledge of our population. We proceed from the individual's perspective since there are major differences in knowledge and commitment. It is important that they have realistic expectations of our support during a crises, when resources are limited and when we need to prioritise those in greatest need of our help. That is why it is important that those who can manage on their own for a while have prepared for that.

– We need to reach everyone, regardless of language or IT access. This makes Crisis Preparedness Week especially important, so we can meet our residents and reach out to young people. Our goal is for everyone to understand that they are an important piece of the preparedness puzzle.

– We collaborate with numerous stakeholders: the Swedish Armed Forces, the Home Guard, first responders, the county administrative board, preppers and influencers. Voluntary defence organisations are of particular importance for engaging our inhabitants. It is important to cherish the commitment of volunteers and to make sure that they get training and exercises, so that we can build mutual trust and have pre-signed agreements for use in crises.

– Our challenges are mainly having sufficient means. At present, we therefore need to prioritise what is stipulated in laws and agreements. The development of total defence entails important issues that we look forward to getting involved in, such as security of supply and how to work closer with the business community. It is a matter of finding the right level of ambition – we cannot do everything at once, but we must start somewhere.







Our ability to receive international support must be improved

Sweden's security is dependent on cross-border cooperation – both bilateral and within multilateral structures. Threats and risks are often cross-border in nature and our preparedness becomes more robust if developed in collaboration with other countries. In several crises, such as the major forest fires a couple of years ago and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweden has both received and provided international support. The ability to receive international aid (known as Host Nation Support) needs to be improved.

When other countries deploy personnel and equipment, they must be able to operate in our national context. It is therefore important to clarify and develop tasks and responsibilities, as well as methods and standard operating procedures. The application of agreements and arrangements to provide and receive international assistance also needs to be comprehensively reviewed.

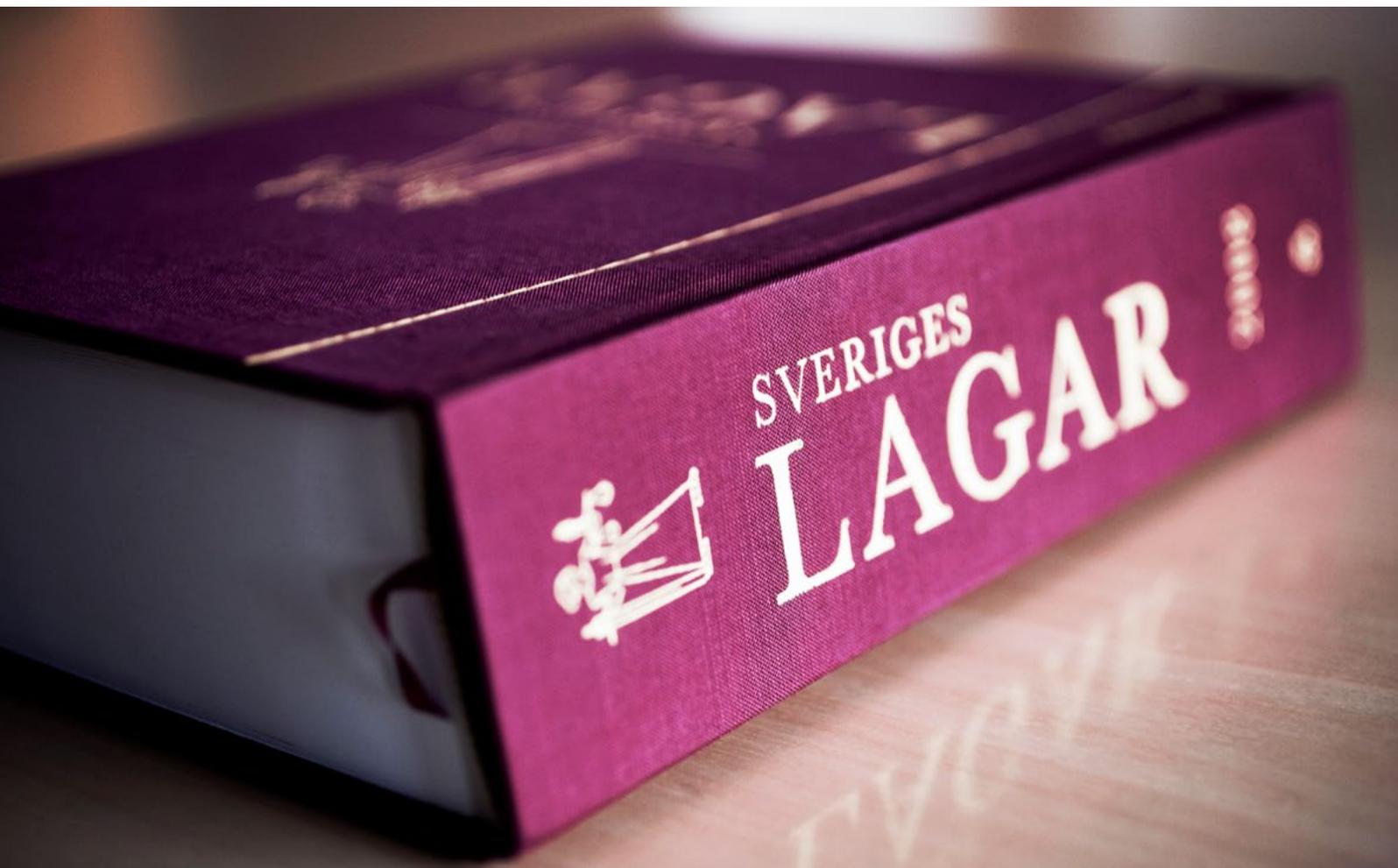
A key starting point in the reconstruction of total defence is that it should have the ability to defend Sweden against an armed attack. Activities in total defence shall be able to be carried out individually and together with others, within and outside the country. To provide and receive international assistance before or in the event of an armed conflict near our borders must therefore be subject of coordination and joint planning, training and exercises to the greatest extent possible.



Legislation needs to be reviewed

Existing legislation in civil preparedness is mainly intended for war or imminent risk of war, where the government can decide on a state of heightened alert. The existing regulatory framework is not adapted to hybrid attacks not prompting a decision about heightened alert or other crises in peacetime. Therefore, current legislation must be reviewed and updated into a more coherent preparedness legislation, to be used in all types of crises in order to provide society's stakeholders with powerful legal tools to manage different crises. MSB calls for continued work in the legislative area, so that Sweden can build up a robust preparedness.

In addition to the need for effective legislation for all threat levels, MSB notes that civil defence regulations largely emerged at a time when society was different. Technical and social development, privatisations and other societal restructuring have changed Sweden. Sections of the regulatory framework have become obsolete or contradictory, and thus need to be reviewed to facilitate the development of civil defence where government agencies must have an up-to-date regulatory framework for their operations.



**Experiences
from the
COVID-19
pandemic**



Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic still entails great human suffering and strain on all parts of society, particularly on health care and elderly care. The pandemic has affected our opportunities to meet our loved ones, our freedom of movement, our work life and our finances. The consequences of the pandemic may affect society for a long time to come, for example, through suspended and postponed health care and financial losses for both individuals and the business community. The pandemic will also affect the continued development of civil preparedness.

When the pandemic emerged in Sweden, it became clear that our society was not adequately prepared for such a strain. However, many operations quickly changed their plans, there was an upsurge in volunteers, and many companies converted their production. This was evidence of considerable commitment, flexibility and ability to consolidate efforts in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted how shortcomings in everyday life often are exacerbated in times of crisis. Examples include lack of protective equipment and other equipment and of personnel with specialised skills. We must therefore strengthen our preparedness in times when society is operating under normal circumstances. This will make Sweden more resilient in future crises.

The government appointed Corona Commission's conclusions and other evaluations will be important for our continued efforts to assess the response, what further development is needed and how to strengthen our preparedness. Although we became acutely aware of various problems and development needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also found solutions that had previously been difficult to identify.

Despite the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has resulted in government agencies developing their crisis organisation, collaboration and command and crisis communication. It is important to be able to adapt and improve during an ongoing crisis, and to continue a well-coordinated development of an adaptive crisis management system. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic will improve Sweden's ability to respond during the next crisis and in the event of an armed attack.





Corona
Virus
Vaccine
COVID-19

Injection only

Single dose

Åsa Hessel, Operations Manager of the Emergency Preparedness Unit, Region Sörmland, on lessons learned from the pandemic



What were the challenges at the onset of the pandemic?

– No matter what happens supplies, equipment and expertise are the challenges. Getting the right person in the right place quickly in a crisis is difficult. The lack of knowledge about COVID-19 was also problematic.

– Communication was important – with employees, other government agencies, the general public and the media. We had to find new ways of reaching out and to translate information into other languages. We launched a podcast, compiled an internal COVID-19 compendium and had large Skype meetings where our employees could ask questions.

What was distinctive about the work?

– Inventiveness and commitment. Many stepped forward to help on their own initiative – employees, volunteers and companies.

What lessons have you learned so far?

– To submit status reports – how, when and to whom needs to be reviewed. On the positive side, there was the development of digital care services and of us being able to easily meet with and train staff at a distance.

– The experiences will contribute to the work on building up our civil defence; how to develop and staff a wartime organisation and how to collaborate in a protracted crisis, what types of health care should be put first and what to be postponed. It is also important that everyone now understands that a crisis can happen quickly and hit hard.



Read more

- Swedish research projects related to the SARS-COV-2 virus: www.msb.se
- The Swedish 'Corona Commission': <https://coronakommissionen.com>
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden: www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/



Tasks and concepts

Tasks and concepts

Principles and tasks

Crisis preparedness is regulated by laws and regulations. The division of responsibilities and tasks follow, among other things, three basic principles and the geographical area responsibility.

- **The principle of responsibility** – those actors responsible for an activity under normal circumstances retain this responsibility in the event of societal disruptions. Actors have a responsibility to act, even in uncertain situations. The expanded principle of responsibility stipulates that actors are obliged to collaborate with and support each other.
- **The principle of proximity** – societal disruptions shall be managed where they occur and by the responsible actors most closely involved.
- **The principle of similarity** – actors are not to make changes to their organisation that are more far-reaching than the situation demands. Accordingly, in the event of societal disruptions, operations shall function as they do under normal circumstances, to the extent possible.

Geographical area responsibility

Some civilian authorities have specially designated responsibilities for coordinating crisis preparedness and civil defence within their geographical area. The responsibility for civil preparedness and response at local level rests with the municipality. At regional level, the responsibility lies with the county administrative board and at national level, with the Swedish government, supported by government agencies.

The role of companies in crisis preparedness

Companies are an important part of society and they are in charge of much of the critical infrastructure in Sweden. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when companies stepped forward to help, adjusted their operations and in many ways made it possible to manage the crisis. The role of businesses in society's contingency planning is often to deliver important goods or services to government agencies or other public actors.

There is no legislation assigning special responsibilities to companies in the event of heightened alert, war or major societal disruptions. On the other hand, owners or shareholders of industrial facilities and other private operations have an obligation to provide information needed by total defence authorities for their planning. If necessary, companies must also participate in the planning of their tasks and operations for total defence purposes. Employers' organisations and trade unions are also obliged to participate in planning and to provide information or other support required by total defence authorities for their planning. Companies may also, on a contractual basis, be obliged to, for example, maintain a certain level of preparedness.

Key concepts

What is total defence and a state of heightened alert?

According to the Act on total defence and heightened state of alert (Lagen om totalförsvaret och höjd beredskap), total defence means activities needed to prepare Sweden for war. To strengthen the country's defence capabilities, the level of alert may be raised. The government decides on a state of heightened alert, when Sweden is in danger of war, if there are any extraordinary circumstances due to war beyond Sweden's borders, or if Sweden has previously been at war or in danger of war. The levels of heightened alert are either 'high alert' or 'highest alert'. Highest alert prevails if Sweden is at war.

During the highest state of alert, total defence consists of all society's activities that must then be carried out. Total defence includes military activities (military defence) and civilian activities (civil defence). This includes protection of the population, security of supply and psychological defence.

What is civil defence?

Civil defence entails all of the contingency preparations made by civilian actors in peacetime and all of the required civilian activities during war. Civil defence includes command structures, the supply of energy, food (including drinking water) and electronic communications, as well as transport, financial services and health care for the needs of the population and of total defence. Many different actors are in charge of these activities: government agencies, municipalities, regions, businesses and voluntary organisations. The general public has an essential role to play. Civil defence thus encompasses major sections of society, where numerous stakeholders must cooperate and work based on the objectives of civil defence.

The Swedish Parliament has established a goal for civil defence for the period of 2021–2025. For example, civil defence must have the capability to protect the civilian population, safeguard the most important societal functions, maintain necessary supplies and contribute to the military defence in the event of an armed attack or a war in the world around us.

What is civil preparedness?

In this publication, the term civil preparedness includes both society's crisis preparedness and civil defence. Civil protection, including preventing major accidents, relates to civil preparedness in that accidents can spark a crisis. A robust civil protection system that can manage accidents and other strains under normal circumstances is a prerequisite for managing crisis and higher threat levels.

What is critical infrastructure?

Critical infrastructure means activities, services or infrastructure that maintain or safeguard functions essential for society's basic needs, values, safety or security.

For certain critical infrastructure, there are requirements on delivery or function, such as with the Electricity Contingency Act (Elberedskapslagen) on contingency measures within the electricity sector. However, many activities have no such requirements and services are therefore provided on a commercial basis.



MSB

Myndigheten för
samhällsskydd
och beredskap

About MSB

Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is responsible for helping society prepare for major accidents, crises and the consequences of war. Our work is led by a Director General appointed by the Swedish Government. We have approximately 1,000 employees working in Karlstad, Kristinehamn, Stockholm, Sandö, Revinge and Rosersberg.

Our mission

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is responsible for issues concerning civil protection, public safety, emergency management and civil defence as long as no other authority has responsibility. Responsibility refers to measures taken before, during and after an emergency or crisis.

We work via knowledge enhancement, support, training, exercises, regulation, supervision and our own operations

- in close cooperation with the municipalities, county councils, other authorities, the private sector and various organisations
- to achieve greater security and safety at all levels of society, from local to global.

The Swedish Government steers MSB via a body of instructions and an annual appropriation. The instructions specify MSB's responsibilities and tasks. The appropriation specifies the objectives and reporting requirements, as well as the resources allocated for MSB administration and MSB activities.



Swedish Civil
Contingencies
Agency