

Press release 21st of April 2023:

Emergency Preparedness for nuclear accidents at sea: Emergency Exercise “Arctic REIHN”

An explosion on a nuclear-powered passenger ship off the coast of Northern Norway destroys the ship reactors and injures several crew members. This is the background for Norway's largest nuclear exercise.

The Arctic REIHN (Radiation Exercise in the High North) exercise takes place in Bodø on May 9-11 and is organized by the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB), the Norwegian Coastal Administration (NCA), the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (DSA), and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC).

"The amount of traffic with nuclear-powered vessels along the Norwegian coast is increasing rapidly. An accident with such a vessel can cause radioactive emissions that affect Norway. It can have serious consequences, and therefore it is essential that the nuclear emergency preparedness organization with the Crisis Committee practices such a scenario," says Director General Per Strand of DSA and head of the Crisis Committee for Nuclear Preparedness.

The Crisis Committee for Nuclear Preparedness includes all relevant sectors and is a civil-military cooperation with the County Governors at the regional level, established to handle nuclear incidents.

Funded by the EU

Arctic REIHN is mainly financed by the EU. The purpose is to exercise the preparedness for an accident with radioactive pollution in Northern Norway. Key elements of the exercise are to test the systems for warning other nations and to receive help from abroad. Around 300 people from seven countries will participate in the exercise. In addition, observers from 31 countries will be present.

"Training together is crucial to handle a serious incident well. Practicing together gives us answers to what works, but also shows us what does not work, and what we need to do something about. If we have an exercise that does not reveal learning points, we probably have not trained realistically. There is always something to learn," says Elisabeth Longva, Director of the Department of Coordination and Preparedness at DSB.

Can have significant consequences

The consequences of an incident such as the one practiced in Arctic REIHN will affect people, the environment, agriculture, the seafood industry, and other societal interests in Norway, but also across borders.

Radioactive pollution can have a negative impact on food production throughout Europe, as other parts of the world may refrain from European goods due to fears of contamination.

Low risk - but important to practice

The Norwegian Coastal Administration monitors and communicates warnings about at-risk traffic along the coast, such as radioactive cargo or nuclear-powered vessels.

"A nuclear-powered vessel, as in this scenario, would be closely monitored by our vessel traffic service (VTS). In this way, measures can be taken early, and accidents can be prevented," says Hans Petter Mortensholm, Director of the Area for Environment Emergency Response at the Norwegian Coastal Administration.

The probability of an accident occurring with a nuclear-powered vessel along our coast is low, but we cannot exclude that it could happen.

"Recent years, with several natural disasters, a pandemic, and war in Ukraine, have shown us that we must prepare for the worst-case scenarios. This does not mean they will happen, but by practicing for them, we are better able to handle whatever may come our way," says Longva at DSB.

Global network regarding nuclear incidents

Norway is linked to a global network through the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident. And if an accident occurs, the rescue service is ready to act. For the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, the exercise will be important to test how, amongst other things, the safety of rescue personnel can be ensured.

In such an event, we must make other risk assessments. Together with our partners, who we closely collaborate with on a daily basis, we will practice the rescue service's ability to solve rescue missions during a period of radioactive contamination, says Tore Hongset, rescue leader and exercise planner at HRS Nord-Norge.

Will affect Bodø

The exercise will leave its mark on Bodø during the days it takes place.

There will be more emergency vehicles and helicopter traffic than usual. A large reception for "injured" will be established in the harbor. The ship, which is central to the exercise, will be close to shore and visible smoke will be generated. Parts of the scenario will also be practiced in Sørvær and in the municipality of Fauske.

In addition to the mentioned partners, a number of other actors will also participate. The complete list of participants and more information can be found at www.dsb.no/arctic-reihn

Contacts:

Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection [\(\[DSB\]\(http://www.dsb.no\)\)](http://www.dsb.no)

Morten Harangen, Press officer and Senior Communication Adviser

Phone: +47 41 29 37 70

e-mail: Morten.Harangen@dsb.no

Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority [\(\[DSA\]\(http://www.dsa.no\)\)](http://www.dsa.no)

Hallfrid Simonsen, Senior Communication Adviser

Phone: +47 915 81 135

e-mail: hallfrid.simonsen@dsa.no

Norwegian Coastal Administration [\(\[NCA\]\(http://www.nca.no\)\)](http://www.nca.no)

Lill Haugen, Senior Communication Adviser

Phone: +47 47 50 50 60

e-mail: lill.haugen@kystverket.no

Joint Rescue Coordination Centre [\(\[JRCC\]\(http://www.jrcc.no\)\)](http://www.jrcc.no)

Anja Kristin Bakken, Senior Communication Adviser

Phone: +47 482 00 284

e-mail: anja.bakken@hovedredningsentralen.no