

RESCUE SERVICES IN SWEDEN

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

VERSION 1



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**Lena Algers
Helge Brändström
Britt-Marie Nordström
Kalle Ängquist**

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1 Facts about the country

1.1 Introduction

Area: 174,000 sq mi (450,000 km²), the third largest country in Western Europe

Longest north-south distance: 978 mi (1,574 km)

Longest east-west distance: 310 mi (499 km)

Population: 9.3 million inhabitants

Languages: Swedish; recognized minority languages: Sami (Lapp), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedalen Finnish), Yiddish, Romani Chib

Form of government: Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy

Life expectancy: men 79 years, women 83 years ¹

1.2 Geography

Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities and 20 counties or regions. In the northern half of Sweden there are 4 geographically large counties in which resides only 10% of the national population. The majority of the residents of northern Sweden live along the coast (Gulf of Bothnia) which means that the inland areas are very sparsely populated, with only 1.4 persons per km²

2 The organization of the rescue service

2.1 Background of the rescue service

There are 3 fundamental principles which guide Swedish disaster management.

Responsibility: the person or party who has responsibility for the response under normal (non-disaster) circumstances will have the corresponding responsibility during crisis or disaster conditions.

Similarity: The response organization and the localization of the response will as far as possible be the same during a crisis or disaster response as during normal operating conditions.

Locality: Crises and disaster shall, as far as possible, be managed locally. If the local resources are deemed to be insufficient, only then will regional or national resources be considered.

¹ www.sweden.se

Many agencies, authorities, and organizations *cooperate* in the response to a crisis and or disaster in our community. The *geographical area of responsibility* includes



local, regional, and national responsibilities when there is a crisis or disaster. As part of this, each municipality, county/regional council and the national government is responsible for their corresponding geographical area.

Level	Authority/Agency	Example of tasking
National	Office of Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination - Strategic matters - Oversight agency for (for example) Police, Maritime administration
Regional	- County Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination, municipalities, private companies, operators, organizations - Oversight over inland waterways, dams - Radioactivity matters
	- County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health care - Pre-hospital care - Hospitals - Collective traffic - Communicable disease protection
Local	- Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire Department - Elderly care - Schools - Water - Heating and energy

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² www.krisinformation.se

2.2 Resources / major units involved

2.2.1 Civil protection / defense

Volunteer resource groups (FRG, in Swedish) are a cooperative effort between the municipalities and local volunteer groups. The goal with the FRGs is to provide an extra personnel resource during extraordinary circumstances, including, or example, to help with evacuation, information delivery, or administration. FRG participation includes a basic training course within each participating volunteer group concerning crisis response, crisis information, basic life support, first aid, and fire protection. FRGs should collaborate with the local religious communities who provide important resources and support for victims in crisis.

Examples of involved volunteer organizations include the following.

- *The Civilian Defense Organization (who also provide leadership training for FRG group members)*
- *The Volunteer Aviation group*
- *The Volunteer Radio Operators*
- *Volunteer Motorcycle Club National Organization*
- *The National Women's Voluntary Defense Organization*
- *Swedish Rescue Dogs Club*
- *Swedish Parachuting Organization*
- *Swedish Rifle Organization*
- *Others*

2.2.2 Police

Police responsibilities (according to the Swedish law governing policing) include, among other things, general protection, providing information and other support when appropriate. Nationally, the Swedish National Police Board has the highest authority for policing activities. The Board also directs and manages specific national police resources including the National Police (and National Police Special Weapons and Tactics group), the National Security Police, and the National Police College.

The Regional Police Authority leads all local police activities, even during unusual events. In case of extraordinary circumstances, the National Police Board can assume operative leadership. Unusual events are those which exceed the normal daily activities of the local police force and which require redistribution of local resources (as guided by established local routines). Examples of unusual events in a crisis situation can include the following:

- violent behavior or threat to the public safety connected with large group demonstrations or sporting event crowds
- sabotage or bomb threat
- terrorist attack
- larger events with multiple casualties and deaths, or life-threatening situation for large groups related to significant physical destruction in the community
- large scale search for missing persons



- capture activities for escaped and dangerous persons

For daily rescue responses, the police are responsible for traffic regulation, public access restriction, evacuation, search, security or non-access or evacuated areas, investigation of events, identification of fatal casualties, finding and informing nearest family of casualties, pursuit and arrest of suspected criminal in connection to events requiring rescue response.

The alarm plan:

The Police have their own alarm coordination system, and direct their own response resources and vehicles. The alarm for an event with casualties goes first through SOS (the central alarm coordination services) to the Police alarm coordination (the Regional Police communications coordinator). It is the Police who decide if a rescue operation will be accompanied by a police presence.

The Police are responsible for the mountain rescue service in the mountain regions (more about this later) as well as search operations for missing persons in mountain regions^{3,4}.

Search operations:

Search operations for people reported lost in mountainous or maritime areas is considered a search for lost persons in circumstances where there is serious immediate risk for life or well being.

The Police can enlist the support of volunteer resources such as outdoor terrain sports clubs or other similar instances. Even national or municipal resources can be enlisted. Large field searches require a systematic method (management search operation, or MSA), to make an assessment based on probabilities in order to distribute search resources in the most effective possible way⁴.

2.2.3 Prehospital healthcare

Ambulance care is a part of the health care system. In each ambulance, there is at least one fully licensed nurse. The ambulance which is first on the scene of an accident involving multiple casualties is responsible for the 2 functions of *Team Leader, Medical* (all medical personnel and resources on site) as well *Site Medical Chief* (care of patients). The *Team Leader, Medical* is the leader for the health care activities, and coordinates with the *Team Leader, Rescue* from Rescue Services as well as the *Site Leader, Police* from the Police. These 3 make up the site leadership organization at the accident site. These 3 are responsible for leading their own personnel as well as coordinating with the other 2 services.

³ www.krisinformation.se

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

Initial tasks for the ambulance personnel are to generate a list of needs and resources, prioritize among the casualties, initiate care of the injured, document activities, and establish contact with their hospital.

The leadership on site will be clearly marked with helmets and reflecting safety vests with the leadership title prominently displayed.

The helicopter ambulance system is part of the pre-hospital response system. These are usually staffed by a physician and nurse who can accompany a casualty during transport from the accident site.

Sorting and prioritizing of casualties at the accident site is managed using a system of 'smart tags'. This system includes easily visible priority classification with documentation on the tag for what has been done for that casualty at the accident site. Colors red, yellow, and green are used^{3,4,5}.

2.2.4 Hospital healthcare

According to the Swedish law regulating health care, each county council will make available health care to all that are residing within the county and that if a county resident needs health care while they are physically present in another Swedish county, then they will be offered health care as needed where they are.

In each county council, there is a regional crisis and disaster plan which includes planning, leadership, division of responsibility and follow-up for all types of foreseeable crises which could occur in the county. It includes large scale accident types but also serious threats to public safety related to interruption of public services for energy, heating, water, telephone or other communication, epidemic/communicable disease, and other crisis within the county council. The regional plan is the basis for local catastrophe plans which are part of each hospital and primary health care centre.

In the county of Västerbotten, there is a local security and catastrophe committee at each hospital which is responsible for seeing that their plan is updated, that the health care system has adequate medical equipment for the response included in the plan, that personnel are educated, equipped and have conducted catastrophe training exercises. Health care personnel can be mobilized to a response at an accident site from each hospital and primary care centre (which is the health care centers for smaller cities which do not have a hospital). In the local crisis and catastrophe plan, there is a local organization provided for including a plan for management of casualties and use of different health care resources. The plan describes division of responsibilities as well as response during a disaster alarm. Each section of the hospital also has a list of steps and activities as well as personnel tasks related to response to a disaster. The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare is the oversight agency for healthcare, and it provides (among other things) national requirements and rules which guide the catastrophe medical preparation and response.

³ www.krisinformation.se

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

⁵ Kris-och katastrofplan, VLL, 2009



There are 3 levels of disaster (preparedness and response):

- initial coordination stage, which means that the leadership gathers and follows developments
- Mobilization stage, where specific parts of the health care response are activated and prepare for or participate in response for multiple casualties
- Catastrophe stage, where all possible resources are mobilized

There is a health care administrator continuously available (day and night) for the disaster preparedness system within each county council. There is a national disaster preparedness administrator continuously available at the National Board of Health and Welfare. There are rules guiding how documentation and identity marking of casualties will be conducted at an accident site, during transport and at health care facilities.

In the event of a serious accident which cannot be managed by a local hospital, the regional (county council) disaster preparedness organization becomes activated and takes over leadership of the response. This can involve transport of casualties to other hospitals within the county or to other counties, even to another neighboring country.

The county council works with other county councils, municipalities, county boards, and other public agencies ^{3,5}.

2.2.5 Mountain rescue services (Search and rescue etc)

Mountain rescue

The Police are responsible for mountain rescue, and the response teams are comprised of volunteers within the police who are trained and practiced in mountainous terrain. These individuals are trained and equipped by the police. The Rescue leader in a mountain rescue is always the local Head of Police (or appointed by the local Head of Police). The mountain region is defined as that outside of the agricultural areas and where the police and municipal rescue services have predetermined the limits from passable roads. This also includes some exceptions such as small mountain communities, cabin areas, ski areas, etc. which are not considered mountain areas for the purposes of rescue.

An agreement exists between the Police authorities of Sweden and Norway concerning cooperation across the border concerning mountain rescue operations. Volunteer mountain rescuers, alpine mountain rescue groups, cave rescue groups and resources for acute transport of casualties are part of the mountain rescue service.

³ www.krisinformation.se

⁵ Kris-och katastrofplan, VLL, 2009

Equipment

Mountain rescuers have wide-track snowmobiles which are equipped with a sled pulled behind designed for casualty transport. Many of these sleds are equipped with a warming device and room for a medical attendant. Other equipment includes lamps, tents, stretchers, avalanche probes and shovels (stored in special depots). Rescue tents and warmers are placed on special snowmobile sleds for larger accidents and disasters.

Cave rescue

There are 2 groups in Sweden with special expertise and specific equipment for rescue in caves. One group is in Frostviken (Jämtland County) and the other is in Hemavan (Västerbotten County) ^{3,4,5}.

2.2.6 Rescue Services (fire & rescue, coast guard)

Rescue Services

In the Swedish law related to protection against accidents, the rescue services are described, which the state or municipalities will provide for response to accidents, and in cases of immediate danger to limit injuries to people, property, and the environment. Rescue Services manages all events from small to large accidents. All municipalities are mandated to have rescue services on continuous alert, by themselves or together with other municipalities. The law distinguishes between national and municipal rescue services.

Municipal rescue services are regulated by the law for protection against accidents, and the municipalities are given lots of latitude to determine themselves how these services will be organized. This can involve, for example, fire rescue and prevention, response to traffic accidents, diving rescue, forest fire response, and response to chemical catastrophe.

When there is a rescue response, there is a Rescue Leader with appropriate competence for the situation. This leader has a large general authority, in the eyes of the law, and when there is significant risk or danger for loss of life or property, the Rescue leader can order other public services, authorities and local companies to participate and help in the rescue response. The Rescue Leader can order all citizens from ages 18-65 to help in the rescue as much as their knowledge, health, and bodily strength allows (according to the law concerning civilian defense duty). He or she can order the forceful opening of locked private property, and even demolition of property as part of the rescue regardless of the views of the property owner (law concerning intervention on another's rights).

Concerning the National Rescue Services, mountain rescue, maritime rescue, aviation-based rescue, rescue related to release of radioactive substances, environmental rescue at sea, and search for lost individuals are all included.

³ www.krisinformation

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

⁵ Kris- och katastrofplan, VLL 2009



Since January 1, 2009, the *Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency* (shortened to MSB in Swedish) is the central oversight agency (previously the Swedish National Rescue Services).

MSB has responsibility for oversight of protection in the event of accidents, crisis and disaster preparedness, and civilian defense. Responsibility concerns responses before, during and after accidents or a crisis. The task covers the whole threat and risk scale, from everyday accidents to large catastrophes. MSB develops and supports all local, regional, and national preparation for accidents and crisis, as well as contributing to the effort to reduce negative consequences when a serious accident or crisis has occurred ³.

Maritime rescue

In the event of accidents, for example search, rescue, and transport to safety and treatment of people in danger in the maritime environment in the coastal archipelagos as well as on the large inland lakes (Mälaren, Vänern, Vättern, Hjälmaren), it is the National Maritime Administration who is responsible and conducts the rescue operations. The Rescue Leader is appointed by the Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre (MRCC) in Gothenburg, and this rescue leader in turn identifies a 'on-scene coordinator' (OSC) who is physically at the accident site. This person can be a maritime pilot with special rescue response training.

There is an agreement concerning rescue activities at sea (RITS) between the Swedish Maritime Administration, the National Coast Guard, MSB, and a number of municipalities (their rescue services). This agreement specifies that the municipalities will provide their specially trained RITS personnel to assist the Maritime Administration and/or Coast Guard for life-saving activities related to fire onboard a vessel, as well as when there are dangerous substances (other than oil) in the water, or if there is risk for that eventuality ^{3, 4, 6}.

Aeronautical rescue

Aeronautical rescue services work with search for lost aircraft, both civilian and military, and are responsible for preparatory rescue activities when there is reported distress from an aircraft in the air or during a threat to air traffic. Aeronautical rescue services will rescue persons in danger in an aircraft which has had an emergency landing in the ocean or large inland lakes (Vänern, Vättern och Mälaren). If the missing aircraft is located on the ground or in other inland lakes or rivers, then it is the municipal rescue services which have responsibility for the response. Aeronautical rescue is led from the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC) in Gothenburg ^{3,4}.

³ [www.krisinformation](http://www.krisinformation.se)

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

⁶ www.sjofartsverket.se

Coast Guard

The Coast Guard is an independent agency which is responsible for border control, environmental monitoring as well as continuous availability for maritime rescue. The Coast Guard is an agency with monitors, rescues, and aids all at sea as part of a close collaboration with the Police, the Customs Agency, Department of Fisheries, the Maritime Administration, and others. There are 25 Coast Guard stations and a Coast Guard Air Station, and these have a continuous availability for rescue activities. Monitoring of coastal areas is conducted with aircraft, maritime vessels larger and smaller, as well as from land ^{3,4,7}.

2.2.7 Central alarm coordination services

Central alarm coordination services/ SOS Alarm

SOS Alarm has a central alarm function, as well a coordination role in the event of a larger accident and response where many different units are mobilized. SOS Alarm has been given responsibility from the national government to manage alarm communication and the national alarm telephone number 112.

Each individual SOS centre (site) has a medical director who is a physician (MLA) as well as a higher medical competence (HMK) available in the form of a physician or nurse with special competence.

Alarm direction in Västerbottens County occurs by way of SOS Alarm which has an alarm centre in Skellefteå. Directives from the health care system, police, and rescue services are coordinated to initiate rescue responses ^{3,5}.

Media

It is always necessary to be able to quickly spread reliable information within the community when organizing a crisis response. If there are no reliable sources of information, then confusion and speculation will arise within the local population. The communications media itself manages a balance between spreading crisis management information and critically assessing the Rescue Services response during a crisis.

Important public service messages to the general public (VMA) are used in acute situations where there is threat to life. These VMA are spread over the radio and television, and even over the public siren speakers in each city ⁴.

³ www.krisinformation

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

⁵ Kris- och katastrofplan, VLL 2009

⁷ www.kustbevakningen.se

National Crisis Website

There is a national crisis web-page which provides information concerning disaster preparedness before a crisis and response during and after a crisis ³.

2.2.8 Other units i.e. army, national red cross etc.

The Swedish Armed Forces, besides their military duties to defend the nation from armed invasion, has a peace-time role in domestic crisis response. Transport is one of the most important forms of support, and Air Force helicopters and transport aircraft can be used for rescue activities. Even other types of military vehicles can be used in a crisis situation.

The Armed Forces can be requested to assist Police, Coast Guard, Customs, and also municipalities and county councils ³.

The Swedish National Home Guard

The National Home Guard is an important part of the civilian and community catastrophe preparedness in peace-time, and, for example, it can be called in to assist in searches for lost individuals and for preparedness during extreme weather.

The National Home Guard is present throughout the country, and independent local units have their own mandates and resources for command, transport, food and shelter. Depending on exactly where in the country, there can be 20-30 National Home Guard soldiers mobilized and available within 2-4 hours after request and activation ^{3,4}.

Swedish Red Cross

In Sweden, the Red Cross is a complement to other aspects of the community protective network. Red Cross activities are based on volunteers ⁸.

Swedish Sea Rescue Society (SRSS)

The SRSS is a private non-profit organization which was established more than 100 years ago. It manages its own maritime rescue stations along the Swedish ocean coastline as well as for the large lakes Vänern, Vättern, Hjälmaren, and Mälaren. The mission is to save lives and rescue individuals who have found themselves in danger in the maritime environment. SRSS also works with development of improvements for effective maritime rescue. There are 64 stations and more than 160 rescue boats. The Society finances this with help from private gifts and donations as well as Society dues. There are approximately 1700 current Society members ⁹.

³ www.krisinformation

⁴ "Räddningstjänst i samverkan" 2008, Räddningsverket

⁸ www.redcross.se

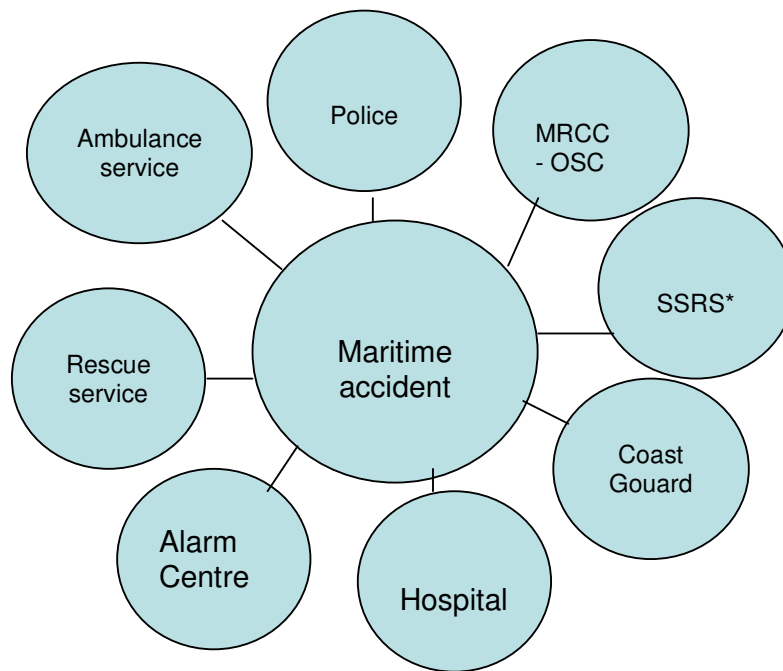
⁹ www.sjoraddningssallskapet.se

2.3 Operational procedures

In the event of a larger disaster, the police, rescue services, and health care systems work together. Each organization is responsible for and leads its own personnel, but a collaborative activity for the leaders of the 3 organizations is fundamental. Leadership at an accident site for the local response can also consist of a collaboration between 3 leaders, one from each organization/agency, who work together to provide leadership and delegate tasks during a coordinated rescue.

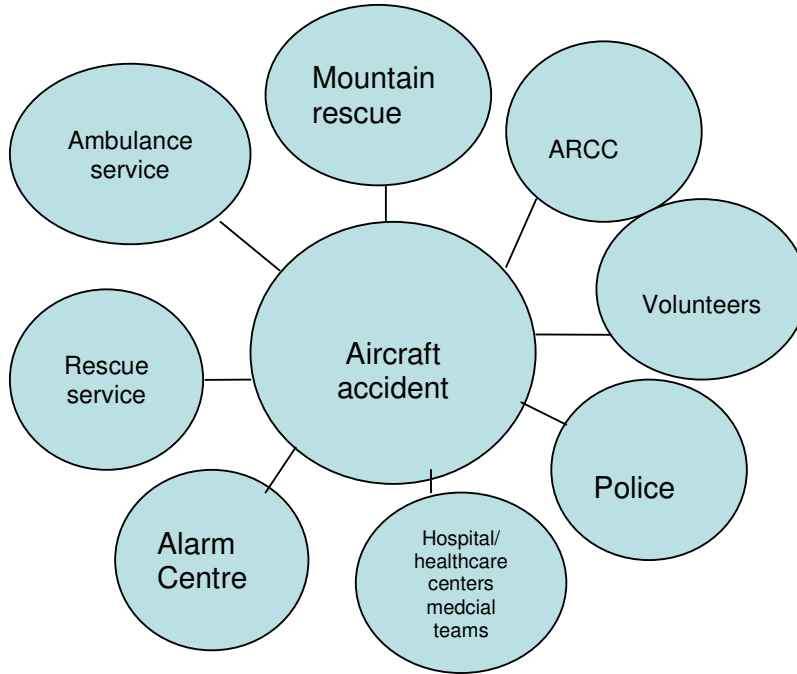
2.4 Cooperation of the service providers in the country

The following units work together in the event of a maritime accident and rescue:

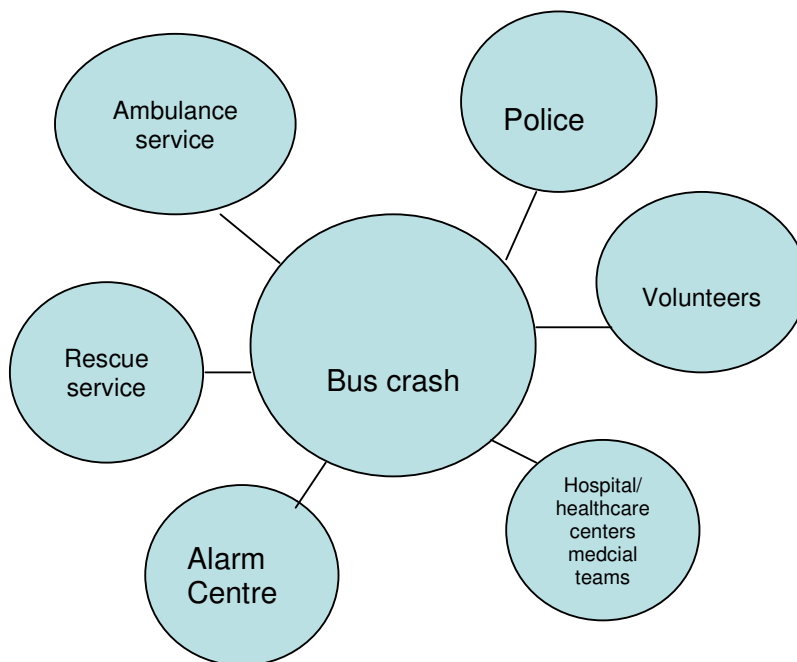


* SSRS = Swedish Sea Rescue Society

The following units work together in the event of an aircraft accident:



The following units work together in the event of a bus crash:



3 Education and training

Regular and annual exercises are conducted with police, rescue services, and health care systems are conducted both on local and regional levels.

4 International cooperation

Cooperation between Sweden and Norway along the long common border areas occurs routinely concerning health care and ambulance transport. Cooperation between Sweden and Finland occurs in the area of northern Sweden where there is a common border, though there has been no active cooperation for rescue operations in the Baltic Sea.

5 Expenses of the services

Each agency and authority manages the costs for its rescue-related activities within its own budget.

6 Summary

All crisis and catastrophe planning and management fore disaster events in Sweden are based on a close collaboration between national, municipal, and county agencies, that is, police, rescue services, and health care systems.

