



Press release from Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), the Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre North Norway (JRCC NN) (for immediate release):

Arctic search and rescue exercise gathers cruise industry and responders

More than 80 representatives from the Arctic expedition cruise industry, the search and rescue sector and academia participated in the Fourth Joint Arctic Search and Rescue (SAR) Workshop and Tabletop Exercise in Reykjavik this week.

The [annual event](#) is organized by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), the Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre North Norway (JRCC NN).

This year, the tabletop exercise was developed and led by the Canadian Coast Guard. The goal of this year's exercise was to determine the challenges, constraints and opportunities for passengers and personnel to survive a period of time stranded on land in a remote area away from the expedition cruise vessel and to evaluate and execute options for self and assisted rescue.

Cruise operators and search and rescue responders were grouped together by region into four groups covering Svalbard, Iceland, Arctic Canada and Faroe Islands. The groups were asked to respond to the incident as it would play out in their respective area. The scenario centered on a group of 66 cruise passengers prevented from returning to the ship due to sea ice after a small boat excursion. The situation is further complicated by bad weather and medical issues. Participants discussed how to ensure the passengers' safety and comfort and how the cruise operator and search and rescue responders can work together to achieve an efficient response.

The event was attended by seventeen AECO members and SAR entities from Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Svalbard, mainland Norway and Sweden. According to AECO Executive Director Frigg Jørgensen, this annual SAR event is an invaluable forum for dialogue and networking.

"We see that joint exercises helps cruise operators and SAR responders understand each other's procedures, capabilities, concerns and perspectives. It gives everyone involved a better understanding of the resources we have at our disposal," says Jørgensen.

For example, some participants were surprised to learn that rescue helicopters can assist with polar bear watch using thermal cameras, whereas others were not aware that some cruise operators routinely bring tents, emergency stoves, survival kits including medicines, and the ship doctor when they go ashore for excursions.

General director of JRCC NN, Bent-Ove Jamtli, says that the event sparks collaboration that continues throughout the year: "This annual event has established a solid platform for collaboration between industry and SAR entities that has evolved into extensive contact to strengthen information exchange and innovation."



Suggested illustration photo



Photo caption: Participants in the Fourth Joint Arctic Search and Rescue Workshop and Tabletop Exercise. Photo: AECO.

High resolution illustration image can be downloaded here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f3srjohoz0dq44z/AACFUJn6ETBUI_72V6CSS27Ja?dl=0

Program for the Fourth Joint Arctic Search and Rescue Workshop and Tabletop Exercise is available [here](#).

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AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators is an international organization for expedition cruise operators and associates in the Arctic, dedicated to managing environmentally friendly, safe and considerate cruise tourism. With close to 70 international members – including 40 vessel operators, owners and management, and 50 expedition cruise vessels that are organized by the association – AECO represent the great majority of these operations in the Arctic.

Website: www.aeco.no.

Joint Rescue Coordination Centre North Norway

Norwegian rescue services are carried out through cooperation between government agencies, voluntary organizations and private companies who have resources appropriate for rescue services. The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) North Norway has the overall operational responsibility during search and rescue operations in its area of responsibility, which stretches from 65°N to the North Pole. JRCC North-Norway is located in Bodø.

Website: <https://www.hovedredningsentralen.no/english/>

Icelandic Coast Guard

The Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) is a law enforcement agency that is responsible for search and rescue, maritime safety and security surveillance, and law enforcement in the seas surrounding Iceland. The ICG's operations are based on gathering, analysing and distributing information in close cooperation with neighbouring countries in order to create a surface picture as accurate as possible at any given moment to ensure maritime safety and security.

Website: <http://www.lhg.is/english/>