

Barents Rescue 2015 Exercise in Kittilä this autumn

Finland will host an international rescue exercise between the countries in the Barents Region – Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia – in Levi, Kittilä from 28 September to 2 October 2015. The exercise is based on a scenario where the resources of the Lapland Rescue Department and other rescue services in northern Finland are not sufficient to deal with the situation in the region, but assistance has to be requested from the neighbouring countries. Participants in the exercise comprise over 400 volunteers and rescue and medical professionals.

The Barents Rescue 2015 Exercise aims to improve preparedness and cooperation between the participating countries. The countries have signed an agreement concerning cooperation in the prevention of, preparedness for and response to emergencies in the Barents Region. Such exercises are arranged every two years. Preparations for this year's exercise are almost complete.

– We started the preparations right after the last exercise in Norway two years ago. The planning process has been extremely invaluable, especially for preparedness. We have learned a lot about cooperation and planning, and clarified certain interfaces in the alarm chain, for example. We have also realised that the obvious is not always so obvious. I guess I could say that the journey has been more important than the destination, says Mr **Jari Honkanen**, Senior Officer at the Ministry of the Interior.

Alarming, requesting assistance and communicating information

The exercise in Kittilä will involve warning and alarming, requesting assistance, dealing with border crossing formalities, managing rescue operations, sharing and communicating information and handling the media. The main focus will be on Host Nation Support, which refers to the arrangements made to receive the incoming assistance. These include providing the staff with guides, interpreters, food, accommodation and other facilities, and ensuring the availability of fuel and water. For the actual exercises, it is essential to know how to direct the incoming staff and give them relevant tasks in which they can use their special skills.

Flooding with associated accidents

The exercise scenarios in Finland involve a series of heavy rainfalls in Kittilä and a simultaneous mine accident. Flooding and the raising water level cause serious damage to the road system in the region, leaving some areas without land connections and hindering food supply and power distribution. In addition, there is a landslide and a traffic accident. The flood scenario is based on a real incident in Kittilä about ten years ago.

The Barents Rescue 2015 Exercise is organised by the Crisis Management Centre (CMC Finland) and the Ministry of the Interior Department for Rescue Services in collaboration with the Lapland Rescue Department and the gold mine of Agnico Eagle Finland. The participants include over forty organisations from Finland and key rescue and medical actors from the neighbouring countries.

More information:

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