



# The Governor of Svalbard



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► The Governor is the Norwegian Government's highest ranking representative on Svalbard. The Governor is based at Skjæringa in Longyearbyen.

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# The Governor of Svalbard

Svalbard is a part of Norway and the Governor is the Norwegian Government's highest ranking representative on the archipelago. The Governor's duty is to implement Norwegian Svalbard policy, to safeguard Norway's rights and obligations according to the Svalbard Treaty and to be a policy advisor for the authorities' development of Norwegian Svalbard politics.

The Svalbard Treaty gives Norway full sovereignty over Svalbard. The Treaty came into force on the 14th of August 1925, and at the same time the Governor's office was established. The designation "sysselmann" (the Norwegian word for the Governor of Svalbard) is old, and it signifies the highest governmental representative within a certain area. Originally having been held by only one person, the office has since then grown considerably. Today the Governor's office counts 37 full-time employees.

The Governor of Svalbard holds a distinctive administrative position in Norway. The Governor is both Chief of Police and has the same authority as a County Governor on the mainland.

The Governor's office consists of an Environmental Department, a Police Department, an Administrative Department and a Staff Section. Combined, the Governor has access to a broad range of professional expertise within the areas of nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, pollution control, law enforcement, rescue and preparedness services, Russian language, laws and regulations, tourism and information services. The Governor and Assistant Governor represent the public prosecuting authority and are responsible for prosecution of criminal cases.

The Governor's authority applies to the Svalbard archipelago and to its territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles from the coastline. Administratively, the Governor is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

Longyearbyen has its own local administration which was established in 2002. Within the Longyearbyen land-use planning area, the local administration has approximately the same responsibilities as a municipal council has on the mainland.

➤ Cleaning of beach litter and waste is an important task during fieldwork.



# Environmental protection

The Governor has the principal environmental protection authority on Svalbard. The main environmental objective for Svalbard is to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, an untouched and unspoiled environment. The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act and several regulations govern environmental protection on Svalbard.

These are some of the duties of the Environmental Protection Department:

- Nature supervision and environmental monitoring
- Management of protected areas
- Species management
- Registration, monitoring and maintenance of cultural heritage sites
- Oil spill preparedness, pollution control and waste disposal
- Safeguarding of the environmental aspects of planning and construction, business enterprises and intervention in nature
- Administration of recreational activities, tourism and travel in outlying areas
- Control of import and export of animals and registration of domestic animals

➤ Svalbard represents one of Europe's largest continuous wilderness areas. Approx. 65% of the land area is protected.



➤ Animal life on Svalbard is protected by law, and species management is one of the duties of the Environmental Department.



➤ All traces of human activity from before 1946 are protected. Monitoring and maintenance of cultural heritage sites is an important task.



➤ The Governor is the principal authority responsible for pollution control. This is from an inspection of a burning coal stockpile in Barentsburg.



➤ Rescue and preparedness services are given top priority in the Police Department.



# Police and legal authority

Svalbard is an independent police district and the Governor is Chief of Police. The police are on duty 24 hours a day.

The police department is, among other things, tasked with the following duties:

- Security, law and order
- Preparedness measures and rescue services. The Governor is the head of the local rescue station (LRS) and leads all rescue missions on Svalbard under the management of the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre for Northern Norway.
- Criminal investigation
- Traffic control, driving licences and registration of vehicles
- Prevention policies aimed at children and youth
- Issuing visas and firearm permits

➤ Rescue operations are demanding on Svalbard. The police have an excellent cooperation with Longyearbyen Red Cross Rescue Team.



➤ The Governor represents the public prosecution authority in criminal cases, and North Troms District Court hears cases both in Tromsø and on Svalbard.



➤ The Governor of Svalbard is administratively subordinate to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Here, Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen (left) visits Svalbard. Governor Odd Olsen Ingerø to the right.



➤ The Governor of Svalbard carry out inspections over large areas of the archipelago.





◀ There are over 5 000 personal visits to the reception at the Governor's office per year.

# Other duties

In addition to being head of law enforcement and environmental protection, the Governor has a number of other duties:

- Inspection and control
- Information to visitors and permanent residents
- Media contact
- Hosting and representational duties
- Providing Russian interpretation services, and maintaining contact with the Russian settlement in Barentsburg
- Tourism and travel matters
- Performing marriages
- Issuing separation orders and divorce orders
- Legal advice
- Official certification of documents
- Board of health advisory duties
- Fire protection
- Issuing licences to sell alcohol
- Issuing passports
- Secretariat for Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund

In connection with some of these duties, the Governor cooperates with other organisations and authorities on Svalbard and on the mainland.

▶ The Governor handles travel matters for individual travellers, organisers and tourist guides. Special attention is paid to ensuring that all travellers comply with safety and environmental regulations.



▶ At 'Svalbardporten' at Svalbard Research Park you will find detailed environmental information issued by the Governor.



▶ The Governor has the authority to perform marriages and officiates for approx. 40 couples every year.



▶ A meeting at the Russian Consulate in Barentsburg with a delegation from the Norwegian Parliament. The Governor maintains regular contact with the mining community in Grønfjorden.



# Areas of commitment

The Governor of Svalbard plays a central role in the implementation of official Svalbard policy and shall ensure an efficient administration of the archipelago. In the Governor's main strategic plans, five areas of commitment are defined:

## 1. Public security

The Governor shall administer Norwegian legislation throughout the archipelago and safeguard security for the inhabitants.

## 2. Environmental protection

The Governor shall contribute to the fulfilment and understanding of the ambitious goals for environmental management on Svalbard.

## 3. Inspection and control

The Governor shall ensure that the prevailing regulations are respected and that the special considerations that apply on Svalbard are attended to.

## 4. Administration and service

The Governor shall safeguard the residents' legal protection and maintain a high level of user satisfaction. The Governor shall maintain a high level of trust.

## 5. Policy advisor

The Governor shall provide the authorities with balanced analyses and advice to contribute to a comprehensive and forward-looking administration of the archipelago.

> The enforcement of Norwegian laws and regulations on Svalbard is an important part of the Governor's duties.



> Ambitious aims have been set for the environmental protection on Svalbard. The Governor's duty is to work towards the realisation and understanding of these objectives.



> The Governor has a contract with Lufttransport AS which is responsible for the Governor's helicopter service.



> During the summer months the vessel M/S "Polarsysssel" is placed at the Governor's disposal. The vessel represents an important part of the oil spill preparedness system on Svalbard.



# Transport resources and equipment

The varied tasks that are carried out within rescue and preparedness services, environmental protection and inspection duties require a high degree of quality with regard to transport resources and equipment. The following are some of the resources placed at the Governor's disposal:

- Two Super Puma rescue helicopters, specially adapted for rescue missions in the high north
- The vessel M/S "Polarsysssel", certified for sailing in sea ice, with a helicopter deck and operations room for mission control
- Belt wagons/snowcats
- Cars
- Smaller boats and snowmobiles
- Rescue equipment and personal equipment for operations in the field
- Communications equipment
- Oil spill preparedness equipment



▲ The Governor's authority applies on Svalbard and on its territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles from the coast line.

# About Svalbard

The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 established Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard. It came into force on the 14th of August 1925. The Treaty provides citizens and enterprises from the signatory states with specific rights to entry and residence, as well as rights to undertake certain commercial activities. In 1925 Svalbard became a part of Norway, thus Norway administers and enforces laws and regulations on the archipelago. The Svalbard Treaty has been ratified by some 40 countries.

Svalbard is defined as all land between 74° - 81° North and 10° - 35° East, as well as all ocean areas within the archipelago's territorial waters (12 nautical miles).

The land area covers 61,000 km<sup>2</sup>, corresponding to approximately twenty percent of the area of mainland Norway. Svalbard represents one of the last remaining large continuous wilderness areas in Europe. Protected areas make up approximately 65% of the land area (national parks, nature reserves, plant and bird reserves and a geotropic reserve).

The two largest settlements on Svalbard are Longyearbyen (the Norwegian administration centre), and the Russian mining settlement in Barentsburg. In addition, there are smaller settlements in Ny-Ålesund, Sveagruva and on the islands of Hopen and Bjørnøya. At Hornsund there is a Polish research station which is manned throughout the year. There are also some active trapping stations on the island of Spitsbergen.



**The Governor of Svalbard**  
P.O. box 633 N-9171 Longyearbyen  
Telephone +47 79 02 43 00 Telefax +47 79 02 11 66  
firmapost@sysselmannen.no  
www.sysselmannen.no

