



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.



The Governor of Svalbard

Svalbard is a part of the Kingdom of Norway, and the Governor is the highest official representing the Norwegian government on the archipelago. The Governor's duty is to implement Norwegian Svalbard policy, safeguard Norway's rights and obligations according to the Svalbard Treaty and to be a policy advisor to the Government in their development of overall national policies for Svalbard.

Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard follows from the Svalbard Treaty and is confirmed, according to the principles of international law, by implicit recognition by other states. The Treaty was signed on 14 February 1920, and more than 40 states are now party to it. Through the Treaty Norway has undertaken a limited obligation in accordance with international law to treat citizens and enterprises from all parties on equal terms in certain areas of activity specified in the Treaty. The Treaty came into force on 14 August 1925, and from that date an act of parliament, the Svalbard Act, confirms the status of Svalbard as part of the Kingdom of Norway. At the same time the office of Governor was established. The designation "sysselmann" (the Norwegian word for the Governor of Svalbard) is old and signifies the highest governmental representative within a certain area. Consisting from the beginning of one person, the office has since grown to more than 40 full-time employees.

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, civil protection 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.



➤ 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.





Environmental protection

The Governor has the principal environmental protection authority on Svalbard. The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act and several regulations govern environmental protection on Svalbard. To maintain the extent of wilderness and to conserve flora, fauna and cultural heritage are among the most important environmental goals.

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

- Nature supervision and environmental monitoring
- Management of protected areas
- Management of biodiversity
- Registration, monitoring and maintenance of cultural heritage sites
- Oil spill preparedness, pollution control and waste disposal
- Ensure the inclusion of environmental and cultural heritage considerations in land-use plans and in execution of measures
- Ensure that traffic and other activities outside the planning areas are in accordance with The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act

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- 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, including the monitoring of waste disposal sites.



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



- 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.



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

➤ The Governor of Svalbard is administratively subordinate to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Kjerstin Askholt became Governor in October 2015. Here she is seen with the former Minister of Justice and Public Security Anders Anundsen.



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





- ▶ 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.



- ▶ In the entrance area of Svalbard museum you will find detailed environmental information issued by the Governor.



Administrative and other duties

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



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 Russians in Barentsburg.
- Tourism and travel matters
- Performing marriages
- Issuing separation orders and divorce orders
- Legal advice
- Official certification of documents
- Fire protection
- Issuing licences to sell alcohol
- Issuing passports and visas
- Registration of motor vehicles
- Processing of applications for firearms permits
- 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 has the authority to perform marriages and officiates for approx. 40 couples every year.



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



Areas of commitment

The Governor's 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 islands. 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. This photo shows breathalyser testing of a group of snowmobile drivers.



> 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.



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 "Polarsyssel", certified for sailing in sea ice, with a helicopter deck, emergency rescue equipment, oil spill response equipment and operations room for mission control
- Belt wagons
- 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.

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



- From March to December every year, the vessel M/S "Polarsyssel" is placed at the Governor's disposal. The vessel represents an important part of the oil spill preparedness system on Svalbard.



About Svalbard

Svalbard is an archipelago comprising all dry 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 km², corresponding to approximately twenty per cent 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).

Svalbard has approximately 2700 inhabitants. Most live in Longyearbyen, the administrative centre. This is also where the Governor's office is located. Other settlements are Barentsburg, primarily a mining town; Ny-Ålesund, an international research base; and the smaller research station at Hornsund. In addition there are small settlements at Sveagruba, on Hopen and Bear Island as well as a few active trapping stations.



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