



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, 14.12.20):

Arctic search and rescue partners pioneer virtual tabletop exercise

For the fifth year in a row, the Arctic expedition cruise industry, search and rescue sector and academia gathered for a joint tabletop exercise. This year, the exercise was organized as a fully virtual event, gathering nearly 130 participants from across the world.

The participants were invited to play out a scenario in which an expedition cruise vessel temporarily loses steering and grounds on a submerged shelf in a remote part of the Arctic. As the scenario progresses, the players must figure out how to evacuate the unstable ship and establish a beach camp. The 175 passengers and 120 crew and staff must be kept safe while awaiting rescue, initially by an expedition cruise vessel and eventually by professional search and rescue (SAR) responders. Groups consisting of SAR responders, ship officers, expedition staff, and the cruise operator home office collaborated to determine the challenges, constraints and opportunities involved.

The Annual Joint Arctic Search and Rescue Tabletop Exercise (SAR TTX) 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). The overall objective is to enhance safety and preparedness in Arctic maritime domain through strengthened collaboration between the Arctic expedition cruise industry, SAR entities and authorities.

According to AECO Executive Director Frigg Jørgensen, this annual SAR TTX event allows the participants to learn from each other and explore opportunities for improvement.

“The cruise industry already has robust safety protocols in place and is aware of the industry’s responsibility for preparedness. This event makes it possible to further develop and enhance equipment, training and Standing Operating Procedures,” says Jørgensen.

Captain Auðunn Friðrik Kristinsson, Director of Maritime Operations at the Icelandic Coast Guard, says that the exercise is an opportunity to both practice and to gain valuable insight:

“This event helps the different sectors involved in a rescue operation understand the procedures, capabilities and perspectives of the other parties. It also allows the professionals working in the field to get to know the actual people that they will be dealing with in the case of a real incident. This can be very beneficial and contributes to better communication and a more efficient response,” says Capt. Kristinsson.

The Joint SAR TTX was attended by 26 AECO members and SAR entities from Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Svalbard, mainland Norway, USA, Finland, UK, and New Zealand.



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The event is organized under the umbrella of the Arctic and North Atlantic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network (ARCSAR) with funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Suggested illustration photo



Photo caption: The exercise scenario involved evacuating a cruise ship and setting up camp on a nearby beach. This photo from a live exercise shows what such a camp may look like. Photo: SAREX Svalbard

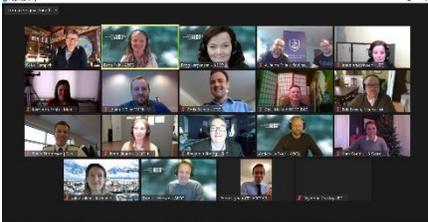


Photo caption: Some of the participants of the 2020 Joint SAR TTX, which took place on Zoom.

High resolution illustration images can be downloaded here:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jwhq9zy8k287ua0/AADILfEAKmX_BIE M9oC4KkrKa?dl=0

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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 over 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.hovedredningssentralen.no/english/>

Icelandic Coast Guard

The Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) is responsible for search and rescue, maritime safety and security surveillance, and law enforcement in the seas surrounding Iceland. ICG's operations are based on emergency prevention, preparedness and response as well as gathering, analyzing and distributing information in close cooperation with neighbouring countries in order to create a surface picture as



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accurate as possible at any given moment to ensure maritime safety and security. Website: <http://www.lhg.is/english/>

ARCSAR

Arctic and North Atlantic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network (ARCSAR) is working to will establish international best practice and propose innovation platforms for the professional security and emergency response institutions in the Arctic and the North-Atlantic. The network consists of 21 international partners representing 13 different nations, including JRCC North-Norway, the Icelandic Coast Guard and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO). The network addresses the Arctic and North-Atlantic (ANA) region, preparing to cope with the Security and safety threats that will result from increased commercial activity in the region including traffic through the Northern passages, cruise traffic, and offshore oil and gas activity. The ARCSAR project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement no: 786571. Website: <https://arcsar.eu/>



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