

Civil Emergency Planning/Crisis Management in Sweden

The Swedish structure for civil emergency planning is coordinated by the MSB, which holds the mandate for a holistic and all hazards approach to emergency management. This includes the entire spectrum of threats and risks, from everyday accidents up to major disasters.

Civil protection is defined as public safety in the form of protection from incidents, accidents and other types of emergencies and disasters. The Swedish emergency preparedness system aims to protect life and health, critical infrastructure and fundamental values from all types of hazards and risks through a comprehensive, risk-based, emergency preparedness programme including prevention, planning, preparedness, response and recovery.

Many of society's activities are highly interdependent. For example, society would not continue to function effectively without electricity, telecommunications and IT. To ensure that emergency management takes this interdependence into account, the planning and resource allocation for peacetime emergency preparedness is built upon a system wherein the various stakeholders take joint responsibility for the strengthening of Sweden's overall emergency management capacity within, and across sectors.

The principle of responsibility

The Swedish emergency preparedness system is primarily built on the principle of responsibility, which means that whoever is responsible for an activity in normal conditions should maintain that corresponding responsibility, as well as initiating cross-sectoral cooperation, during major emergencies.

The tasks and objectives for Swedish CEP during peacetime emergencies are to

- minimise the risk and consequences of major emergencies
- advance and support societal preparedness for emergencies
- coordinate across and between various sector boundaries and areas of responsibility.

The extended international task of Swedish CEP is to increase capacities for dealing with a wide spectrum of situations and emergencies ranging from international confidence-building measures to coordinated crisis management in complex emergencies.

CEP organisational structure

The responsibility for CEP is managed by three different levels of government – national, regional, and local. The Ministry of Defence has overall political responsibility for CEP. In order to assure that the Government Offices have a coordinated ability to handle cross-sector emergencies when they occur, the Crisis Management Coordination Secretariat at Government Offices is responsible for everyday management.

Crisis management at the Government Offices is based on a joint cross-sector approach. Every government office is responsible for planning and handling crises within its own area of responsibility. Authorities and agencies at the national level are also assigned complementary tasks by the government during major emergency situations.

Every government agency is responsible for CEP in its own area of expertise, and the MSB has the task of coordinating the various stakeholders. This responsibility applies to measures taken before, during, and after the occurrence of emergencies and disasters. All Swedish authorities are obliged to carry out risk and vulnerability analyses in their own areas in an effort to strengthen their own, and Sweden's overall emergency management capacity.

The regional level

At the regional level the county administrative boards are responsible for the coordination of CEP activities such as exercises, risk and vulnerability analysis. They also act as a clearing house between public and private partners. During a crisis, the administrative boards coordinate the relevant measures with relevant actors. The county administrative boards have overall responsibility for reporting the need for host nation support in the event of a major emergency. Additionally, the county administrative boards also coordinate contact with the mass media during major emergencies, crises, and disasters.

The local level

Swedish municipalities have a large degree of autonomy and play an important role in civil emergency planning and preparedness. During a major emergency the municipal executive board is the highest civilian authority within the municipality, and is responsible for all civilian command and crisis management at a local level. In this role municipalities are supported and assisted by the county administrative board.

Civil-military cooperation

The overall aim of civil-military cooperation is to achieve close cooperation as well as a mutual exchange of information in order to handle different kinds of emergencies more efficiently. Civil-military CEP cooperation is carried out at all administrative levels and includes planning, international activities, training and exercises. At the national level the MSB and the Swedish armed forces headquarters coordinate civil-military activities.

Volunteers

There are 19 voluntary defence organisations who are involved in both civil and military aspects of CEP. They are all independent and non-profit associations. In co-operation with the authorities, these voluntary defence organisations inform, recruit and train volunteers for emergency preparedness and wartime situations.