

Press release from AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (for immediate release):

AECO represents cruise industry in new Arctic SAR network

Cruise industry, authorities and researchers will join forces to enhance Arctic SAR through the new ARCSAR network. Having secured €3.5 million in EU funding, the ARCSAR project will run for five years and include a live exercise on a cruise vessel.

The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) is one of 21 international partners that will work across sectors to strengthen cooperation and innovation in security and emergency response in the Arctic and the North Atlantic.

The ARCSAR network is led by the Joint Rescue Coordination Center North-Norway, and search and rescue (SAR) will be an important focus area for the project. AECO, which represents the majority of expedition cruise operators that sail in Arctic waters, will work closely with authorities, SAR responders and researchers to determine how SAR preparedness and response can be strengthened and developed.

Important initiative

The expedition cruise industry welcomes the opportunity to contribute to safe Arctic navigation through dialogue and innovation.

“In a time of increased activity in the Arctic, the ARCSAR project is an important and timely initiative. The expedition cruise industry is already working closely with Arctic SAR entities, and this network will make it possible to take full advantage of the knowledge, experience and best practices we are identifying,” says Frigg Jørgensen, Executive director of AECO.

Live exercise

Jørgensen underlines that passenger vessels represent an important asset in Arctic marine preparedness.

“During search and rescue operations in remote parts of the Arctic, expedition cruise ships can be the first to arrive on site. Cruise ships carry food, water, medical supplies, doctors, numerous high speed small vessels and other resources that are useful in SAR operations. Previous tabletop exercises organized by AECO and SAR entities have shown that there is a potential for making better use of these resources. ARCSAR’s planned live exercise will be a valuable opportunity to continue to learn and improve cooperation,” says Jørgensen.

Swedish cruise operator and AECO member PolarQuest is also part of the ARCSAR network and will most likely supply the vessel which will be used during the live exercise. The time and location of the exercise is yet to be determined.

ARCSAR was recently granted €3.5 million in EU funding, and will involve partners from Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, the U.S., Canada, Russia, Italy, Germany, UK, Ireland and New Zealand.

Suggested illustration photo



Photo caption: The expedition cruise industry and SAR responders will carry out a live exercise on board a passenger vessel sailing in Arctic waters. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Grant DeVuyst, via Wikimedia Commons.

High resolution illustration image can be downloaded here:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0a/Coast_Guard_participates_in_joint_Arctic_search_and_rescue_exercise_150713-G-YE680-142.jpg

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 close to 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.

ARCSAR

The ARCSAR project 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 following organizations will be involved in ARCSAR's Arctic and North Atlantic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network:

JRCC North-Norway, Landhelgisgæsla Íslands (Icelandic Coast Guard), MRCC Torshavn, Maritime and Coastguard Agency UK, Center for Arctic Study and Policy US, Maritimt Forum Nord SA, RCCNZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Rettung Schiffbrüchiger, Norwegian Coast Guard, Norwegian Coastal Administration, MET Norway, Nord University, University of Portsmouth Higher Education Corporation UK, Lapin Ammattikorkeakoulu, Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, Cork Institute of Technology, E-GEOS SPA IT, Admiral Makarov State University Maritime and Inland Shipping, Laurea-Ammattikorkeakoulu, Memorial University of Newfoundland and PolarQuest AB.