

Guidelines for researchers in Svalbard

The Svalbard Environment Act and associated regulations regulate which type of activity is subject to application. The Act has provisions on everything from flora and fauna, cultural heritage, spatial planning, and various activities with consequences for the environment, both encroachment, pollution, and traffic. Not all research activities on Svalbard require an application. Whether a measure is subject to application depends on how extensive the measure is, and what impact it has on the natural environment. Smaller, temporary installations without terrain interventions, water samples and smaller rock samples are examples of measures that do not require a permit. Otherwise, reference is made to the provisions of the Svalbard Environment Act.

Registration and reporting in the Research in Svalbard database

The project must be registered in Research in Svalbard (RiS), with all requested information. The project manager must investigate in RiS whether there are other projects with which it might be appropriate to collaborate. You must apply to the Governor of Svalbard via the RiS database for a research permit.

Reporting to the Governor after fieldwork is completed must also be done through the RiS database. When you report, you must register collected material and data from the project. Data must be of a quality that makes it accessible, retrievable, interactive, and reusable in line with the international FAIR principles.

Notification and reporting of tour plans

If you are going on fieldwork outside Management Area 10 cf. FOR-1991-10-18-671 §3 letter c, you have an obligation to report to the Governor of Svalbard. The Governor lays down requirements for what such a message must contain. For a group, it is sufficient to send a joint registration form. The notification must be sent electronically via our notification form (<https://skjema.no/sysselmesteren/individuelle>). The field work must not start until you have received a reply to the message from the Governor.

After fieldwork is completed, field days must be registered in our reporting form (<https://skjema.no/sysselmesteren/turrapportering>).

Insurance

Individual travellers must normally have insurance or a bank guarantee that covers any search, rescue operations and medical transport (SAR) that may be necessary in connection with trips to Svalbard. However, it is expected that researchers and students are covered through the fact that the research institutions are self-insurers, and we therefore do not require separate SAR insurance for researchers going out into the field.

Participants in the field work

For security reasons, among other things, the Governor needs to know who is participating in the field work. Make sure that all the participants are included in the RiS registration and possibly in the notification of trip plans.

Visa requirement

Persons with visa requirements for Schengen must apply for a visa well in advance of their journey. The application is submitted to the nearest Norwegian embassy or consulate. When entering Svalbard, one leaves the Schengen territory, and it is therefore important that permission to enter Schengen is applied for **twice**, once on the journey up to Svalbard and once on the return journey. More information can be found on the Directorate of Immigration's website: [Svalbard - Visa and residence requirements - UDI](#).

The field period

For reasons of safety and consideration for the natural environment, among other things, the Governor needs to know where and when the fieldwork is taking place. Before you apply, you must decide whether the fieldwork is planned to be carried out within restricted areas. If that is the case, you must consider other options, e.g., to move the field work in time or to another location. Make sure that the planned fieldwork is registered in the RiS database. One fieldwork per location must be registered. Remember that the field period(s) are not necessarily the same as the project period (the total period the project is in progress).

Location

Enter the specific area for the field work in the Research in Svalbard database. Be as precise as possible. If you are going to carry out fieldwork in several locations, you must ensure that all are registered. There are different provisions that apply within and outside management area 10, and within the various protected areas.

Within management area 10, there is no special registration for travellers. Outside management area 10, the Governor's registration form for individual travellers is required.

If you want to carry out fieldwork within national parks or nature reserves, you must comply with the protected area's regulations. These vary for the different conservation areas. Travel and field work in such areas usually require permission from the Governor, and you must apply for exemption from specific provisions and justify why the work must be done in the conservation area. Projects that can just as easily be carried out outside protected areas must be located in non-protected areas. In some protected areas, traffic is prohibited for all or part of the year.

Basically, all flora and fauna with eggs, nests and dens are protected (§ 25 Svalbard Environment Act).

Flora

It is forbidden to damage or pick plants on Svalbard according to § 28 of the Svalbard Environment Act. Collection of mushrooms, and of seaweed and kelp for private use, is permitted. Collection of plants for research or teaching is permitted if this does not significantly interfere with the population on site. All collection of flora that can make a significant impact on the population on the site must have a permit from the Governor in accordance with Section 29 of the Svalbard Environment Act.

Moving plants must have a permit from the Norwegian Environment Agency. Import of plants to Svalbard must have a permit from the Norwegian Environment Agency pursuant to §26 of the Svalbard Environment Act. When exporting plant material from Svalbard to Norway, a separate permit is not required for naturally occurring plants from Svalbard. For other plants, you must contact the Governor. For onward transport to other countries, contact the customs authority in the relevant country.

Fauna

The rules regarding the disturbance of wildlife are very strict and also cover handling and collection. It is forbidden to move fallen game, animals that have died by themselves in the wild or parts of such. Exceptions are naturally felled reindeer antlers. Report to the Governor if you make interesting discoveries.

All disturbance of fauna requires permission from the Governor in accordance with Section 30 of the Svalbard Environment Act. Avoid all unnecessary disturbance.

Handling, marking and instrumentation of animals must be approved by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority before the application is sent to the Governor. The processing time at the Norwegian Food Safety Authority can be long, so allow plenty of time.

Moving fauna requires permission from the Norwegian Environment Agency. Import of fauna to Svalbard also requires a permit from the Norwegian Environment Agency, § 26 of the Svalbard Environment Act. Various regulations apply to the export of zoological material, and some require approval from the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. The Norwegian Environment Agency processes applications for the export of material from CITES-listed species.

Cultural monuments

All fixed and loose cultural monuments from before 1946 are automatically protected, cf. the Svalbard Environment Act, chapter V. The protection includes all traces of human activity, such as buildings and structures (both standing, ruins and tufts), graves and all other structures and objects made by humans. Human graves are protected regardless of age, and this also applies to skeletal remains from whales and walruses at slaughter sites and skeletal remains of polar bears at self-shot boxes.

Around all permanent cultural monuments there is a 100-meter security zone in all directions. The protection zone is just as protected as the cultural heritage itself, and both parts are shown on the map in the RiS database (remember to zoom in well to see these). It is forbidden to set up camp and burn fires within the security zone. It is also not allowed to move automatically protected cultural monuments, even if they are found on the beach or other exposed places. If in doubt, assume that the object is protected.

If the requested fieldwork affects protected cultural monuments or protection zones around them, it is necessary to apply for a dispensation from Section 42 of the Svalbard Environment Act. The application must contain detailed information about all planned physical interventions in the area with protected cultural monuments and associated protection zones:

- Research installations: location (coordinates or detailed map section showing all the installations), size and foundation type.
- Sampling:
 - Type of samples, number, and volume
 - Location, size and depth of test routes
 - Should samples be taken from protected cultural monuments (buildings, facilities, structures, etc.)?
 - Should the samples be taken out of Svalbard for analysis?
- Camp: exact location and size (number of tents and other facilities/structures)

The application must be sent to the Governor who prepares a recommendation before it is forwarded to the National Archives. It is the Directorate for Cultural Heritage that makes decisions in such cases, and plenty of time must be calculated before the application is fully processed.

Geology / terrain intervention / seismic

In principle, a permit is not required for the collection of loose stones but examine the protection regulations that apply to the area from which the samples are to be collected. There are somewhat different regulations in the different protected areas. A prerequisite is that the collection is not so extensive that it can be said to affect the natural environment in the area. Larger collections are therefore subject to application. Collection of fossils is only permitted outside protected areas. Within protected areas, such collection is subject to application.

For geological work that involves terrain intervention larger than 20x20 cm, you must have a permit from the Governor in accordance with Section 57 of the Svalbard Environment Act. If the terrain intervention affects areas with protected cultural monuments, this is subject to application (see section on cultural monuments).

Soil, ice, snow, water samples

For smaller soil samples (< 1 l and fewer than 10) and the extraction of ice cores from glaciers, a permit is not required in principle, nor for the extraction of snow samples and water samples (salt and fresh water). Permission for soil samples is nevertheless required if the extraction is extensive. A permit is also required when removing ice cores if mechanical or motorized equipment is to be used.

If the taking of soil samples affects areas with protected cultural heritage, this requires an application (see section on cultural heritage).

Contamination

No one must have or do anything that could cause a risk of pollution to the natural environment, and it is prohibited to release environmental toxins into the environment, cf. Svalbard Environment Act §§ 65 and 66. In practice, this means that it is not permitted to release any substances or products in nature that may entail a risk of damage to the environment. If substances or products are to be used that may have an environmental consequence, then this must be applied for. Information about a substance or product being harmful to the environment appears, for example, of the labelling and classification of the product data sheet.

Fuel storage

If you plan to establish a fuel depot on Svalbard, you need permission from the Governor. Note that you also need a permit to set out jerry cans. You can apply for a fuel depot electronically on the Governor's website. You must enter the establishment of a fuel depot in the application that you send to the Governor via the RiS database.

The fuel depot must not be located near protected cultural monuments or within their protection zones (see section on cultural monuments).

Installations - deployment and acquisition

If you plan to set up installations, you must apply for permits to the Governor. The Svalbard Environment Act applies to all of Svalbard. All major installations outside the planning areas with an approved site plan require a permit from the Governor in accordance with Section 57 of the Svalbard Environment Act. If the installation is to be placed in an area with protected cultural monuments, this

is subject to application (see section on cultural monuments). Remember to indicate the exact location on the map. All installations must be registered in RiS.

The three largest settlements on Svalbard and the areas around them are regulated by land-use plans: Longyearbyen, Ny-Ålesund and Barentsburg. Measures and installations within these planning areas must be in line with the land-use plan and possibly have permission from the planning authority. Therefore, first investigate whether the measure is in line with the current land-use plan and submit a notification or application to the planning authority. If you are in doubt, contact the Longyearbyen local council in Longyearbyen, Kings Bay AS in Ny-Ålesund and the Governor for measures in Barentsburg. Aside from the Longyearbyen local council in Longyearbyen, the Governor is the planning authority in the planning areas. The planning authority can also help you with practical questions. Installations and other measures must also have permission from the landowner.

Transportation

Depending on your transport needs, you may need several permits. Note that permits are required for all helicopter landings and cargo drops, also on sea ice or on vessels. It is important that the transport is planned thoroughly, so that the applications and permits cover the need. There is an obligation to report for all traffic outside Management area 10. For snowmobiling outside Management area 10, all visitors must have permission from the Governor.

UAV

The use of drones does not currently require a permit from the Governor, but it is forbidden to disturb wildlife on Svalbard, cf. §§ 5 and 30 of the Svalbard Environment Act.

If you are going to fly a drone, you must familiarize yourself with and follow the rules for drone flying. In addition, there are requirements for the pilot's competence. The requirements increase in line with the risk of flying. The Norwegian Civil Aviation Authority administers the provisions on drones and model aircraft: <https://luftfartstilsynet.no/en/drones/>

The National Security Authority (NSM) and the Norwegian Data Protection Authority provide information on which rules apply to filming and photography from the air. More information can be found here: <https://nsm.no/areas-of-expertise/physical-security/airborne-sensor-systems/> and here: <https://www.datatilsynet.no/personvern-pa-ulike-omrader/overvaking-og-sporing/droner---hva-er-lov/> (The Norwegian Data Protection Authority).

In Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund, it is not permitted to fly drones closer than 5 km to the airport, unless permission has been granted from the control tower. The pilot must obtain permission himself for each flight. Ny-Ålesund also has a zone of 20 km around the city with radio silence. This means that in practice there is a ban on flying drones in Ny-Ålesund and in the entire Kongsfjorden. In order to be able to fly a drone in Ny-Ålesund, permission must therefore be applied for from the National Communications Authority (NKOM). Prior to the application, the Mapping Authority must be contacted so that the drone flight is coordinated with the planned listening activity. For more information about radio silence, contact Kings Bay AS, NKOM and the Mapping Authority. You can also find useful information here: [Rules for UAVs \(kingsbay.no\)](https://nyalesundresearch.no/research-and-monitoring/researchers-guide/using-air-space/) and here: <https://nyalesundresearch.no/research-and-monitoring/researchers-guide/using-air-space/> (nyalesundresearch.no).

Camp and tenting

Requirements for camping and camping are regulated in the Camping Regulations for Svalbard, as well as in the provisions of the Svalbard Environment Act. You must have permission from the Governor to stay for more than a week in the same locality. Remember the distance requirements to cultural monuments. The security zone around permanent cultural monuments is 100 meters and is marked on the map in the RiS database (see section on cultural monuments).

Tenting or camping must be carried out in such a way that damage or wear and tear on vegetation is avoided to the greatest extent possible. Tents and other installations must, as far as possible, be placed on land free of vegetation.

Safety

Anyone who travels outside settlements, with the exception of visitors and permanent residents who take part in organized tours, must have knowledge of protection against polar bear attacks. Necessary measures must be taken to avoid the risk of attack by polar bears and to be able to ward off such an attack without harming or killing the animal.

Anyone who travels outside settlements, with the exception of visitors and permanent residents who take part in organized tours, must have suitable means of scaring and chasing polar bears. It is mandatory to secure campsites against polar bears. We strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with potential dangers on Svalbard and current preventive safety measures. Be sure you are familiar with the use of weapons and flare guns. We recommend that everyone who is going out in the field take a safety course. Responsible handling of weapons is important, both for your own safety, that of other people and the safety of polar bears.

It is a requirement that emergency beacon transmitters are present on all travels outside Management area 10 and that the Governor must know the identity of the transmitters. This will appear on the registration form.