



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen ladies get ready to call to order the 10th annual World International Female Arctic Lutfisklag meeting Saturday at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel, which includes kicking out the press.

Fish tale a stinky lye

Longyearbyen's lady lutfisk lovers meet at 10th annual bash doing ... only they know what

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Not that the guys should worry or anything, but 100 or so of the women spent the weekend hoping for the chance to spend a night with another man.

Only they know who will get lucky (yes, a future-tense reference to the guaranteed trust) and be required to tell the tale before the same group next year. And forget about learning the

rest of the secrets going on inside that room, except for two things: They'll be wearing hats and dining on the one dish "The Man Who Ate Everything" refuses to eat.

The dedicated dames gathered Saturday for the 10th annual World International Female Arctic Lutfisklag (WIFAL) meeting. The agenda, to the extent it is made public, includes a secret entertainment guest and a lottery where the grand prize is a blind date.

"If we as a team win I feel sorry for this guy," said Unni Johansen, attending her third meeting with a group of four family members and friends.

See WIFAL, page 4

Forced by fire to flee?

Numerous changes sought at power plant after blaze puts city at serious risk of evacuation

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A fire at Longyearbyen's power plant in December could have quickly turned into a situation that would have forced an evacuation of the city, according to officials asking for major changes at the facility.

The actual impact of the fire the plant's roof was minimal, with power flowing uninterrupted from a backup facility to nearly all residents. But both the main and backup plants have flaws that could have been disastrous with a simple twist of fate.

"If it had been windy or very cold the risk would have been much greater," said Marianne Aasen, administrative director for Bydrift, the city's infrastructure agency.

Merely having the fire danger spread to a room where engineers were controlling the backup plant would have likely turned the threat to reality, Aasen wrote in a letter to Norway's Ministry of Justice and Public Security,

"If we had been forced to evacuate the control room due to the danger to the staff we would not have been able to manage the reserve

See EVACUATE, page 4

Inside

Elvis alive, coming incog as a geek
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- C. Kristoffersen fourth in Troms Labor vote
- Bydrift chairman still opposes grinder mandate
- Man breaks legs in snowmobile accident
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Put kindly, film fest is explosive

TIFF in Svalbard bombs at box office, but organizers call it a success and see hope for future

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A very cold, hard fact: The regular Sunday night movie apparently got a larger audience than all ten screenings combined during a four-day film festival that ended the same evening.

But an admission of failure isn't coming from organizers of the Tromsø International Film Festival in Svalbard, even though the best

See MOVIES, page 3



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A sparse audience gathers Friday evening at Kulturhuset for a movie during the Tromsø International Film Festival in Svalbard.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

'Adorable' animals or 'frozen food?'



NICOLAS LECOMTE / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

A rock ptarmigan and reindeer forage for food during wet winter weather in Svalbard. A study determining such conditions cause herbivore populations to dwindle, triggering a chain reaction affecting multiple species in the food chain, is getting widespread publicity and quirky headlines due to the "adorable" Arctic animals affected. Details of the study are at <http://tinyurl.com/agx4d8o>.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Being the mastermorons of this fishwrap, we're obviously big fans of freebies (another way of saying we couldn't get people to pay for copies at gunpoint). We're also diehard computer nerds who've heartily embraced not paying for software since about the age of 12. So we've got a geek arousal about **an open-source software summit featuring some of computing's biggest names March 5 and 6 in Tromsø and Longyearbyen where, among other topics, a separate internet domain for Svalbard will be discussed.** Among the guests is open-source pioneer Richard Stallmann who "is as close we get Elvis in this context," said Morten Amundsen, director of the Norwegian Open Source Competence Center, in an interview with *Nordlys*. Representatives from Google Maps are also scheduled to expand the local Street View and other features that went online last year ... Meanwhile, those former Soviet communists continue heartily embracing the money-making glories of capitalism with a draft federal law on Russia's Arctic zone published this week. Along with reasonable-sounding concepts such as mandatory state environmental evaluation and banning privatized air transport facilities (although we'd like to see the fine print), it also declares **Russian citizens and legal entities registered in Svalbard have the right to develop the zone's offshore resources.** Um, yeah, they say it can't be in violation of treaties Russia has recognized, but since their opinions on rights and boundaries differs massively from Norway's that could make things interesting in a hurry ... One reason film festivals flop in Longyearbyen, organizers say, is it's hard finding dates that don't clash with the crowded dark-season



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Gutless: We will never, ever criticize children performing in a talent show again.

cultural calendar. The most popular of those events may be **the annual UKM youth talent competition at 5 p.m. Sunday at Kulturhuset**, since obviously every peer and parent will pack the theater to see who goes on to the regional and possibly national stages. Also obvious is anyone not on the judging panel would have to be a complete idiot to critically review kids brave enough to take the stage, a mea culpa we'll be writing until the end of time after making that our first act of journalism here years ago ... Finally, it's not local, but it's in the Norwegian Arctic and so mind-bogglingly weird that's enough for our prurient interests. **The Brattli Tunnel in Tysfjord will likely be closed for several weeks due to a 27-ton truckload of brunost catching fire**, since the caramelized brown goat cheese emits toxic gas when ablaze. Kjell Bjoern Vinje of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration told the BBC said it was the first time he could remember cheese catching fire on Norwegian roads. "I didn't know that brown cheese burns so well," he said.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Directors Nick Bonner, left, and Anja Daelemans, center, discuss making the movie "Comrade Kim Goes Flying" with NRK journalist Kjersti Strømmen at Longyearbyen Library on Saturday during the Tromsø International Film Festival in Svalbard. The movie is the first fictional feature with an all-Korean cast co-produced with partners from Western countries and shot inside North Korea. Bonner, who has participated in three other film projects in North Korea, said "Comrade Kim" is meant to be entertaining, not a realistic depiction of politics and everyday life in the country. The film, which tells the story of a female coal miner who dreams of being a circus acrobat, defies tradition by featuring surreal hues and a strong female lead character. "The whole feeling is you're in a slightly unreal world," Bonner said. "This shouldn't be happening, but it is happening."

Hope for film fest, despite struggles

MOVIES, from page 1

screenings struggled to top 20 viewers – many of them journalists and festival officials – and the worst attracted one person.

"I think we need time, more years," said Igor Shaytanov, the festival's co-producer, adding the Svalbard festival is new and needs to build a local following.

"I think the film program was very good," he said, although he'd like to see future festivals expand with more events.

It's the second time in about two years a film festival by the organizing group, CinemArctic, has flopped. The first (and perhaps only) festival using the group's name featured a similar program and lack of attendance in October of 2011. That festival was further plagued by organizational chaos until the opening day.

The result, officials said then, was a scaled-down festival intended to save some contributed funds to boost a subsequent festival. But a second CinemArctic in 2012 was called off and the decision to proceed with this year's festival wasn't reached until November.

The revised concept was to make the Svalbard event a "satellite" to the much larger and

world-renowned TIFF in Tromsø. A subset of TIFF films was screened, including the same opening and closing movies, and two directors of a film shot in North Korea participated in a discussion about the project.

But the largest audience may have been opening night, when an invitation-only opening reception included two tickets to opening film. Many invitees remained for the evening's other screening of two short Svalbard documentaries including "Ghost Radio Hunter," featuring the husband of festival co-producer and famed pop musician Aggie Peterson.

One problem, organizers said during both local film festivals, is finding dates that don't conflict with other events in Longyearbyen's packed cultural calendar at this time of year. But it's clear a large audience for movies exists, as "Les Misérables" played to a full theater Sunday only minutes after the last festival film ended.

TIFF Director Martha Otte, in an e-mail interview, stated this year's festival is still being evaluated and local CinemArctic officials will determine the event's future.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Kristoffersen gets fourth spot in Troms Labor Party vote

Christin Kristoffersen was voted the fourth-ranked candidate during the Troms Labor Party's nominating meeting Saturday in Tromsø, almost certainly knocking Longyearbyen's top politician out of contention for a seat in Parliament this fall. Martin Henriksen received 69 votes for the top-ranked spot, defeating former Tromsø Mayor Herman Kristoffersen who received 33. Tove Karoline Knutsen was chosen as the second-ranked candidate. The regional party is expected to be allocated two Parliament seats after the fall election. The nominated vote occurred more than a month after originally scheduled due to a sex scandal that resulted in the resignation of former top-ranked candidate Roger Ingebrigtsen. Some party members strongly opposed Henriksen in the aftermath, claiming he was behind the scandal, resulting in a late effort to promote Christin Kristoffersen as the top-ranked candidate.

Bydrift chair rejects claims new food grinders are OK

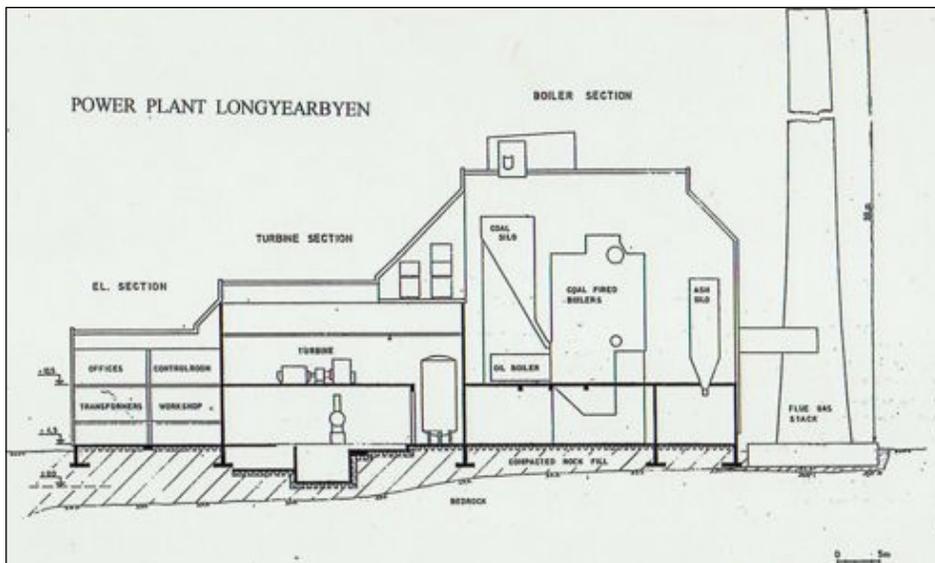
The chairman of Longyearbyen's infrastructure agency is opposing the organization's mandate that food grinders be installed in the sinks of residences. Heinrich Eggenfellner complained in November that mills installed in a building he owns were defective and replacement units, obtained by the city at a higher price, had virtually identical parts and construction. He said assurances from other officials at Bydrift, the municipal agency, the replacement mills are of higher quality haven't proved true since then. "In our opinion, the old and the new mill was 99 percent identical," he wrote in a letter to the agency. "The only difference is that the Norwegian importer has double or triple profits compared to the previous importer."

Barentsburg man breaks legs in snowmobiling accident

A Barentsburg man was flown by helicopter to Longyearbyen Hospital on Monday after breaking both of his legs in a snowmobiling accident, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The man, who is Ukrainian, was subsequently flown to Tromsø by air ambulance for further treatment.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High -15C (-22C wind chill), low -18C (-24C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. E winds to 29 km/h. High -17C (-24C wind chill), low -20C (-26C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 29 km/h. High -20C (-26C wind chill), low -23C (-29C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 42 km/h. High -14C (-21C wind chill), low -22C (-29C wind chill). 24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -6C (-12C), -14C (-22C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -5C (-11C), -10C (-13C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -10C (-15C), -12C (-18C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -5C (-12C), -10C (-16C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF TROMSØ

A blueprint of Longyearbyen's main electricity plant shows the boiler section where a fire broke out in the roof in December. The roof is too high for the city fire department's truck lift, one of numerous problems officials say need quick remedies. In addition, concerns are being voiced about operating a backup plant from the control room in the main plant. If the fire had forced engineers to evacuate that room it is likely both plants would have been inoperative, resulting in an evacuation of the city.

Power plant fire exposes risks

EVACUATE, from page 1

unit and monitor remote heat in the city," the Dec. 14 letter states. "This could have quickly given us a very critical situation and full evacuation would quickly become the consequence."

She said the danger, while small under the conditions at the time of the fire, was known then. That contrasts with statements by the Svalbard governor's office, which would be responsible for coordinating an evacuation, that such a possibility was not contemplated.

The backup facility is adjacent to the main plant, putting it at risk if there is a fire at the larger facility, Aasen noted. It is theoretically possible to operate the backup plant independently if engineers manually work all the main lines from outside the building, but electronic controls for the lines are currently in the room at the main plant.

Aasen, who with other local officials met with Justice Ministry representatives in Oslo this week to discuss the situation, said the estimated cost of the recommended changes likely won't be known until February.

Among other improvements sought:

- A fire truck lift able to reach heights of 32 to 34 meters. The current 14-meter lift was unable to reach the plant's roof, let alone fight flames at a safe distance. Longyearbyen's municipal council in December approved 4.5 million kroner for a new lift as a last-minute addition to this year's budget.

- Additional fire hose connections, a larger water supply (and evaluating the possibility of foam), replacing parts of the building with fire-resistant materials, and relocating numerous circuits to outside the building.

- Additional firefighter gear including harnesses, exterior clothing and helmets.
- A separate water main and boiler house for harbor areas near the airport and Store Norske offices. Heating was shut off to those areas during the three days it took to contain the fire and ensure the plant could resume operation safely. They also currently would not have water to fight fires in a similar emergency.

- A mobile boiler house for the city in the event an existing fixed facility catches fire.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

A decade of ladies, lutefisk and liaisons

WIFAL, from page 1

The entrée that unites the women might also cause a guy to blanch, with lutefisk supposedly originating long ago when someone dropped a fish into a lye bucket or sodden wood ash containing lye. But Johansen was among the many who said they genuinely like the much-ridiculed gelatinous grub.

"I do it at home always," she said. "I ate it on Sunday."

The WIFAL meeting at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel went into executive session almost immediately after members began quenching their thirst, denying the media an opportunity to observe how much of a mandate there is for the menu. There was also scant opportunity to ask

members, single and otherwise, about their ideal evening should they win the grand prize.

"I would have a nice meal and a nice story," said Anita Johansen, who's attended "seven or eight" meetings and was wearing a hat made from the WIFAL t-shirts handed out during the evening. "Hopefully it's a nice man."

Grete Haldorsen, one of the organizers of this year's meeting, said the identity of the date isn't determined until after the drawing.

"We try to get a good match," she said.

Is she worried her husband might also be flirting with waywardness during the meeting?

"No," she said. "He's in a cabin."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Jan. 24

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 26

2 p.m.: Presentation about Hanna Resvoll-Holmsen, Svalbard's first female scientist, by author Sigri Sandberg. Longyearbyen Library.

5 p.m.: Spitsbergen Up And Down race from Nybyen to top of Trollsteinen and back via any unmotorized means. Details at www.spitsbergenupanddown.no.

Jan. 27

10 a.m.: Family Mass w/ concert by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: UKM local youth talent competition. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Gangster Squad," U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 28

11 a.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Trivia Quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Jan. 30 - Feb. 3

Polarjazz festival. Details and tickets at polarjazz.no.

Jan. 30

1:55 p.m. (est.): Queen Sonja arrives at Svalbard Airport.

Jan. 31

1:30 p.m.: Local leaders host lunch for Queen Sonja. Huset.

5 p.m.: Queen Sonja debuts her photo exhibit "Tre Reiser – Tre Landskap" ("Three Visits – Three Landscapes") at Galleri Svalbard.

Feb. 4

7 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Russian comforts on Antarctic ice*
- *Norway OKs China in Arctic Council*
- *Arctic food security summit in Nunavut*
- *Polar bear joins Occupy Shell protest*