



# Swine flu arrives in Svalbard

*Many report symptoms within days of first two cases; Tamiflu available as vaccine lacking*

An estimated 20 to 30 Longyearbyen residents have been infected with what appear to be H1N1 flu after two local cases of the disease were confirmed last Thursday, officials said.

None of the cases have required hospitalization or treatment on the mainland, said Aksel Bilicz, a doctor at Longyearbyen Hospital. Eleven people have sought medical treatment at the hospital as of press time, with an estimated 10 to 20 more calling to report symptoms of the disease, also known as swine flu.

"We have not done any tests for swine flu," Bilicz said. "There is an increasing of cases of flu. It is supposed to be swine flu because there is not any other kind of flu right now."

People are generally reporting symptoms similar in severity to traditional flu, Bilicz said.

"They say they are very sick for a couple of days," he said.

An initial shipment of 500 vaccinations has been administered to residents facing the most

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Berit Fosslund, owner of Apotek Spitsbergen, demonstrates the use of a surgical mask available at the pharmacy to help prevent those with swine flu from infecting others. She said 1,300 doses of the treatment medication Tamiflu are also available without a prescription.

## New big band fest not a 'big' big band fest

*85 visiting musicians join locals for four days of jazz and sacred music in 'small' inaugural event*

The plan is to start small, but just the concept of a big band festival makes that kind of difficult.

So organizers know they'll at least have plenty of musicians as more than 100, mostly from other parts of Norway, perform four days of jazz and sacred concerts during the inaugural Storband Weekend starting Thursday.

The lineup includes two visiting big bands plus a choir joining the Longyearbyen Storband for activities that also include a workshop, a ballroom dance and performances



The Vesterålen Storband performs an October benefit concert in Sortland.

aimed at youths.

"We decided to start out with only two bands because it's a size we can handle," said

Hans-Gunnar Skreslett, the festival's director.

Skreslett, who also plays trumpet in the Longyearbyen Storband, said the concept of the festival already existed when he moved to Svalbard a year ago. While jazz fans already can get their fix during the dark season with Polarjazz in February, efforts to add activities during slow periods remains an ongoing process.

There seems to be an appetite for more music in Longyearbyen, with the first Spitsbergen Rock drawing strong crowds earlier this year and receiving a grant from the city this week to stage another festival next year. But Skreslett said there are uncertainties about

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## Schei back on stage with new life

*Singer/pianist performs first show since birth of daughter last year*

Liv Mari Schei hasn't been singing about life in Svalbard the past year so much as discovering it.

Schei, perhaps Longyearbyen's most famous musician, returned to the stage Saturday after a year's absence to focus on her new daughter. The 80-minute concert with cellist Bernt Simen Lund to a full crowd at Brasseri Nansen revisited the stories about life in Svalbard featured on her first two albums.

"I think it's great to be back," she wrote in

**Web exclusive:** Download the MP3 "Sporløst Gikk Tiden" by Liv Mari Schei free at [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net).

an e-mail interview following the concert. "It took time to get used to having children – I actually had plans to return to the cultural life much earlier."

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## Corrections policy

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.

## A ghastly night for prospects



Women from the grave and men with subtle imperfections such as scissors instead of hands mix at a Halloween party Oct. 31 at Barentz Pub. Drinks were served by the Devil's henchmen and costumes ranged from superheroes to an astronaut wearing (cough) moon boots.

## Flu medicine available, shots face delay

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risk from infection. Another shipment is scheduled to arrive in about two weeks, but Bilicz said "that may be delayed a bit."

"They asked me to call back next week," he said.

Norwegian Health Minister Anne-Grete Stroem Erichsen announced the flu medicines Tamiflu and Relenza will be available without a doctor's prescription starting this week. Longyearbyen is receiving 1,300 doses of Tamiflu that will be available starting Thursday, said Berit Fosslund, owner of Apotek Spitsbergen.

Those in high-risk groups, including children and diabetics, should receive priority in getting the medication, Fosslund said. The medicine must be taken within 48 hours of first experiencing symptoms to reduce the flu's severity. It can also help people exposed to those with the flu from becoming infected.

The pharmacy is also selling surgical masks that help prevent those infected from spreading the disease, although she said so far the only sales have been to companies who are required to have them for contingency plans.

Locals infected with the flu should avoid contact with others for seven days, Bilicz said. He said those who must do things like get medicine and essentials when another person is unavailable should wear a surgical mask.

"People think a mask should be worn to prevent getting infected, but it is for people who are infected," he said. Ski masks and similar items residents already likely have can be worn, but are not nearly as effective.

An estimated 100,000 people in Norway have been infected with H1N1 since it appeared earlier this year, with 15 deaths to date. National health officials said 9.1 percent of people seeking medical treatment last week did so for swine flu, compared to 4.1 percent the

previous week. The record for flu treatment is just above 10 percent, which officials expect will be exceeded when the current week's totals are reported next week.

"All the parameters are pointing straight up," said Dr. Bjorn Iversen of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health in an interview with *Nordlys*. "We never expected something like this. It does not appear that the curve will break soon."

Southern Norway has been the most affected, with 12.4 percent of patients seeking treatment diagnosed with the ailment, according to the NIPH. Eastern regions reported 10.2 percent, western areas 8.6 percent and central districts 6.2 percent. The total for the three northernmost counties plus Svalbard is 3.6 percent.

Svalbard officials have issued warnings for several months about the disease due to the large number of international visitors. An online poll in *Svalbardposten* shows 28 percent of 526 respondents are worried about swine flu while 72 percent are not as of this week.

The first two Svalbard cases were officially diagnosed last Thursday, two days after the initial shipment of vaccinations was administered.

"All patients in risk groups that have signed up at the hospital have received the vaccine," the Svalbard governor's office noted in a statement. "In addition, personnel from the hospital, fire department, airport and the governor's office received the vaccine."

All Svalbard residents, including those living in the Russian settlement of Barentsburg, will be offered vaccinations when new supplies arrive, the governor's office stated. Those already vaccinated are supposed to receive a second shot three weeks later, but Bilicz said they may have to wait due to government regulations that all receive an initial dose first.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**



Liv Mari Schei, left, and Bernt Simen Lund perform an Oct. 31 concert at Brasseri Nansen. It was Schei's first full concert since the birth of her daughter, Sigrid Schei Fledsberg, a year ago. Schei is scheduled to perform with guitarist Staffan Johansson for shows Nov. 12 and 13.

## Singer looks to north Norway for new project

SCHEI, from page 1

Schei's return continues Nov. 12 and 13 as she will pair with Swedish guitarist Staffan Johansson for performances scheduled as part of KunstPause Svalbard 2009. The Nov. 12 performance at Galleri Svalbard will be a 20-minute opening night preview while the Nov 13 show at Brasseri Nansen is a full concert.

Her return concert at the restaurant in the Radisson SAS Polar Hotel played to a nearly full crowd seeking a more nuanced evening than the Halloween costume party in the pub down the hall. Her soprano rang clear with little sign of rust, harmonizing smoothly with her piano backings and Lund's interweaving dialect. The songs, while familiar, were well received by the audience, even if not everyone was locked in.

"I think it was nice that there were many who came up the concert," Schei wrote. "There were some who talked loudly. I'm used to it, but the reason is probably they ate dinner and listened to the concert. Then there will be some noise. I got a lot of good feedback, and felt that I and Bernt Simen played well together."

She said she asked Lund to play the duet after he appeared on her 2006 debut album *Solode*. Lund said he met Schei during a concert that year, which led to his playing on the album and subsequent appearance.

"She took a big risk," he said after the recent concert.

"He came up on Friday, and we were rehearsing on Friday and Saturday," Schei wrote. "He also prepared himself much at home." Also, while she was offstage, "I have the piano in the living room and play often."

Schei, who performed in Longyearbyen with Johansson during Solfestuka 2008, said the concerts during KunstPause will feature some similarities and differences.

"It is a more rhythmic concert, but the same songs," she wrote.

Schei is also looking ahead to a new project, although her daughter, Sigrid Schei Fledsberg, isn't the inspiration. Instead she plans to look partially to her past while expanding her musical storytelling beyond Svalbard to "heritage old and new" in places like Bodø, Alta, Tromsø and Kirkenes, the latter being where her father grew up.

"I'm trying to collect money to get a tour of northern Norway," she wrote. "I think it is time to present these stories, which are a cultural treasure, other than just Svalbard."

Biographical information, photos and full-length streaming audio from Schei is available at [www.livmarimusikk.com](http://www.livmarimusikk.com).

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### New rock festival among winners of cultural grants

Spitsbergen Rock is among the noteworthy recipients of more than 2.5 million kroner in welfare and culture grants awarded by Longyearbyen. The rock festival, which debuted this year, received 60,000 kroner to continue the event. The established Polarjazz and Dark Season Blues festivals each received 70,000 kroner, even though the latter missed the Oct. 1 application deadline. Camp Svalbard received the largest grant of 620,000 kroner, with Svalbard Turn receiving 550,000 kroner. A total of 45 applications were received by the deadline, not counting the blues festival, seeking a total of 7.8 million kroner. Eight applicants did not receive any funds.

### Store Norske revives plan to turn Mine 3 into museum

Store Norske is planning to turn Mine 3 into a technical and industrial museum, reviving a proposal originating five years ago. The mine concluded operations in 1996 and Arne Kristoffersen, a miner at the company, initiated the museum efforts. The company decided last fall to close the facility, citing security reasons, but is now prepared to invest as much as 10 million kroner in safety renovations. Store Norske plans to establish a separate company to run the project.

### Tour company, captain go on trial for glacier encounter

A trial began last week in Tromsø for a Dutch tour operator accused of navigating a cruise ship too close to a calving glacier in Hornsund, resulting in 23 people injured when ice and sea water washed over the vessel. Oceanwide Expeditions chartered a Russian ship for the August 2007 voyage and was fined 800,000 kroner for the incident, which the company has not paid. The captain of the ship was also charged and fined 25,000 kroner for negligent navigation, but efforts to serve him with a summons have been unsuccessful.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

### Wednesday

Sleet and freezing rain. E winds at 11 km/h. High -1C (-4C wind chill), low -2C (-6C wind chill).

### Thursday

Partly cloudy. ENE winds at 11 km/h. High 0C (-5C wind chill), low -3C (-6C wind chill).

### Friday

Cloudy with a few flurries. ESE winds at 11 km/h. High -2C (-5C wind chill), low -4C (-6C wind chill).

### Saturday

Snow clearing late. SSW winds at 8 km/h. High -1C (-2C wind chill), low -6C (-6C wind chill).

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, cloudy then snow, -4C (-4C), -8C (-10C); Monday, cloudy, -2C (-6C), -6C (-9C); Tuesday, cloudy with a flurry, -3C (-9C), -7C (-18C); Wednesday, snow and wind, -3C (-13C), -7C (-17C).

Data provided by [AccuWeather.com](http://AccuWeather.com)



The Longyearbyen Storband performs at Huset during the Solfestuka celebration in March. The ensemble will appear Friday and Saturday nights as part of the inaugural Storband Weekend.

## Visiting, local bands bring new vibe

### STORBAND, from page 1

Storband Weekend, in part because as of Tuesday nobody had purchased the 250 kroner passes that provide admission to all concerts, so traffic will essentially be who shows up at the door.

"I'm a little bit nervous about the audience," he said.

The festival is also sandwiched between two already popular events, Dark Season Blues and KunstPause Svalbard. Skreslett said it remains to be seen if that's a blessing because people are already in the mood for such events or a curse from having too many of them at once.

But the interim weekend is still traditionally a slow one, so arranging for inexpensive lodging for the musicians at the Radisson SAS Polar Hotel was possible because "of course they're happy to have this." Also, while travel arrangements to Svalbard aren't the easiest thing for big bands, "You have a lot of musicians who want to come here."

"The situation is these are amateurs, so we have made them really cheap to get," Skreslett said.

Visiting big bands include the Vesterålen Storband from the northwest Norwegian coast and the Drøbak Storband from the southern coast. The latter will join with the Nesodden/Frogn choir at 5 p.m. Saturday at Huset to perform Duke Ellington's "Sacred Music," a work they have collaborated on elsewhere.

The choir will also perform during the liturgy Sunday at Svalbard Church.

The Longyearbyen Big Band may be more familiar to locals, but they will play some new material, including a collaboration with long-time saxophonist Henning Gravrok, as part of Friday's lineup starting at 9:30 p.m. at Brasseri Nansen, Skreslett said.

A number of free events are also scheduled, including an opening jam session starting at 9 p.m. Thursday at Barentz Pub.

### Storband Weekend schedule

#### Thursday

- 9 p.m.: Big band preview concert and jam session. Barentz Pub.

#### Friday

- 11:30 a.m.: Vesterålen Storband concert at Longyearbyen School.
- 3 p.m.: Workshop at Longyearbyen School.
- 5 p.m.: Drøbak Storband concert at UNIS.
- 9:30 p.m. Concerts by the Longyearbyen Storband with Henning Gravrok and the Vesterålen Storband. Brasseri Nansen. Admission 100 kroner.

#### Saturday

- 1 p.m.: Vesterålen Storband performance at Svalbardbutikken.
- 1:30 p.m.: Miniconcert featuring youths from helgas workshop. Lompensenteret.
- 5 p.m.: Duke Ellington's "Sacred Music," performed by the Drøbak Storband and the Nesodden/Frogn choir. Huset. Admission 150 kroner for adults, 100 kroner for youths.
- 10 p.m.: Ballroom dance with three big bands. Brasseri Nansen. Admission 100 kroner.

#### Sunday

- 11 a.m.: Liturgy with performance by the Nesodden/Frogn choir. Svalbard Church.

Passes for all events available for 250 kroner at the Radisson SAS Polar Hotel.

Performances intended for students are scheduled Friday at Longyearbyen School and The University Centre In Svalbard, although Gravrok said others showing up will be admitted. A workshop at Longyearbyen School on Friday afternoon is similarly intended for students. Other free events include miniconcerts Saturday afternoon at Svalbardbutikken and Lompensenteret.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Nov. 5

2 p.m.: Meeting of the culture and leisure committee. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Nov. 5-8

- Storband Weekend: Local and visiting big bands, choirs, workshops and other activities. Full schedule of events at left.

### Nov. 6

- 9 a.m.: Meeting of the board of growth and enterprise. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Nov. 7

Movie marathon, featuring four movies for half price. Huset. Films include:

- Midnight: "Bonson," British action/drama, ages 15 and up. Admission 40 kroner.

- 11 a.m.: "Knerten," Norwegian family film, all ages. Admission 25 kroner.

- 12:30 p.m.: "Up," U.S. animated family film with Norwegian speech, ages 7 and up. Admission 25 kroner.

- 2:30 p.m.: "Coco før Chanel," French drama, all ages. Admission 40 kroner.

### Nov. 8

11 a.m.: Liturgy with guest choir. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Briller," Japanese comedy, all ages. Huset.

### Nov. 9

6 p.m.: Meeting of the Bydrift board. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Nov. 10

10 a.m.: Meeting of the management committee. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Nov. 12-15

KunstPause Svalbard 2009: Concerts, art exhibitions, theater performances and other activities throughout Longyearbyen. Full schedule of events at [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) and in the Nov. 10 issue of *Icepeople*.

## 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:

- *Final pre-Copenhagen talks underway*
- *Brits least concerned about warming*
- *U.S. wanted nukes in Norwegian Arctic*
- *Beijing's first snow is artificially induced*