



# No gear faults on fatal trip

*Rife, bullets and tripwire from expedition attacked by bear OK; human error question lingers*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

No defects have been found with emergency equipment that failed to operate properly

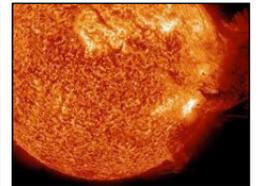
during an expedition attacked by a polar bear this summer, resulting in the death of a teenager and mauling of four other people, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

The question of whether a rifle, ammo and tripwire flare alarm system were used properly by expedition members – who have been accused of lacking proper experience – remains under investigation.

"What we need to do is look is at the different interviews to see how they set it up," said Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim. He said he expects the investigation and recommendation of criminal charges, if any, to be finished within a month.

He said the wide range of potential penalties makes him reluctant to discuss which  
**See INVESTIGATION, page 4**

## A bright, warm dark season (get used to it)



NASA

The Northern Lights shine in the skies surrounding Longyearbyen at about 4 p.m. today, left, as seen from the top of Longyearbreen. The light show came after the strongest solar storm in nine years, above, offering dazzling views throughout the Arctic. The storm also disrupted communications signals, forcing airlines to divert flights over the North Pole to the south. Such storms, along with high local temperatures the past month, are seen as future trends.

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STUARTTHOMSON.NO

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## Mankind's follies, all in 90 minutes

*Rare visit by opera pros from Oslo highlight performance of 'Carmina Burana' on Saturday*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

For those thinking this is snooty entertainment because it's sung in three languages including Latin, it's also the trailer for the movie "Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island."

A rare visit by singers with Norway's biggest opera company headlines Saturday's  
**See CANTANA, page 3**



ERIK BERG / DEN NORSKE OPERA

Kjerstin Løvdal, seen here performing in Oslo, is one of three featured Den Norske Opera & Ballett soloists appearing for Saturday's performance of "Carmina Burana."

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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 massive – but helpful – sea grave



ANGLIN KRAFT / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

The research ship *Helmer Hanssen* lights up the sea during a first-ever voyage north of Svalbard in January by the Norwegian Polar Institute. Among the discoveries was a mass death of zooplankton in Rijpfjorden at Nordaustlandet. The species feed on algae during summer and is prey for species such as herring, pollock and mackerel. "It seems that there is a natural process" for the deaths, said Stig Falk-Pedersen, an NPI researcher, in an interview with NRK: "It provides good food for bottom-dwelling animals."

## Briefly

### Air ambulance fix sought

A series of measures to overcome new regulations that may prevent some air ambulance flights to Svalbard is being implemented, Health North officials said Monday.

The major restrictions prevents flights from operating if temperatures are below 54 degrees Celsius, increase fuel capacity requirements, and impose new visibility and cloud-height limits at Svalbard Airport.

"We are working to get approval of a higher takeoff weight of aircraft," said Øyvind Juell, general manager for Luftambulansetjenesten, in a prepared statement. "We are in dialogue with other air ambulance operators to hire a second air ambulance. The ability to transport patients on commercial flights is also

being discussed with SAS."

Equipping and keeping an air ambulance in Svalbard, rather than having all flights initiate in Tromsø, is also being considered.

### Man fined 8,000 kr. for fire extinguisher vandalism

A man in his 20s was fined 8,000 kroner for emptying a fire extinguisher in a residential complex at Blåmyra 13, coating the entire first floor with chemicals, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

The man was given a chance to explain his actions that occurred just before midnight Jan. 13 before officials imposed the fine for vandalism, according to a prepared statement.

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Facebook is the pacesetter for all that's evil on the internet (soon to be supplanted by Google), but it's still worth noting the Local Paper With A Real Website has its first 1,000 "likes" after signing on recently so readers can comment. Since online commenters are known for being intellectual and rational giants when it comes to opinions and debates, it seems like a good excuse to offer a sampling of the posts that will enhance and destroy reputations for all eternity. For instance, we mused who deserved the Stupidest Person Of the Week after last week's issue featuring: 1) an arrogant tourist who had to be rescued by helicopter for wrecking a snowmobile while not carrying polar bear protection, and 2) a guy who slept through a fire he caused by leaving food in the oven *and while firefighters put it out*. Well, in one of the most-heavily commented stories yet,

Arrogant Guy dominated as Sleeping Guy got no responses. Among the various potshots at the need breed of Clueless Adventure Tourists was a suggestion to "set up a toll road where the trail goes out of town. There they have to show everything from papers, guns, tents, GPS, satellite phone etc." Another heavily commented story came a week ago as local post office officials said they are cracking down on not delivering mail with full addresses because it takes too much time to determine the correct mailbox, even in a town where everyone knows everyone. There wasn't much sympathy, with one person saying a complaining official "should seek a new job when she is so tired of the job and get someone with a better work ethic." Finally, there was universal love for the BBC's "Frozen Planet" series, which was much mocked by the British press for using polar bear footage shot elsewhere.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jan Helge Trøen, left, a conductor with Den Norske Opera & Ballett, guides Longyearbyen singers during a rehearsal of "Carmina Burana" at Huset this week. The performance at 6 p.m. Saturday also features three vocal soloists and two pianists from the Oslo opera company.

## 'Carmina' links opera, beer ads

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performance of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana," which will also feature a choir of about 60 people as the Longyearbyen Blandakor is "reinforced" with other local and mainland singers.

The performance at 6 p.m. at Huset will be conducted by Jan Helge Trøen of Den Norske Opera & Ballett. He is in town working with local singers on the rehearsals that began last fall, some of them lasting five hours.

"I am really looking forward to this because it is not just pieces, but a story," said Elin A. Amundsen, who has sung in a Trondheim choir for 20 years.

She has never sung operatic-style music, but did play the violin in "Carmina Burana" about 30 years ago and said that seems to have been the easier achievement.

"In one way I feel singing is harder because when you play the instrument your fingers you just go," she said. "With your voice you have to control your intonation."

Featured soloists from Den Norske Opera include soprano Kjerstin Løvdal, tenor David Fielder and baritone Trond Halstein Moe. Also performing will be pianists Olivera Marinkovic and Bjarne Sakshaug.

"Carmina Burana" is a scenic cantata featuring 24 of the poems in a medieval collection

by Johann Andreas Schmeller published in 1847. It features a wide variety of themes such as the "fickleness of fortune and wealth, the ephemeral nature of life, the joy of the return of spring, and the pleasures and perils of drinking, gluttony, gambling and lust," according to Wikipedia.

The fast, intense and harmonically simple music structure (relatively speaking) has resulted in its widespread use in pop culture ranging from entrance music for professional wrestlers to beer advertisements.

But the lyrics in German and Latin, plus a bit of Old Provençal, and some challenging vocal passages aren't the easiest thing to master for people more likely to be playing "The Sims Medieval" than singing its background music.

"It's a little difficult because you're using your voice in ways you haven't before," said Marlene Mellum, 16, who's lived in Longyearbyen for the past six years.

Interesting as the music is, however, she said she's not likely to stock up on opera CDs as a result of the experience.

Tickets, available at Huset's cafe and at the door, are 200 kroner for adults and 150 kroner for students. A sellout is expected.

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

### HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

#### First sentences in 11-person drug case; 1 may be expelled

The first sentences have been imposed following the arrest of 11 people last October on drug-related charges, with expulsion of one person still under consideration. A Norwegian man in his 30s was sentenced to 27 hours of community service and confiscation of 1,500 kroner obtained for selling marijuana to two men. A Swedish man in his 20s was sentenced to 30 days in jail and a fine of 7,500 kroner for purchase and use of drugs. Both pleaded guilty to charges in Nord-Troms District Court. Four other people have been fined and cases are pending against the remainder. Penalties under consideration for all are being based largely on the amount of drugs involved, said Svalbard Lt. Gov. Ivar Erik Alfheim. He said one person has been given advance notice of expulsion, which means the person will be allowed to comment before the governor makes a decision. An online *Svalbardposten* poll shows 86 percent favor expulsion for drug crimes.

#### Local politicians trying to set up vocational classes by fall

Local politicians said they will do everything possible to meet the needs of Grade 10 students seeking vocational courses, with two classes possibly offered this fall. The biggest challenge, officials said during a meeting Friday with students at Longyearbyen School, is finding a suitable premises. LNS Spitsbergen has a suitable local workshop, for instance, but the company will not know until April if the space will be available. An alternative may be determining if courses at the school can be arranged.

#### Oxbow appeals coal verdict

Oxbow Coal is appealing the loss of a 400 million kroner lawsuit against Store Norske following the terminal of a contract due to a corruption scandal. The December verdict in Oslo City Court stated Oxbow should have known former Store Norske Director Robert Hermanssen was abusing his position by agreeing to the contract for sales of coal from Svea until 2015. Oxbow's forthrightness in court was also questioned.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High -16C (-24C wind chill), low -20C (-26C wind chill).	Snow. SE winds to 35 km/h. High -4C (-11C wind chill), low -15C (-24C wind chill).	Snow. SE winds at 15 km/h. High -5C (-10C wind chill), low -7C (-13C wind chill).	Snow. SE winds at 15 km/h. High -5C (-11C wind chill), low -6C (-12C wind chill).
Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, snow, -5C (-10C), -6C (-11C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -4C (-9C), -6C (-11C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -5C (-11C), -9C (-16C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, -5C (-12C), -10C (-17C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



STUARTTHOMSON.NO

A lone spectator views the Northern Lights near the bottom of Longyearbreen at about 6 p.m. today. The largest solar storm in nine years produced a show of lights lasting several hours during the late afternoon and early evening. Such activity is expected to intensify until 2013.

## Dark season? Sun thinks not

*Dazzling Northern Lights show follows a month of high temps, with the trend likely to continue*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Considering it isn't supposed to be back from its three-month vacation until the middle of next month, the sun's seems a little hot for something to do these days.

The skies above Longyearbyen lit up for several hours this afternoon and evening as the largest solar storm in nine years produced a dazzling Northern Lights show in Arctic regions worldwide.

The display followed a month where temperatures at Svalbard Airport were 10.1 degrees Celsius above normal.

What's more, the light shows are expected to continue and intensify through 2013. And the warm temperatures are predicted to be around for a much longer time.

There are, of course, downsides to a not-so-dark winter sky and frostbite-free snow-mobiling weather.

The solar storm disrupted communication signals, including those used for internet and

GPS. While there were no serious local incidents of note, commercial airlines worldwide were forced to divert long-haul flights over the North Pole to more southern routes.

As for the drawbacks of long-term warming caused by climate change, including rising sea levels and mass species extinction, well that's been covered – and widely ignored – a lot.

The warming in late December and earlier this month results from the seas north and west of Svalbard still not being covered with ice, said Ketil Isaksen, a researcher with the Norwegian Meteorological Institute, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*. That prevents air from cooling, with mild air from the south an additional factor.

He said that while January's average temperature of minus 4.7 degrees Celsius will be one of the hottest during the past 40 years in Longyearbyen it will not approach the record set in 2006. This year's temperatures are expected to generally remain above normal until April.

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

## Gear not at fault on trip attacked by bear

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might applicable to participants in the ill-fated expedition.

The Aug. 5 attack at Von Postbreen resulting in the death of Horatio Chapple, 17, of the United Kingdom, was the first such fatality in Svalbard since 1995. The tripwire surrounding the site being used by the 13-member British Schools Exploring Society expedition failed to activate when the bear approached and attacked a tent while the campers were sleeping.

A rifle also reportedly failed to fire four times before a leader of the group was able to

shoot and kill the bear.

The incident is being investigated by Norwegian and British officials, with the announcement about the equipment being in working order made by the governor's office Friday.

"It is too early to conclude the importance of this," Alfheim said. "We thought it was important to get the technical information out. What this means for the criminal case, it is too early to say."

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

## What's up

### Jan. 26

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

### Jan. 28

2 p.m.: Presentation about the 1876-78 Norwegian North Sea Expedition by Per Kyrre Reymert. Longyearbyen Library.

6 p.m.: Performance: "Carmina Burana" by Den Norske Opera & Ballett w/ Jan Helge Trøen, plus Longyearbyen choirs. Huset.

### Jan. 29

6 p.m.: Movie: "Drive," U.S. action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Mission Impossible – Ghost Protocol," U.S. action, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 31

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

### Feb. 1-5

PolarJazz festival. Details at [polarjazz.no](http://polarjazz.no) and in Jan. 31 issue of *Icepeople*.

### Feb. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Play," Swedish drama, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Varg Veum – De Døde Har Det Gode," Danish/Norwegian crime/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "Puss In Boots" (3D), U.S. animation/fantasy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 11

Spitsbergen Up and Down 2012. Race to the top of Trollsteinen and back, with various age and gender groups in timed and untimed categories. Starting times range from 1 to 4 p.m. Prizes in "surprise" categories announced after. Details at [spitsbergenupanddown.no](http://spitsbergenupanddown.no).

### Feb. 12

5 p.m.: UKM 2012.

9 p.m.: Movie: "Iron Woman," British drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

## 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:

- *Norway's Arctic at record high for oil bids*
- *What if a cruise ship foundered in Arctic?*
- *Study: Weaker sun won't delay warming*
- *Hungry seals and helmeted penguins*