



Snowmobile riders set off on a trip across Adventdalen this spring. Pollution during peak rider season is nearly that of Zurich, a city with 400,000 residents, according to a new study. Much of that is from older machines that tour operators say will be mostly gone within a few years.

Study: Snowmobiles 'big polluters' here

Older machines largely blamed for air comparable to large cities

Longyearbyen's air pollution during peak snowmobile season in spring is 100 times higher than during the summer, making it comparable to a large European city, according to a new study. But most of it is caused by older machines not expected to be in wide use for long.

There were 1,802 snowmobiles registered on Spitsbergen during the measurements, 30 percent of which were older two-stroke engines that emitted more than 90 percent of the aromatic hydrocarbons detected, according to

the study published in the current issue of *Environmental Science and Technology*. Spring readings were usually low at night and during windy conditions, but peaked during "rush-hour" periods around 9 a.m. and, to a lesser extent, late afternoon when excursions were passing the measurement site.

"Amazingly, average (pollution) mixing ratios in the spring months in Longyearbyen were nearly as high as in Zurich, although the number of inhabitants is more than a factor of

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Starting early on arts of darkness

Planning for KunstPause Svalbard underway in hope of attracting more visitors

It's never too early to start thinking about celebrating Longyearbyen's plunge into total darkness.

Organizers are already announcing preliminary plans for KunstPause Svalbard, an annual event highlighting local art, taking place this year Nov. 12-15. Roger Ødegård Zahl, Longyearbyen's cultural advisor, said the event was launched in 2002 to increase activity during a slow time of year and hopes this year's early start will refocus on that goal.

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Residents and visitors gather around a bonfire in the center of Longyearbyen to hear an outdoor concert during the 2008 KunstPause Svalbard festival.

Former gov. returning to post this fall

Odd Olsen Ingerø to head office after four-year absence; other new senior officials also coming

Meet the new governor, same as the old governor.

Odd Olsen Ingerø, 58, has been named Svalbard's new *sysselemann* for a three-year term starting on an undetermined date later this year. He served in the same position from 2001 to 2005 before becoming head of Norway's criminal police department.



In an interview with *Svalbardposten*, he said the *sysselemann* appointment is "a last chance to come back."

"I left very abruptly and was not completely finished with Svalbard," he told the newspaper. "I think I got really lucky to have the opportunity to come up for a second time."

He replaces Per Sefland, who was appointed to the position in September of 2005 and is departing voluntarily to return to the mainland. Sven Ole Fagernæs served briefly as acting governor after Ingerø's departure.

Also departing this year are two long-serving lieutenants in the governor's office. Petter Braaten is departing in August after eight years to become the state nature supervisor of

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Svalbard must cast early ballots, beginning July 1.
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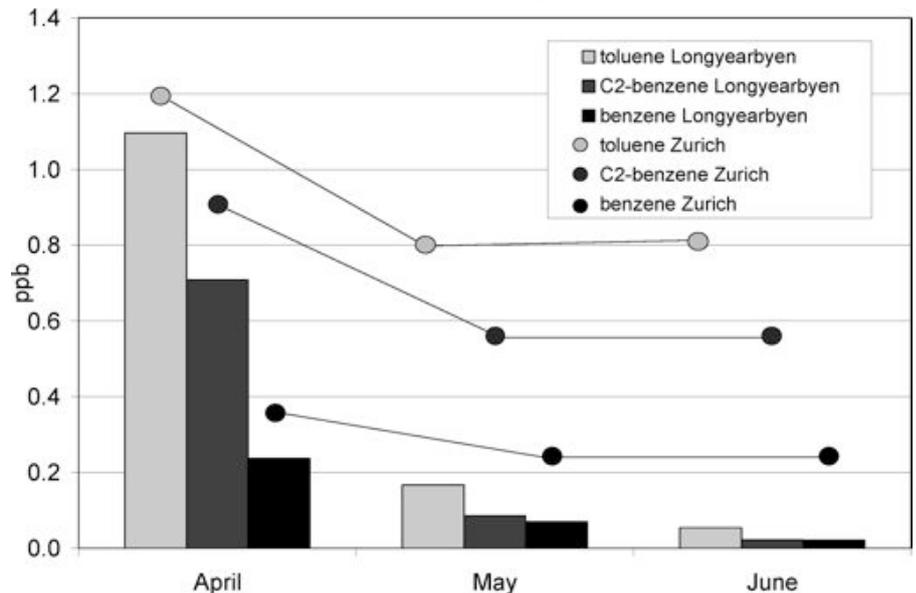
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Pollution comparison



Measurements for three types of pollutants taken in Longyearbyen and Zurich, Switzerland, between April and June of 2007, as published by *Environmental Science and Technology*.

Older snowmobiles blamed for dirty air

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100 higher in Zurich," the study notes.

Measurements were taken between April 15 and June 15 of 2007 outside The University Centre In Svalbard. It's uncertain how pollution then compares to the current year since there are now more than 2,500 registered snowmobiles, but a higher percentage of them have lower-polluting four-stroke engines. Also, the global economic crisis has resulted in some tour operators seeing a reduction of bookings and officials have said there is a growing trend among visitors toward non-motorized activities such as dog sledding.

"It seems as we have done our study just in the transition period between the older and the newer technology," wrote Stefan Reimann, one of the study's three co-authors, in an e-mail responding to questions. "We possibly will redo our analysis next spring and hopefully can provide a more positive picture, with less emissions due to the more modern technology."

Longyearbyen tour operators agreed the findings aren't good, but the situation may largely resolve itself.

"It's a surprising result," said Tore Magne Hoem, production manager for Spitsbergen Travel, Longyearbyen's largest tour agency. "I don't think anyone would have guessed that."

But he said his first thought was about where the readings were taken, noting UNIS is where local pollution would almost certainly be at its highest.

"That's right where the traffic is," he said.

The findings weren't as surprising for Andreas Umbreit, owner of Spitsbergen Tours, which became Longyearbyen's first registered tourism operator in 1987. He said that's partially because of fuel usage statistics he's seen.

"I've seen these figures for many years, and it's clear there is a peak in April and May," he said.

Also, Umbreit said the smell and haze from

air pollution became noticeable during the early- to mid-1990s. He said those irritants appear to have declined during the past two or three years.

"A big difference I have seen is snowmobiles have become stronger, more reliable, and that has led to a much longer range," he said, referring to the period since he started his company. "At the same time, it's not as noisy and smelly as it was."

Umbreit said he doesn't see a need "to make a big fuss" about forcing owners of older scooters to either buy new ones or have emissions-reducing equipment installed on their current machines since it's uncommon to keep one here longer than five years.

"The stinky ones will disappear by themselves," he said.

Hoem said many local snowmobiles are in use only two or three years before being shipped to the mainland for parts because of frequent lengthy trips to places such as Barentsburg.

"I know that we drive longer and more kilometers than anywhere else in the world," he said.

The study is the first about snowmobile air emissions outside of Yellowstone National Park in the U.S. The pollutants known as aromatic hydrocarbons result from incomplete combustion of organic sources such as oil, wood, tobacco and garbage. Among the health risks linked to the chemical are heart disease and cancer.

"It should be noted that the levels of these chemicals in Longyearbyen are well below the federal safety limits as established in the United States," a summary of the study notes.

Total pollution from cars and other motorized vehicles in Longyearbyen was about one-seventh that of snowmobiles.

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



The Valkyrien Allstars fiddle trio, above, and Norwegian pop singer Tonje Unstad, right, are among the musical performers scheduled for this year's KunstPause Svalbard festival Nov. 12-15.

Everyday culture focus of KunstPause

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"We don't get too many outsiders, but every year we hope there will be more," he said. "We're trying to get the tourism companies to make more interest in getting people to visit. That was the intent when they started this... (but) we took over."

The event isn't Longyearbyen's biggest "dark" celebration; that's the annual Dark Season Blues festival, scheduled Oct. 22-25 this year. KunstPause is more relaxed and diverse, promoted as "a break from everyday life and routines," focusing on visual art as well as music and performances.

This year's festival collaborates with the "daily life of cultural heritage" campaign featured by the Svalbard Museum and the Svalbard governor's office. Tove Sundt-Hansen will open KunstPause with the exhibition "Sølvtråden" ("Silver Thread") at Galleri Svalbard, with later events including former minister Wenche Frogn Sellæg lecturing about building in Longyearbyen at the town library and Pernille Skar Nordby discussing similar development in the abandoned Russian mining community of Pyramiden.

Music performances scheduled so far include the Valkyrien Allstars, a fiddle trio "rooted in the traditional Norwegian music," but expanding into avant-garde by including ele-



ments of rock, jazz, blues and soul. They are scheduled to release their second album in August. Also scheduled is northern Norwegian vocalist Tonje Unstad, whose debut album Sett is promoted as "pop music mixed with reggae, jazz and Latino styles, all wrapped in a down-to-Earth acoustic production."

The full KunstPause lineup is scheduled for release in September. Other activities planned or tentatively scheduled include a hymn composition project, a children's theater performance, a snow sculpture course, and a display of old snowscooters and equipment. Plus, of course, a wealth of art exhibitions at galleries throughout town.

"There are a lot of good painters in Longyearbyen and we want them to be in focus," Zahl said.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Russians again seeing to expand helicopter flights

Permission to expand Svalbard helicopter flights beyond mining operations in Barentsburg is being sought by Russian mining company Trust Arktikugol and flight operator Spark Plus. Russians have repeatedly taken up the issue of flights with Norwegian officials, saying restrictions imposed violate the Svalbard Treaty and appear more strict than those applied to Norwegian operators. An official with Norway's civil aviation authority declined to comment about the merits of the application since it is still under consideration, but said a recent court ruling where Russians were penalized for illegal helicopter flights will not be a factor in the decision.

Delays in apartment planning process frustrate builders

Frustration about the length of the planning process for new Haugen family apartments is being expressed by Store Norske officials, saying Longyearbyen's local governor board is making last-minute changes that are unrealistic and expensive. "It is hopeless for us to meet the demands of the local board when the plan is treated like this," said Håvar Fjerdingsøy, the company's housing director. "They can not wait until the plan is completed to take initiatives. Contributions should come through in the process to avoid major delays."

Nobody admitting they put up bird warning sign on road

A road sign near the dog kennels at the edge of Longyearbyen warning about the presence of birds was posted without permission and nobody is claiming responsibility for it, according to the Svalbard governor's office. Local officials endorsed a similar sign from the Longyearbyen Field Biology Society (LoFF) last year, but it was rejected by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. LoFF denies making or putting up the current sign.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Partly sunny. N winds at 16 km/h. High 1C (-2C wind chill), low -2C (-4C wind chill).

Thursday

Mostly sunny. Winds light and variable. High 1C (1C wind chill), low 0C (-1C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy with occasional rain. SE winds 14 km/h. High 3C (2C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).

Saturday

Milder with a few showers. ESE winds at 11 km/h. High 8C (6C wind chill), low 7C (6C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, low clouds, 8C (8C), 5C (5C); Monday, cloudy, 6C (5C), 3C (3C); Tuesday, cloudy, 6C (5C), 0C (0C); Wednesday, cloudy, 2C (2C), 1C (1C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com

Summer vacation



Lars Gustafsson takes a picture in the largely empty town square during a snowstorm June 30. He said the weather when he left his hometown of Gothenburg, Sweden, was "very much like southern Europe," but doesn't mind the wintry welcome on his first trip to Longyearbyen. "I'm not so surprised," he said. "The weather here is very special. It changes fast." He said his plans for the day include a dog sledding trip. Snow is not unusual in Svalbard in June, when the average temperature is 2°C.

Early voting in Svalbard starts July 1

Svalbard residents eligible to vote in Norway's Sept. 14 parliamentary election get a head start on the rest of the country as early ballots will be accepted starting July 1 - but those who wait until election day will find themselves out of luck.

Early ballots can be cast until Sept. 4 at the Svalbard governor's office in Longyearbyen, plus locations in Ny-Ålesund, Hopen, Bear Island and trapping stations. They are not being accepted in Svea.

The extra time for Svalbard allows the governor's office to send the ballots south. But because residents cast votes for the mainland municipality where they are registered, no voting takes place when the rest of the country goes to the polls Sept. 14.

The votes will be tallied according to where residents are registered as of June 30.

Advance balloting for the rest of Norway begins Aug. 10. Municipalities are also allowed to have an open-voting day Sept. 13, a Sunday.

The parliamentary election selects 169 members for four-year terms. Twenty-four political parties are fielding a total of 3,682 candidates, although only seven of those parties won seats during the 2005 election.

Most Norwegians eschew party affiliation, with 9 percent of men and 6 percent of women registered with one in 2004, according to Statistics Norway. In 1980 the totals were 21 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

No single party has had a majority since 1961. The Labor Party, led by current Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, won the most seats in 2005 with 61. The Labour, Socialist Left and Centre parties formed a majority "Red-Green Coalition" during the election.

Voter turnout in the 2005 election was 77.4 percent, the fourth-lowest since World War II. Among other Scandinavian countries, Iceland had 87.7 percent during its past election, Denmark 84.5 percent, Sweden 80.2 percent and Finland 66.7 percent.

New governor brings local, international skills

INGERØ, from page 1

Hallingskarvet National Park. Roar Mordal Hilde departed in June after six years to join his family on the mainland and work with the police department in Molde.

Ingerø was selected ahead of three other candidates, with his previous experience in Svalbard and internationally cited as key reasons. He was a deputy judge in Vardø from 1980-1981 and a police department official at the municipal and national level for more than 20 years. He has worked closely with Russian officials as the head of the East Finnmark po-

lice, and participated in the FBI Academy's senior program in Washington, D.C.

Svalbard's governor reports to the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and is in charge of three departments: environmental conservation, police and administration. The office also numerous other matters such as fire prevention, board of health tasks and civil activities like marriages. He also oversees issues related to sovereignty, making relationships with the Russian community of Barentsburg and other countries with a research presence in the archipelago a significant priority.

What's up

July 5

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Secret Life of Bees," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up, Huset.

July 16

7 p.m.: Exhibit opening, watercolors of Arctic fossils and plants by Hedvig Wright Østern, Galleri Svalbard. On display until Aug. 31.

July 19

8 p.m.: Movie: "Terminator Salvation," U.S. action/adventure, ages 15 and up. Huset.

July 23

7 p.m.: Solo concert by free improvisational jazz pianist Maarten Regtien, Galleri Svalbard.

July 28

8 p.m.: Movie: "Star Trek," U.S. science fiction, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 2

8 p.m.: Movie: "Transformers," U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 9

8 p.m.: Movie: "Knowing," U.S. action/drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 16

8 p.m.: Movie: "Drag Me To Hell," U.S. horror/thriller, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 23

6 p.m.: Movie "Coraline And The Secret Door," U.S. animated fantasy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 27

2 p.m.: Meeting of cultural and leisure enterprise board. Næringsbygget 1, "Tundra" room.

Aug. 28

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

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:

- *Jan Mayan concludes research voyage*
- *Pope: Seed vault a humanitarian boost*
- *U.S. climate bill sparks political furor*
- *Canada declared 'Arctic superpower'*
- *Antarctic band salutes Michael Jackson*