



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the Danish government's planning
and coordination of the emergency
preparedness for major incidents
and disasters

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1. Introduction and conclusion

1.1. Purpose and main conclusion

1. The report is about the ministries' planning and coordination of emergency preparedness for major incidents and disasters and how the government authorities' use their evaluation of major incidents and disasters, and emergency exercises to enhance the preparedness. The examination was initiated in March 2013 by Rigsrevisionen and covers the years 2008-2013.

2. The purpose of the report is to examine whether the government authorities are adequately prepared to tackle major incidents and disasters. The report answers the following questions:

- Are the ministries planning preparedness within their respective remits in a satisfactory manner?
- Is the Danish Emergency Management Agency coordinating the planning of preparedness between the ministries in a satisfactory manner?
- Is emergency management in connection with major incidents and disasters being adequately evaluated by the police, the Danish Emergency Management Agency and the ministries, and do they follow up on the evaluations?

MAIN CONCLUSION

The key ministries and agencies involved in the emergency preparedness like, for instance, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice, have – as prescribed by the Danish Preparedness Act – established plans for emergency management in connection with major incidents and disasters and they have also conducted emergency exercises. The other ministries and agencies involved in the preparedness are not equally well prepared to tackle major incidents and disasters; in spite of the fact that most of the ministries are responsible for functions that are critical to society only a few of them have emergency plans and have conducted emergency exercises.

A strong and coherent system of preparedness relies on the ministries' ability to manage major incidents and disasters. Rigsrevisionen therefore considers it essential that the ministries that have not at this point elaborated emergency preparedness plans – as they are obliged to under the Danish Preparedness Act – take initiative to do so and address the risks within their respective remits.

Definition of major incidents and disasters

There is no fixed definition of major incidents and disasters. Both are events that cause significant and lasting damage. Local authorities are generally not capable of tackling the consequences of major incidents and disasters, which require involvement of central government authorities.

Key ministries responsible for the Danish preparedness

- The PM's office
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Ministry of Justice
- The Ministry of Defence
- The Ministry of Health and Prevention
- The Ministry of the Environment
- The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
- The Ministry of Transport
- The Ministry of Climate, Energy and Building.

Emergency management

When a major incident or disaster occurs, the consequences of the incident must be tackled immediately to ensure that the affected organisation can continue its activities uninterrupted.

The ability to manage emergencies is crucial for the containment of the disaster and for bringing the disaster to an early end.

In the opinion of Rigsrevisionen, effective preparedness planning will have a positive bearing on the authorities' ability to manage major incidents and disasters in the best possible manner. Effective preparedness planning does not, however, guarantee that all incidents will be managed in a satisfactory manner, since unforeseen events may occur.

The Danish Emergency Management Agency is – according to the Danish Preparedness Act – responsible for coordinating preparedness planning across the ministries, but the agency has not solved all its tasks in a satisfactory manner. The agency has supported the ministries' preparedness planning through elaboration of common guidance on effective preparedness planning and by providing counselling to the ministries.

Yet, the agency has no general overview of the ministries' preparedness planning and therefore lacks an appropriate basis for assessing cohesion. It follows that the agency has therefore not assessed the cohesion of the preparedness planning in a satisfactory manner.

The Danish Emergency Management Agency is of the opinion that it has not been authorised to obtain an overall view of the ministries' preparedness planning. Rigsrevisionen does not share the agency's opinion that the agency should need formal authorisation to obtain an overall view of the ministries' preparedness planning. On the contrary, Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the obligation to collect knowledge on preparedness planning in all ministerial remits should be considered an inherent part of the agency's coordination responsibilities.

Following an amendment of the Danish Preparedness Act – planned for mid-2014 – all ministries will be required to submit their emergency preparedness plans to the Danish Emergency Management Agency. The Ministry of Defence has informed Rigsrevisionen that this change will have a positive impact on the agency's general overview of the ministries' planning of preparedness and also increase the ministry's focus on how the agency coordinates preparedness planning.

The authorities' evaluation of major incidents and disasters and emergency exercises can be improved; the police and evaluation section of the Danish Emergency Management Agency have not elaborated written evaluations of all major significant incidents that have occurred in Denmark, and less than half of the ministries and agencies have followed up their emergency exercises with evaluation reports on their emergency management. The police and the Danish Emergency Management Agency have, however, evaluated the national emergency management exercises and followed up on lessons learned.

In order to improve the preparedness, the authorities have also followed up on lessons learned in connection with the terrorist acts in Norway in 2011. Rigsrevisionen finds this satisfactory.

Rigsrevisionen finds that in order to ensure that lessons learned are recorded and applied to improve the emergency preparedness, all authorities should, in the future, report in writing on the evaluation of their respective emergency management in connection with major incidents and emergency exercises.