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Views and news from Norway

Norway boosts crisis preparedness

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War in Europe, digital threats and climate change have prompted Norwegian officials to expand their crisis preparedness guidelines and even cooperate more closely with the EU. Everyone in the country should now be able to get along without water, electricity, digital communications and electronic payment systems for at least seven days.

That's up from earlier preparedness guidelines that advised Norwegians to have enough food, drink and emergency supplies for three days. Now Norway's civil defense and preparedness agency DSB is urging everyone to be ready for a crisis for much longer.



Here are some of the items that all households are advised to have on hand, and be replenished in the case of a national emergency. PHOTO: DSB/Ivar Kvaal

"We live in a steadily more uneasy world," warns DSB. "Even if most things function as they should in Norway, we must be prepared for extreme weather, pandemics, accidents, sabotage and even war."

The warnings come just as Norway has also entered into a new security and defense cooperation with the EU. That's especially significant since Norway's defense minister, Bjørn Arild Gram, represents the Center Party. It has long been firmly opposed to EU membership for Norway and insists that the country's defense needs are met through NATO.

On Tuesday, however, Gram and Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide of the Labour Party were in Brussels and met with the EU's defense chief Josep Borrell. They then signed a new "partnership agreement" stressing that "security and welfare depend on one another."

Newspaper *Aftenposten* reports that the new agreement confirms the framework for existing cooperation and areas where both the EU and Norway want more regarding long-term support for Ukraine, strengthening critical infrastructure, space exploration, cyber security and how hybrid threats should be handled.

Even the generally anti-EU Center Party had to admit that Norway needed help from the EU (which it got through Sweden, which is a member of the EU) in securing vaccines during the Corona crisis. Opposition parties in Parliament, especially the Liberal Party, have prodded the Labour-Center government into promoting more dialogue with the EU on a security agreement.

Now Norway has one. Not only has its neighbouring Russia's invasion of Ukraine hurled Norway into a new reality, the prospect of Donald Trump returning as US president increases the need for European solutions and cooperation. Defense Minister Gram still stresses that NATO remains the most important factor in Norwegian defense. "At the same time," he said, "the EU is taking the initiative to also take on roles that are important for NATO."

That can include new projects and cooperation within the defense industry. Norway will now be invited to take part in important EU meetings regarding defense- and foreign policy.

Meanwhile, DSB is calling on individual Norwegians to think more about how they can get along if water supplies are cut, if electricity fails or if they can't shop for food for a week. "Power failures can also disrupt sewer systems, medical equipment, battery recharging, electronic payment systems, the Internet, mobile telephone communication, refrigeration systems and means of preparing food," DSB warns, just after powerful rain- and thunderstorms did cut power to thousands in Southern Norway earlier this week.

"Good individual preparedness is an investment in safety and security," DSB stated. "You'd also be contributing to efforts by public authorities to help those who need it most."

DSB issued a new "checklist for your emergency kit," which can be found here *(external link to DSB's website)*. It includes everything from adequate supplies of clean drinking water and food that can be stored at room temperature, to stocks of matches and candles, DAB radios that can run on batteries, necessary supplies of important medicines and first-aid equipment, and fully charged power banks at all times.

Norwegians accustomed to paying for everything digitally have also been advised to have a supply of cash on hand, in small bills and coins.

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