

# Stay Safe in Lapland

Information for visitors and residents



**TOP SAFETY**



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## In Reindeer Territory

### Mind the Reindeer

Reindeer herding is one of the oldest livelihood in Northern Finland and the reindeer are a common sight in Lapland. Roads often cross reindeer grazing areas. During summer, reindeer go near the roads to graze the roadside vegetation and to get away from mosquitoes. In winter, the road offers an easier way for reindeer to move from place to place. If you come across reindeer on the road, give them time to get out of the way.

### How to Avoid a Reindeer Collision

Leave ample time for your journey. Maintain a speed that allows you to control the vehicle in sudden situations, and keep an eye on the roadsides.

**Take heed of reindeer warning signs - they are placed in areas that are highly frequented by reindeer**

If you see one reindeer, a larger herd is probably nearby. Switch on the high beams at the first sign of dusk, as reindeer eyes reflect the light from afar and give you advance warning. In Lapland, it is customary for drivers to warn each other about reindeer ahead by flashing the high beams.

### What to Do in a Reindeer Accident

- Ensure that passing traffic is aware of the incident by placing a warning triangle on the road.
- If the reindeer is lying on the road, move it to the shoulder to prevent further collisions.
- Give first aid to any injured persons, and call the emergency number **112**.
- Mark the site clearly, using an object such as a plastic shopping bag, to help the assessor of the local reindeer cooperative find the place.
- If the reindeer is injured, put it down if you know how to do it.
- You must report the incident to the emergency number **112** even if the collision was light, as the reindeer cooperative assessors will need to track the reindeer down.
- You must not take roadkill with you.
- Report the accident to your insurance provider.

## Moving on Land and Water

### On a Snowmobile

The maximum allowable speed on snowmobile routes is 60 km/h (37 mph), or 40 km/h (25 mph) if carrying persons in a trailer or sleigh. A helmet is compulsory for the driver and passenger travelling on the snowmobile. Passengers in an uncovered sleigh must also wear helmets.

Snowmobile routes are subject to the Finnish Road Traffic Act, and driving these routes on other vehicles, such as quad bikes or motocross bikes, is prohibited.

Be careful to avoid weak ice, especially near strong currents, narrow waterway passages and under bridges. The majority of serious snowmobile accidents and fatalities happen on ice. Remember that the ice can suddenly present uneven surfaces, ice mounds, cracks or hollow ice (a void between the ice sheet and the water surface below it).

**Take extra care when driving on ice**

Don't drive if you have been drinking alcohol. Drink driving regulations apply to snowmobile drivers travelling off-road, just as they apply to the drivers of cars: the legal drink driving limit is 0.5 parts per mille.

According to the Finnish Off-Road Vehicles Act, snowmobile traffic should primarily be restricted to routes maintained for that purpose. On official snowmobile routes, the driver must have at least a Class T driving licence or equivalent. Drivers must carry the licence with them whilst driving. A driving licence is not required for off-route driving or on ice, but the driver must be at least 15 years of age.

As a rule, snowmobiles are not allowed on the road, but temporary crossing of roads and bridges is allowed. Railways must not be crossed without permission of the rail operator.

### Check Your Speed

The driving speed affects observation, the ability to control the vehicle, and, most importantly, the ability to stop and the severity of consequences in the event of an accident.

**Always maintain the right speed for the conditions**

Drivers must take into account the condition of the road, weather conditions, road surface conditions, visibility and traffic. The driver must be able to bring the vehicle to a stop within visible range and in all foreseen circumstances. When selecting the speed, consider your driving skills, the vehicle, traffic conditions, and vehicle- or road-specific speed limits.

## **Seat Belt**

According to the law, drivers and passengers must use a seat belt in all vehicles and seats where a belt is provided. Failure to use a seat belt is subject to a fine. The use of children's traffic safety equipment is the responsibility of the driver or the child's parent or guardian if he or she is travelling in the vehicle. If a child is under 135 cm (approx. 4 feet 5 inches) tall, an infant carrier or car seat for appropriate weight must be used. Rear facing car seats and carriers are safer for young children.

## **Wear a Reflector in the Dark**

Safety reflectors improve pedestrian visibility on the road. According to the Road Traffic Act, pedestrians must use appropriate reflectors when moving on the road in the dark. The reflector should be attached in a position where it is visible to the driver of an approaching vehicle both when the pedestrian is walking on the road or if he or she is crossing it. Reflectors should also be worn in population centres. In most European countries, a reflective jacket is part of the mandatory in-vehicle equipment. In Finland, it is also advisable to keep one in the car in case of an accident.

**Driving in Lapland winter conditions is very demanding.  
Take the risks seriously.**

- **Ice covered in snow is dangerous.**
- **Black ice, which forms when the temperature is close to zero, is especially dangerous.**
- **Stopping distances are longer on slippery roads.**
- **Maintain longer distances to other vehicles in snowstorms.**
- **A storm can catch you unexpectedly and cause your vehicle to drift sideways (coming to an open space).**
- **The road can become blocked by accumulated snow.**
- **Bridges and low-lying ground are especially dangerous as they are the first to freeze.**
- **When the temperature drops, the road surface can become slippery from snow, sleet or ice.**
- **Risk of accidents increases during dark winter days.**

Winter tyres must be used on vehicles from December until February. Studded tyres can be used between the beginning of November and the first Monday after Easter. They can also be used at other times if weather conditions require. Even the best winter tyres cannot provide the same traction as summer conditions.

## Risk Factors in Traffic

Driving while tired or under the influence increases the risk of accidents. Long periods of wakefulness have the same effect as drinking alcohol. The driver's level of alertness reduces and errors in judgment become more likely.



The legal drink driving limit is 0.5 parts per mille. Exceeding the limit is always a punishable offence, and entrusting a vehicle to a person who is under the influence is also an offence.

The driving ability can be impaired for a number of different reasons. Stress, medication and illegal drugs can also increase the risk of an accident, and the driver may not always be aware of changes in his or her own behaviour.

## Load Your Car the Right Way

By packing your vehicle carefully you can make it safer in unforeseen circumstances. Loose items on the rear window shelf can cause serious injury, even death, in the event of a collision or a sudden stop. Sharp-angled items must not be placed on the rear window. The shelf should be kept as empty as possible.

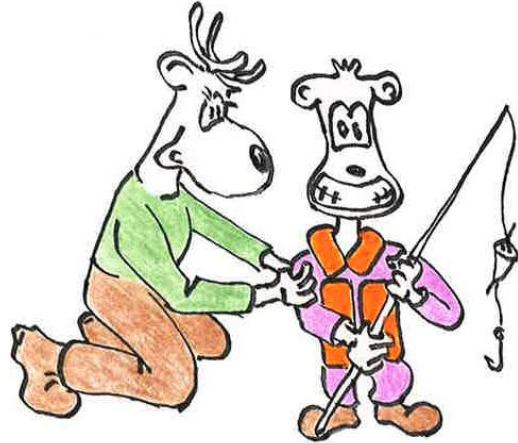
Heaviest items should be placed in the back of the boot, as low and as far towards the front as possible. When packing the boot, be aware of where you are placing items, in order to make important items easily accessible during the journey.

The more securely the items are positioned in the boot, the better they will stay in place even during heavy braking. The warning triangle should be kept in a place where it is quickly accessible.

## Swimming and Boating

Swimming skills are very useful in Finland, the country known as “the land of a thousand lakes”. That said, even the best swimming skills are of no use if you forget the basic safety rules: drunkenness and carelessness are your worst enemies when it comes to spending time in or on the water.

When swimming, you should follow the shoreline and ensure that you can reach the bottom with your feet if you have to. Use common sense and judgment. Never dive head first into unknown or shallow waters.



**Ensure children’s safety in and on water**

Before taking to the water, check the condition of your boat. Make sure that it doesn’t leak and that the equipment is in good condition, oars are intact and the boat has a bailer.

Life jackets should be worn at all times when on water. On power boats, life jackets are compulsory for all passengers. People who are under the influence of alcohol are better off staying on the shore. The legal limit of drink driving a boat is currently 1.00 parts per mille.

If the boat capsizes, stay calm and shout for help. It is usually best to stay near the boat and try to climb on top of it.



## **In the Woods**

### **Everyman's Right**

In Finland, people enjoy the so-called everyman's right or "right to roam". The everyman's right means that all people in Finland can access countryside and wilderness areas regardless of who owns or occupies the land. Visitors to Finland also enjoy everyman's right.

### **Everyman's right in brief:**

#### **You can**

- walk, ski or cycle freely in the countryside, except in gardens, in the immediate vicinity of people's homes, and in fields and plantations which could easily be damaged
- stay or set up camp temporarily in the countryside where access is generally allowed; for example, camping is allowed in most places provided that you choose a site far enough from people's houses
- pick wild berries, mushrooms and flowers
- go angling or ice-fishing (but not in rapids or currents), and
- go boating on waterways, swim or wash in lakes, rivers and the sea, and go on frozen waters

#### **You must not**

- cause disturbance or damage to other people
- disturb or damage birds' nests or their young
- disturb reindeer or game animals
- fell or damage living trees, or collect dried or felled wood, shrubs, moss, etc. on other people's property
- light open fires on other people's property without permission, except in an emergency
- disturb the privacy of people's homes, for example by setting up camp too close to someone's house or by making too much noise
- leave litter
- drive motor vehicles off-road without the land owner's permission
- fish (excluding angling and ice-fishing) or hunt without the relevant permits

## Roadside Parking and Overnight Stays

Staying in roadside parking and rest areas for long periods is not permitted. Parking a motor vehicle off-road or on the roadside is not allowed for long periods or if it causes danger or damage.

However, motor vehicles can be parked near roads in unpopulated areas during activities such as berry picking, provided that it does not cause damage or inconvenience to the land owner.

## Camping and Hiking

Before leaving, you should let someone know where you are planning to go and the estimated time of your return. Take sufficient supplies and equipment even if you are only going on a day trip. Never overestimate your experience. When hiking in a group, plan the route carefully, taking into consideration the skills and fitness level of the weakest group member. Agree in advance on what action should be taken and in what direction you should head if one of your group gets lost.

**Plan your trip carefully  
and be well-prepared!**

Follow a map and keep an eye on what is coming ahead on your route. Estimate how long the journey should take and keep an eye on the time. To avoid getting lost, practise orienteering, map and compass reading in advance. The skill of orienteering requires practice. When moving in wilderness areas, carry an up-to-date and sufficiently accurate map with you.

The risk of getting lost is higher in the dark and during low visibility. If you are unsure, stop immediately and try to determine your location.

## If You Get Lost

- Stay calm
- Have a rest and eat something
- Try to work out your last known location
- Examine the terrain and any landmarks (fells, rivers, roads) and compare them with your map
- Try to determine the points of the compass

## If you still don't know where you are or which direction to take

- Call the emergency number 112
- Find a spot with good visibility
- Set up camp and, if possible, light a fire
- Make yourself as visible as possible: mark the ground, use fire, or place something large and colourful in the terrain (the colour blue is highly visible during the autumn colour season)
- Wait for rescuers

If a person is known to have gotten lost, search parties or patrols are sent out. They walk through the determined area calling the person's name. The members of the search team stay within a few metres of each other to ensure that they don't walk past the missing person who may be unconscious.

## Travelling in Border Areas

If you are planning to travel off-road in a border area, you should contact the nearest Border Guard Station or the command and control centre of the Lapland Border Guard District, and let them know your travel plans.

The notification is for your own safety, as some remote areas may not have mobile phone reception. Tell the border guard the names of the persons travelling, your contact details, the intended route, overnight locations, estimated time of return, and the contact details of a family member to ensure that additional information can be quickly obtained in the event that you get lost. When you come back, don't forget to inform the border guard to let them know of your safe return.

Especially on the eastern border, you should take into account that the Russian border has a Border Zone which must not be entered without a permit. The zone is maximum three kilometres wide and indicated in the terrain with yellow signs and plastic tapes marked with "RAJAVYÖHYKE" (BORDER ZONE). In the waterways the Zone is indicated with yellow buoys, spar buoys and signs.

## In Hunting Season

During hunting seasons, people accessing wilderness areas must exercise caution and wear colourful clothing. The busiest hunting season in Lapland runs from early autumn until December. Hunting in Finland is by licence only.

If you spot hunters in the same area as you, make sure that they have noticed you. It is a good idea to talk to the hunters and find out their plans in order to minimise risk.

## **Mobile Phones and GPS**

You should carry a mobile phone on all trips. Bear in mind that cold weather makes the battery run out faster, and you should avoid unnecessary phone calls when out in sub-zero temperatures. Carrying a spare battery is advisable on longer trips. Avoid making unnecessary phone calls if you are lost or in an emergency situation.

A GPS navigator provides added safety in low visibility conditions or if you are unsure of your location. Use the WGS84 coordinate system, as this is the one used by Finnish authorities.

If you are near a national border, remember that any phone calls you make could be automatically connected via an operator on the other side of the border. In this case, your call charges will be those of the foreign operator. For that reason, you should set the network selection setting to manual instead of automatic, if you want to make sure that you are using a Finnish operator.

## **Other Things to Remember**

Tap water in Finland is safe to drink as is. Water taken from a lake or river should be boiled first.

In some years, there can be a lot of mosquitoes in Lapland in the summer, but they do not spread any kind of disease. You can use mosquito repellents and take antihistamines and other similar products to minimise allergic reactions.

When planning your trip, you should take into account that Lapland is a very sparsely populated area, and the nearest medical centre can be over 100 miles away.

## Fire Safety

### Open Fires

Open fires are permitted only in designated sites. Open fires are not permitted in conditions which present a high risk of wild fire or other danger – for example, during drought, high wind, etc. Don't forget to put the fire out before leaving, using plenty of water. The hot ash can reignite the fire even a day later.

### Camping and Fire

Fire can spread very fast in tents and caravans. For that reason, caravans and tents on campsites must be positioned at least four metres apart. Like in other areas, at campsites, open fires are permitted only in designated sites.

Campers should have easy access to a fire extinguisher, and all family members should know how to use it. Extra care must be taken when using camping stoves, and they must never be used inside tents. Fitted LPG installations are recommended for campers and caravans. Barbecues should be placed on a non-flammable surface and extinguished carefully after use. Smokers must make sure that cigarette butts are properly extinguished and that they don't cause a risk of wild fire.

### Fire Safety in Accommodations

Hire cabin companies and hotels are responsible for maintaining working fire safety equipment and the safety of fireplaces. Responsible accommodation providers have drawn up safety instructions, which are usually placed in a folder or other visible place in the room. It is especially important that electrical equipment and fireplaces are used correctly. Read and follow the instructions carefully.

**Never leave fire unattended**

Find out the address of your place of accommodation in advance in case of an emergency. In well-equipped facilities, the address details and driving instructions are usually provided in a visible place.

It is advisable to test the fire alarms and carbon monoxide alarms (if applicable). Notify the owner or maintenance company of any safety issues on the property. Position barbecues, candles, tea lights, oil lamps etc. in a safe place on a non-flammable surface. Check that they are not too close to flammable materials. Make sure that burnt-out outdoor candles and torches are not spread around in the wind.



Read the instructions on what to do if you discover a fire or if the fire alarm goes off in your place of accommodation. Emergency exit instructions are usually placed on the back of hotel room doors.

### **If You Discover a Fire**

- Rescue any injured persons or those at risk
- Move to a safe location
- Report the fire by calling the emergency number 112
- Put the fire out or close doors to prevent it from spreading
- Accompany the fire brigade to the site

Not all hotels are staffed overnight, and it may take a while for the fire brigade to get to a remote location.

Avoid triggering the fire alarm unnecessarily. The fire alarm can be triggered by smoking in the room, steam coming from a shower or sauna, and excessive smoke from cooking. Fire doors are an important element in the safety of hotels. Never wedge or leave fire doors open unnecessarily.

## Unpredictable Climate

The fell regions have a microclimate, which means that the national weather forecast is not always accurate. Weather conditions can change very rapidly, and you should prepare for all kinds of weather. In Lapland, travelling in fog or heavy snow storms can be very difficult.

### Staying Warm in Sub-Zero Temperatures

Sebum, the natural oil layer on your skin, provides the best protection against the cold. Avoid washing your face or using skin products before going out into sub-zero conditions. Multiple thin, loose layers keep the cold at bay better than a single thick garment, as the air between the layers provides good insulation. Footwear should be spacious and dry. Wool is an excellent material for outdoor activities, as it provides thermal insulation even when wet and it is fire retardant.

Your fingers, toes, cheeks, nose and ears are most susceptible to frostbite, and you need to boost blood circulation in these areas in sub-zero conditions. Use your warm hand to warm up your face frequently. Don't forget to wiggle your fingers and toes.

Smoking increases the risk of frostbite, as nicotine causes veins to contract. Urine production increases in cold weather, which is why it is important to drink a lot and preferably hot drinks. However, you should avoid drinking coffee in sub-zero conditions as it increases your metabolism and causes dehydration.

### Accessing Frozen Waterways

By midwinter, waterways in Lapland are usually covered by thick ice, but in spring, the ice can reduce very quickly around rivers and other currents. Ask your travel organisers or local residents about the conditions in your area.

### If You Fall Through Ice

You should carry ice picks which can help you get out of the water if you fall through ice. If the ice gives way, try to stay calm.

- Call for help and turn towards the direction where you came from
- Remove your shoes, and skis if wearing any
- Break the ice in front of you as far as it will break
- Use swim kicks to raise your body in a horizontal position, and shift your body onto the ice using ice picks, or ski poles if you have them
- Crawl or roll until you are certain that you have reached solid ice

Keep moving and find a warm place as quickly as possible. Do not fall asleep, no matter how tired you feel.

If you can't get out of the water, hang on to the edge of the ice, stay still to reduce heat loss, and call for help.

### **If someone needs your help:**

- Act fast
- Get a long object, such as a rope, pole, tree branch, oar or your jacket
- Approach the ice hole from the direction where the ice is solid, and crawl the last few metres
- If there are several of you, form a human rescue chain



Help the victim move around carefully. Protect the victim from further drop in body temperature and take him or her to the medical centre.

## **Getting Help**

### **Emergency number**

The emergency number 112 is used in Finland and the rest of Europe. The emergency number is free to call, and you don't need to enter an area code when dialling from a mobile phone. You can call the emergency number without entering the phone PIN code.

### **Call the emergency number 112 only in real emergencies:**

- When someone's life or health, property or the environment is under threat or in danger
- Or if there is reason to believe that is the case

You must also call the emergency number if you want to notify the police of a crime that is currently taking place. If you're not sure if the situation is an emergency, it is always better to dial 112 than not.



## Calling the Emergency Number 112

- **Stay calm**
- **Answer the operator's questions**
- **Don't hang up until advised to do so by the operator**

Although the mobile phone network in Finland has good coverage, there are some dead spots. In addition, mobile phones may not work in certain places, or the reception can be poor. In these situations, it may help to move to a higher elevation or an open space. When you remove the SIM card to make an emergency call, the phone automatically finds the nearest available network



## Contacting the Police

### Reporting a Crime

You can report a crime at the nearest police station. In order to investigate a crime, the police will need as many details as possible about the incident and the people involved.

### **The following information is required when reporting a crime:**

- A description of what has happened and how
- Accurate details of the time and place
- The suspect's name, if known
- The suspect's description (age, height, build, facial features, eye colour, teeth, speech/accent, hands, movement, clothing)
- The direction and method of travel
- If the suspect is travelling by vehicle, the registration number and a description (make, colour, model)
- Threat of dangerous (weapons, state of mind, threats, substance abuse, etc.)

Electronic crime reporting is available for minor incidents, which can be reported using the crime report form. The electronic crime report must NOT be used in situations where police assistance is urgently needed or if the police are required to visit the site (in this case, you should call the emergency number 112), if the crime involves breaking and entering, or if the location (town) of the incident is not known or the crime has taken place abroad.

The crime report is submitted to the local police station based on the location specified in the report. Crime reports are usually processed during office hours at the police station.

## **Crime Victim Helpline**

The Riku Victim Support Finland Helpline offers support for crime victims, their relatives and court witnesses. The service is aimed at helping victims cope and ensuring legal protection. If required, you can have a personal support person assigned to you from RIKU.

You can contact the service by telephone or online via the website. RIKU serves people of all nationalities. The service is free of charge with the exception of normal call charges.

## **Reporting a Missing Person**

A missing person report should be filed in person at a police station if possible. The report should be made as soon as possible after the person has gone missing.

### **Information needed for the report:**

- The personal details and a photograph of the missing person
- Physical description and any distinguishing features
- Clothing, equipment and items carried
- Time and place person went missing
- What the person was doing or where he or she was travelling to
- Likely routes of travel
- Vehicle details and description
- The person's health, background, state of mind, plans, funds
- Any places that have already been searched
- Acquaintances the person may visit

The police launch a search operation immediately if the missing person is a child, an elderly or sick person, or if the person is believed to be in danger.

If the person is found or returns home, the police must be immediately notified. Any clues or additional information related to the case must also be immediately reported to the police.

## **Lost Property**

The police maintain a lost property service nationwide. You can query a lost item or take found property to the nearest police station. Lost documents such as passports and driving licences must be reported to the police.

If the owner doesn't reclaim the lost property within three months, the property is transferred to the finder, subject to certain exceptions. If the finder doesn't collect the property within three months of being notified, the property is transferred to the state. The owner of the property has the right to reclaim the property against the costs incurred.

Property found on public transport or in another public area must be handed over to a staff member or the lost property office of the facility. If the owner doesn't collect the property within two weeks, it is handed over to the police.

Low-value items can be kept by the finder if the owner cannot be reasonably determined. Low value items are those which are less than 20 euros in value and which don't have special practical use, sentimental value or other personal value to the owner.

## **Under the Influence in Public**

The maintenance of public order and safety by the police includes taking into custody and monitoring of persons who are under the influence, if deemed necessary. The Finnish act on the taking into custody and care of persons under the influence requires the police to take into custody a person who is unable to look after him/herself or who is causing public disturbance or is in danger of committing a crime.

Persons who are taken into custody while under the influence are usually detained in police cells. Not all police stations are manned round the clock, which means that persons under the influence who are taken into custody sometimes have to be transported over a long distance to the next municipality.

## Enjoy Lapland

Lapland is a safe and pleasant province which offers plenty to see and do. We can all enhance our day-to-day lives and well-being by looking after ourselves and other people. We hope that this booklet has been useful in ensuring that you have a safe journey and making your visit or life in Lapland easier.

The Lapland Police Department (including Maija!), the Regional Rescue Services of Lapland, the Lapland Border Guard District, and the Multidimensional Tourism Institute wish you a safe and pleasant stay in Lapland!

## The Story of Maija the Reindeer

It started as an off-the-cuff joke, but the idea about a “police reindeer” soon got wings - or hooves - when someone at the Lapland Police Department decided to find out if they really could have their own reindeer. A phone call to the Konttaniemi reindeer farm confirmed that it was possible, and soon after, the police adopted a mascot reindeer.

The reindeer selected to join the force was a female born in spring 2009. This sweet girl had grown up in the farm yard, which meant that she was used to being around people and was very tame.

The name for the new member was chosen in a poll of police communications officers: the reindeer was given the name of Maija, a Finnish girl's name and long-established slang for a police van.

Unlike her namesakes, Maija is not black but grey like most reindeer.



Maija made her first public appearance in December 2009 with the national traffic police in the Declaration of Christmas Peace. Since then, Maija has made regular public appearances in various events in Rovaniemi, and she has proven to be an excellent ambassador for traffic safety.

In May 2011, Maija's huge fan base rejoiced the birth of Maija's calf, a beautiful boy reindeer. Although the boy hasn't been given an official name, one of the officers decided to call him Artturi – after Artturi Sakari Reinikainen, a famous police character in Finnish fiction.

And so be it. Maija and Artturi remind their fans about safety when travelling in Lapland, where reindeer are regularly seen on roads. Appearing in illustrated form on the pages of this brochure, Maija the reindeer helps us spread our safety message to all visitors and residents in Lapland.

4 October 2011  
Lapland Police Department

## **Just in case: Important numbers**

### **General Emergency Number 112**

#### ***Lapland Police Department***

Tel. +358 (0)71 87 60321

[www.poliisi.fi/lappi](http://www.poliisi.fi/lappi)

[palaute.lappi@poliisi.fi](mailto:palaute.lappi@poliisi.fi)

#### ***Police Department of Peräpohjola***

Tel. +358 (0)71 87 60331

[www.poliisi.fi/perapohjola](http://www.poliisi.fi/perapohjola)

[palaute.perapohjola@poliisi.fi](mailto:palaute.perapohjola@poliisi.fi)

#### ***Regional Rescue Services of Lapland***

[www.lapinpelastuslaitos.fi](http://www.lapinpelastuslaitos.fi)

#### ***Lapland Border Guard District***

[www.raja.fi/lr](http://www.raja.fi/lr)

Command and Control centre tel. +358 (0)71 87 25010

#### ***Victim Support Finland Helpline***

<http://www.riku.fi/fi/victim+support/>

Helpline tel. +358 (0)20 316 116

Lapland regional branch +358 (0)400 979 175

#### ***Autoliitto (The Automobile and Touring Club of Finland)***

[http://www.autoliitto.fi/in\\_english/](http://www.autoliitto.fi/in_english/)

24h Road Service Helpline tel. +358 (0)200 - 8080

#### ***The Finnish Meteorological Institute***

Weather warnings

<http://en.ilmatieteenlaitos.fi/warnings>