



The Lifeguard and Rescue Services of the Formentera Council begin the summer season on 1 May with a team of 8 lifeguards, and, as the summer continues, will continue to increase staff until a total of 18 lifeguards are assuring safety across Formentera's coastal zones. This figure must be further increased to include the work of three volunteers trained and certified in the Water Safety course. These three individuals are scheduled to join the lifeguard force during the most intense portions of the summer season.

The body of lifeguards will assure safety on the beaches of Migjorn (es Arenals and Maryland), Llevant (the Llevant and Tanga beachfront bars), Ses Illetes and Pas des Trucadors. Last year, due to a lack of resources, no service was possible for the beach at Es Pujols. For this reason, this year every possible effort was made to return lifeguard service to Formentera's most popular tourist centre.

Included in the water safety services' equipment are lifeguard watchtowers (existing at the majority of beaches), a 6 metre semi-rigid rubber dinghy and 4 jet skis. This last figure represents the Formentera Island Council's acquisition this year of 2 new jet skis, 17,000€ greater in value than the previous two.

The work of the lifeguard service consists basically in giving preventative warnings to swimmers and watercraft, providing medical assistance and acting in emergency situations. Their

presence on beaches is wholly indispensable, as evidenced by the elevated number of incidents and lifeguard interventions summer after summer. For example, last summer, medical assistance was necessary on approximately 2,000 different occasions, and there were close to 1,000 instances of lifeguard intervention, a classification which includes swimmer warnings and rescues. Other very common perennial incidents are ambulance-assisted evacuations.

The Formentera Office of Environment is making a strong commitment to the implementation of the island's first accessible beaches. Last year and the year before, this dedication was witnessed in the adaptation of beachfront hillsides and walkways along the Es Pujols and Es Arenals beaches, with elements like sitting points and shaded rest-spots and facilitated-access for people with reduced mobility. At these two locations there will be aquatic lifts and lifeguards with specific training in order to attend to swimmers with special needs.

Further, the final week of April work began in the signage of all of the island's beaches with lifeguard service. In this way, all channels of entry and exit to and from beaches will be correctly signed, thus guaranteeing the safety of watercraft and swimmers. For the first time this year, installation of these signs will be extended to the beach at Es Caló.

We remind readers that Formentera is still the only municipality in the Balearics to have its own lifeguard and rescue service, permitting an increased level of flexibility with respect to procedural protocols and work strategies that are re-adapted every year to meet the needs at each beach.

It should also be noted that in specific locations, like the beach at Illetes – one of the most-visited swimming areas – the entrance checkpoints allowed for faster responses and increased effectiveness, especially with respect to safety and emergency services.

This year, with the awarding of new contracts for tourist season services on Formentera beaches, special attention was given to the importance of safety and rescue services, and applicant businesses with staff qualified in life-saving and first-aid will receive higher scores, as will businesses that make contributions to the lifeguard service, with a minimum of 300€ and a maximum of 1,500€. It is very important that business owners themselves understand the importance of safe beaches.

Additionally, this year marked another instance of the “Aquatic Lifeguard” course, given by the Office of Environment and the Department of Employment and Work-training of the Formentera Council. The goal behind offering the course was to insure the presence of qualified personnel and to promote work insertion among young people and island residents and to make these same individuals aware of the responsibility that the profession requires.

The Office of Environment would like to call special attention to the volunteer work done by several students of the “Aquatic Lifeguard” course. Their contribution helps fill in the gaps in lifeguard coverage and maintain safer beaches during the hardest months of the summer season. Living on an island means investing resources in that island's beaches, since these constitute Formentera's highest-drawing attractions for tourists.

The Lifeguard and Rescue service has an annual cost of 200,000 euros.