



The president's office of the Formentera Council, whose remit includes the island's beach lifeguard and rescue service, reports that the service's annual halt in summer operations took place last week. The team worked from May 1 to October 31.

For six months, a team that numbered as many as 23 lifeguards “worked to assure the safety of Formentera's beaches and swimming areas”, noted department head Bartomeu Escandell, who highlighted the “dedication and professionalism” of the team.

Incidents in summer 2018

Lifeguards responded to 3,025 cases involving everything sun burns to spills, cuts, scrapes and bumps. They also assisted in stings by greater weever (a poisonous fish), sea urchins and jellyfish—at 2,992, this last group was the largest.

Seventy individuals were rescued from potentially dangerous situations in the water, a type of rescue most common when the yellow flag flies, which means beachgoers can still swim but are encouraged to apply caution, something some fail to take into account. Another twelve rescues happened involving individuals on boats. Likewise, a total of 23 people were taken to hospital in ambulance.

The president's office is saddened to report on three deaths that occurred this season at Cala Saona. One person died after going into cardiopulmonary arrest while in the water, a second suffered a heart attack in the sand and a third threw themselves off the cliffs near the beach at twilight. Red-flag days, when swimmers are expressly banned from entering the water, made up for 62 days this summer.

In addition to on-the-clock duties, the team also intervened to provide emergency assistance to crews of ships involved in accidents, and helped tow watercraft during off-duty hours.

Formentera beaches: accessible and equipped for heart-attack response

Arenals and Es Pujols beaches feature accessible-swimming options for individuals with reduced mobility. The service, available from 12 noon to 5.00pm when the green flag flies, was requested this year by 37 people. All lifeguard posts without exception are fitted with defibrillators to assist in cases of possible cardiopulmonary arrest.