



On the heels of the announcement, October 15, that the Balearic Islands had put their season of high fire risk behind them, the Formentera Council's firefighting brigade released wildfire figures for this year. From January 1 to October 15, crews tackled a total of 40 fires, two less than the same period in 2016.

"This season's star operations," reported president's office secretary and head of interior Bartomeu Escandell, "were without a doubt the three forest fires that swept across 29.5 hectares (h) in Cala Saona between 20 May and 18 July".

Escandell took the opportunity to congratulate the brigade and other volunteers on their hard work and effectiveness on the job. "This was a particularly heart-wrenching year," said the secretary, pointing to the loss of 29.5h of forested area, compared to 1.8h damaged by fire in 2016. He also highlighted crews' efforts on other occasions: two house fires and two traffic accidents.

Brigade enlisted in 158 operations

In all, Formentera's firefighters were called on 158 times in 2017, forty-two more than the same period in 2016, when the service was activated 116 times. Escandell linked the upsurge to two causes: the brigade's expansion and consolidation (local ranks swelled from five in 2015 [three salaried, two part-time] to six in 2016 to seven in 2017) and the storms that pounded the island last winter.

In fact, the greatest uptick was recorded in efforts which required the brigade's technical expertise: 21 in 2016 against 60 this year. Such operations followed damages caused by things like wind- or rainstorms or spills on public roads. The service was also tapped for 17 rescues, 18 false alarms and 23 preventive operations.

Training

Moreover, Secretary Escandell stressed the importance of ongoing training. This year, firefighters took part in refresher courses and training in: extraction with lightweight tools

following traffic accidents; emergency management and control; hazardous materials; managing updated tactical situations; accreditation to use semi-automated external defibrillators; indoor fires and ventilation including multi-pronged approaches.