



The Catalan government was caught off guard by last year's rash of forest fires and more than 800 heat-related deaths

Catalan government preparing for problems with summer heat

Summer plan being implemented to deal with health problems and forest fire risk

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Different agencies of the Catalan government are taking measures to avoid getting caught off guard as they were last summer, when unusually high temperatures resulted in a rash of forest fires and more than 800 deaths related to exposure to extreme heat.

The Catalan government has approved the *Pla d'Estiu* (Summer Plan) with the aim of carrying out interdepartmental actions to improve the government's ability deal with fires and the effects of the summer heat on health, as well as citizen security, traffic safety, beach security, water quality.

Most of the last year's heat wave victims were elderly or people who had some medical condition which

made them more susceptible to the heat.

A plan for the prevention of the effects of heat waves on health will be co-ordinated by the Department of Health and Family Welfare. One key element will be the an integrated emergency plan designed to give health professionals special training in dealing with heat-related illnesses. There will be 370 more personnel and 31 more ambulances available for medical transport and the department will distribute 4,000 informative brochures about the effects of heatwaves on the elderly.

In the area of forest fire prevention, the Department of the Interior will increase in the number of personnel and technical resources in-

involved compared with last year. The department reports that a total of more than 5,000 people, 681 vehicles and 24 aircraft will be available.

To guarantee early detection of forest fires, 85 lookout posts will be manned by 170 people. To put out any fires that may start, 4,208 fire-fighting professionals and 1,400 volunteers will be on hand.

A mobile park will house 681 vehicles. There will also be four amphibious aircraft, four helicopters ready to fly on a moment's notice ten helitankers and five observance and firefighting planes. The total extinguishing power will be more than 55,000 litres.

The Department of the Interior is also counting on a more intense co-operation between the emergency,

firefighting, forestry and law enforcement agencies in each local region of Catalonia.

The fire prevention campaign will also be assisted by the Catalan Meteorological Service. This agency will carry out the same duties it does all year long such as distribution of the weather forecast, a 24-hour meteorological watch, forecasts for the sea conditions.

Although there have been several warm nights so far this summer, with temperatures not dipping below 20 degrees, officials say they do not expect Catalonia to experience the extreme temperatures of last year, pointing to the fact that the high temperatures of summer are taking longer to arrive this year compared with last year.

SITGES

Police seize 430 kilos of cocaine

The police have confiscated 430 kilos of cocaine from a yacht in Sitges, near Barcelona. They have also arrested 11 members of an alleged cocaine smuggling group, who were caught with cash worth 1.5 million euros. According to police spokesman, Miguel Angel Vázquez, the alleged smugglers had been detained in San Sebastián, Bilbao, Lleida and Barcelona during an operation started last year in co-operation with the Andorra police.

The police confirmed that the suspects were part of an alleged network used to transport drugs from the Caribbean in ships with which they sailed the coast of the Americas, pretending to carry passengers, but receiving two million euros for each shipment, although on this occasion they had decided to keep a part of the cocaine and distribute it directly. The police said that haul of cocaine taken from the yacht in Sitges, allegedly comes from Columbia, but it was collected near the coast of Barbados, where it had been dumped into the sea from a plane. According to the police two or three members of gang transferred the drug in vehicles to Andorra and Geneva in Switzerland where they deposited the money obtained in small quantities and in different currencies, in a bid to keep the alleged crime secret.

Only in Andorra have the police been able to freeze 14.6 million euros belonging to the alleged suspects but the police have still not calculated the full amount of money deposited in Swiss and Spanish bank accounts. The police confirmed they had arrested the suspected leader of the gang who lives in San Sebastian, saying that they had arrested him in 1986 together with other members of the gang after confiscating 9 kilos of cocaine. The gang's activities allegedly started in 1993, when the suspected leader left prison and he came to police attention after they discovered he had deposited 12 million euros in bank accounts, even though he was only the boss of cruise yacht business.

Police started to follow the suspected leader and his gang after receiving a tip-off from the Andorra police, who were responsible for investigating laundered money in the principality. They discovered his link with three boats that carried out journey's to the Caribbean, and a yacht with an English registration with a name to an 'off-shore' company in Guernsey.

The police said the suspects were all away from Spain last summer and restarted their activities in the last three months of 2003, when the police in Andorra discovered damp smelling bank notes deposited in banks in the principality. In the last few days police confirmed that they had intensified their watch over the group.

Salou installs new underground rubbish collection containers

Salou Town Council put into operation yesterday its first underground rubbish collection containers. The advantage of the new containers, according to the town's Environment and health Manager Montserrat Porter, is that they are less odorous and increase the amount of recycled waste.

A total of 10 container islands, seven of which are in the centre of the city and three in the main tourist area, have been installed. Each collection area is made up of separate containers for organic wastes, paper/cardboard, glass and tins. The

containers will also have a foot lever to make it easier to open the lids when throwing away rubbish.

The installation of these containers has been designed to coincide with the refurbishing of the streets and the development projects such as the PPR-1 residential plan. In this area, seven sets of containers will be installed at a cost of 6,000 euros per container. This first installation will mark a trial phase for this kind of system.

Three more sets of containers could be installed in Via Roma and Ciutat de Reus street.



The town's new underground rubbish containers are designed to be less odorous