

PRESS RELEASE

THEFT OF LIFEGUARD EQUIPMENT COULD COST LIVES

Staff at Fingal County Council's Operations Department have expressed their frustration and outrage after thieves broke into the Lifeguard station at Claremont in Howth on Friday night 12th August /Saturday morning 13th August and stole valuable equipment including a rescue boat and engine.

A senior source at Fingal County Council expressed his shock at the callousness of this theft "On any given day during the summer, hundreds of people visit Fingal beaches, and during particularly fine weather this can rise to thousands, with adults and children enjoying seawater swims. The council ensures that the main beaches are patrolled by lifeguards, and that safety signage and equipment is available, but now, because of this theft, safety at Claremont could be compromised"

He continues "Replacing this equipment is a must, but will cost us over €5,000. The council simply doesn't have thousands of euro to repair and replace essential life-saving items which are destroyed, vandalised or stolen. This senseless attack on scarce and important Council resources is a huge blow to the Council and it will have a serious affect on innocent members of the public who use this beach. Fingal has been working extremely hard this summer to make sure that any reduction in resources has had the least possible negative effect on members of the public, but incidents like these make our job much more difficult as we have to take money from somewhere else in our budget to replace this vital equipment."

Two days after this theft (on Sunday 14th), a member of the public who was kayaking along Claremont contacted the local Coastguard advising them that he had towed back to shore two teenage girls who had experienced slight difficulty when their inflatable device was carried too far out from shore. If this kayaker had not been in the area, without the lifeguard boat, this could have easily turned into a tragedy.

Operations staff at Fingal are of the opinion that the thieves certainly knew the value of the equipment they stole, and that this was most likely "theft-to-order", as only very specific items were taken.

We appeal to members of the public using any beaches to report any suspicious behaviour at any time to their local Gardai.

If any one has any information in relation to events at Claremont Beach on the night of Friday 12th August / Saturday 13th August please contact Howth Gardai at 01-666 4900 or any local Garda Station.

ENDS 16/08/11