

PUERTO DE SANTIAGO

Two people swept out to sea

COMMENTARY

By Sabine Virgin

The Atlantic continually strikes

When *Island Connections* receives official warnings of bad weather and dangerous sea conditions, we warn again and again about the possible risks and ask residents and visitors to be cautious. Anyone who reads our online or print editions may wonder whether we have anything else to think about, but there are good reasons for our warnings: every day new tourists arrive who perhaps do not know the dangers.

A total of 72 dead by drowning last year speaks for itself. Many underestimate the Atlantic Ocean, which, in a peaceful co-existence, requires us to respect it. The Canaries are surrounded by a vast water mass which can be agitated by wind, tides and seaquakes. The rule of local people is that in the months with names which contain the letter 'r' (in Spanish), we should not go into the water, and certainly not when the waves are high.

Islanders who warn holidaymakers are often rejected with comments such as: "What's the matter with you?" The latest sad example shows us exactly what it is all about. People who put themselves in danger are responsible for those who rush to their aid. David Vila is quite rightly being hailed a hero, but his death was simply unnecessary. We can all, by being careful, make sure that neither we nor others are put at risk by our foolish behaviour.

We owe this to all those who are willing to risk their lives for others because of their professional attitude or because they have a good heart. ■

Violent waves towards the end of March meant that a pre-alert for bad sea conditions was in place; nevertheless, a 60 year old holidaymaker from Palencia used the natural pool at Isla Cangrejo in Puerto de Santiago in the afternoon and was swept away by a wave.

A 35 year old man from Galicia who lived in Costa Adeje was watching with his fiancée. Boldly, David Vila ran to save the woman, but tragically both were dragged into the sea and smashed against the rocks by the strong waves.

A young Italian who was also at the scene jumped into the water to help. Although he couldn't do anything, he managed to reach the shore on his own.

The mayor of Santiago del Teide, Emilio Navarro, said that the island has lost a tourist and a hero. The young fiancée of the male victim was attended to by psychologists until her family arrived.



↑ Bathing in the natural pool can be extremely dangerous when sea conditions are volatile

The natural pool is not supervised by a lifeguard. At the entrance gate there is a sign pointing out that bathers should exercise care. If there is a bad weather alert, the gate is closed. On the day of the

tragedy a pre-alert was activated, only indicating the possibility of high waves.

The foolishness of one holidaymaker has cost two lives, her own and unfortunately that of a young man who

tried to save her. The Spaniard had come to the island via a senior group. She had travelled unaccompanied and had been staying at the Hotel Tamaimo Tropical in Puerto de Santiago. ■

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