

All in a Day's Work



Tiarnan O'Sullivan – Lifeguard



Photos courtesy of Tiarnan O'Sullivan

Tiarnan O'Sullivan is a lifeguard. He was trained by Irish Water Safety and spends his working day patrolling the beach, helping to ensure that members of the public that visit the beach are kept safe at all times.

Where do you work?

Beach lifeguards work every weekend in June, and every day in July and August. My first two Summers I worked on Inchydonney Beach in Clonakilty and spent last Summer on Garrettstown Beach near Kinsale.

Have you always been interested in what you do?

I've been taking classes in Water Safety at my local pool since I was 11 years old, and as my eldest brother was a beach lifeguard before me it was something I've wanted to do since I was young.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

I've done a lot of swimming. You don't need to swim with a club or anything like that, I just went to the pool a few times every week to build up my fitness so I could pass the beach lifeguard exam, a test given to everyone that wants to work on the beach.

What is a day in your life like?

As a lifeguard, you spend your day patrolling the beach (mainly in the safe swim zone - between the red and yellow flags), giving first aid to people with cuts or stings, filling out reports and, sometimes, you might have to rescue someone that has gotten themselves into difficulty in the water.

What is your main aim?

Our main aim is to ensure the members of the public that are visiting the beach are kept safe at all times, and that they know the most dangerous areas of the beach. Simple rules like not swimming beyond waist depth, always having at least one other person with you and only swimming between the two red and yellow flags are the kind of things we try to make sure everyone knows about.

What is the best thing about your job?

Being able to work at the beach, of course! Obviously, being a lifeguard is not all fun and games, but it is

nice to have a job that keeps you outside all day, preferably in the sun!

What is the worst thing about your job?

We do live in Ireland, so there is a very big chance that you're going to be working in the rain and wind a number of times throughout your summer. Thankfully, I've yet to work during a summer with mostly bad weather!

What equipment do you use?

Lifeguards have a lot of equipment which we use on a daily basis; the most important is our can-buoy, a large orange float which we hold in our hands at all times. It is essential if we need to swim out to someone in difficulty so we can use it to help them back to shore. We also have binoculars, a siren, a first aid box, flags, flippers and a rescue board.

Do you work alone or as part of a team?

Each beach is assigned a team of lifeguards every year, usually three to a beach.

What advice would you give someone wanting to do your job?

Get signed up to your local Irish Water Safety classes. I loved the years I participated in the classes, and they'll really help you if you'd like to become a beach lifeguard yourself. You can check the closest pool which holds the classes at www.iws.ie.

What is best piece of advice you have ever had?

I read in a novel a few years ago that one question is far more important than a thousand statements. I've been asking questions about everything ever since!

Top: Tiarnan on watch; Bottom: Can-buoys, which lifeguards hold at all times.



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