



BLUE FLAG BEACH CRITERIA AND EXPLANATORY NOTES 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Blue Flag Programme for beaches, marinas and tourism boats is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education). The Blue Flag Programme started in France in 1985. It has been implemented in Europe since 1987 and in areas outside of Europe since 2001 when South Africa joined. Today, Blue Flag has become a truly global Programme, with an ever-increasing number of countries participating in it.

The Blue Flag Programme promotes sustainable development in freshwater and marine areas. It challenges local authorities and beach operators to achieve high standards in the four categories of water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety. Over the years, the Blue Flag has become a highly respected and recognised award working to bring together the tourism and environmental sectors at local, regional and national levels.

The explanatory notes given in this document make up the common and shared understanding of the Blue Flag beach criteria and the requirements for the implementation thereof. The explanatory notes provide details on the assessment and management of compliance with the Blue Flag beach criteria.

The criteria are categorised as either imperative or guideline. Most beach criteria are imperative, i.e. the beach must comply with them in order to be awarded Blue Flag accreditation. If they are guideline criteria, it is preferable that they are complied with, but not mandatory.

It must be emphasised that the Blue Flag beach international criteria in this document are the minimum criteria. A National Operator can choose to have stricter criteria to what is outlined here, as long as they are in the same line of philosophy as the Blue Flag international criteria. These more stringent criteria must be approved by the National Jury and communicated to the International Jury. Moreover, the beach administrator must be informed about the stricter criteria before the beginning of the following Blue Flag season.

These beach criteria and explanatory notes are to be used by all Blue Flag applicants in order to understand the requirements that must be met before a beach can receive Blue Flag accreditation. For guidance purposes, this document should also prove valuable for the management of those beaches already accredited with Blue Flag status. The beach criteria and explanatory notes also serve as a guide for the National, Regional and International Blue Flag Juries when making decisions about a Blue Flag beach candidate.

During the Blue Flag season, the flag must fly at the beach. The flag is both a symbol that the beach participates in the Programme but also an indication of compliance with the criteria. The flag may either be flown 24 hours a day during the Blue Flag season or only during the hours when the beach meets all the Blue Flag criteria. In the case of the former, there must be adequate signage indicating the time when services (e.g. life-saving), and facilities (e.g. toilets) are in operation.

If a beach that has Blue Flag accreditation does not comply with the Blue Flag criteria, the flag may be permanently or temporarily withdrawn from the beach. There are several degrees of non-compliance:

1. A **minor non-compliance** occurs when there is a problem with only one imperative criterion, which is of little or no consequence to visitor health and safety and the beach environment.

Should the non-compliance be to the detriment of visitor health and safety or the beach environment, it must be treated as major non-compliance.

When minor non-compliance occurs and can be immediately rectified, the flag is not withdrawn, and the non-compliance is only registered in the control visit report. If, however, a minor non-compliance cannot be rectified immediately, the beach is given ten days in which to comply fully with all criteria. The flag is withdrawn until all problems are rectified, and this is noted on the Blue Flag national and international websites.

2. **Multiple non-compliance** relates to non-compliance with two to three imperative criteria which are of little or no consequence to visitor health and safety and the beach environment.

Should any of the non-compliance be to the detriment of visitor health and safety or the beach environment, it/they must be treated as major non-compliance.

When multiple non-compliances occur, the beach is given ten days in which to comply fully with all criteria, the flag is withdrawn until all the problems are rectified, and the national and international websites are updated accordingly.

3. **Major non-compliance** occurs when the beach does not comply with one or several criteria, with a consequence for the health and safety of the beach user or to the environment, as well as the general perception of the beach and therefore the Programme.

When detecting a major non-compliance, the flag is withdrawn immediately and for the rest of the season. The beach information board must clearly indicate that the Blue Flag award has been withdrawn. The national and international websites are updated accordingly.

In all cases of non-compliance, the National Operator must immediately inform the local authority/beach operator about the observed areas of non-compliance. Information about the reason for a withdrawal of the flag must be posted clearly at the beach. The local authority/beach operator must inform the National Operator of re-compliance with the criteria and present the appropriate documentation needed. The flag can then be raised at the beach again. The National Operator should also consider a follow-up control visit to check that the beach does comply. In the event that the local authority/beach operator does not ensure and document re-compliance with the criteria within ten days, the National Operator must ensure that the Blue Flag is withdrawn for the rest of the season at the beach.

In the event that conditions on the beach change and the Blue Flag has to be temporarily withdrawn, e.g. when climatic events cause damage to the beach or an emergency arises, the beach management must inform the National Operator that the Blue Flag has been temporarily withdrawn and the national and international websites must be updated accordingly.

Apart from updating the national and international Blue Flag websites of the status of the beach, the National Operator must inform the Blue Flag International Head Office about the non-compliance. If the non-compliance is noted by an international controller, the National Operator has to give feedback to the Blue Flag International Head Office within 30 days.

The applicant for Blue Flag accreditation is the authority charged with responsibility for the beach. This may be a local municipality, private hotel, national park, or private beach operator. A beach may be eligible for Blue Flag accreditation if it is legally designated as a bathing area and it has the necessary facilities and services to comply with the Blue Flag criteria.

A beach must be accessible to all (regardless of age, gender, political views, religion) in order to be eligible for Blue Flag accreditation. It is preferable that beach users be granted free access to a Blue Flag beach, i.e. to use the beach and its facilities without paying a fee. Blue Flag, however, recognises that at some beaches, e.g. private beaches, members of the public are charged a small, reasonable fee to access the beach. Other payments may be levied for services in the area, e.g. for parking or hiring of equipment, but have to stay within the reasonable limits. If a beach wishes to have an entry fee higher than 30 US dollars, it must apply for a dispensation case to the International Jury.

FEE, and the National Operator in a country, reserve the right to refuse or withdraw Blue Flag accreditation from any beach where the local authority/beach operator is responsible for violations of national environmental regulations or otherwise acts in discord with the objectives and spirit of the Blue Flag Programme. Blue Flag beaches are subject to announced and unannounced control visits by the National Operator and FEE International.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Each beach must provide at least five environmental education activities to the public, preferably during its Blue Flag season. It is possible for beaches managed by the same municipality to provide the same five environmental education activities. Activities can be active or passive but must make sure to incorporate both environmental and education components (see appendix C for more information).

Each beach must have at least one Blue Flag information board in place, containing all the information required by the criteria listed below. For long beaches, it is recommended that more than one Blue Flag information boards are installed (approximately one every 500 metres). All Blue Flag information boards must follow national standards with respect to information, content and design. These Blue Flag information boards must be in place at all Blue Flag beaches.

Criterion 1. Information about the Blue Flag Programme must be displayed.

Information about the Blue Flag Programme must be displayed on the Blue Flag information board. The correct Blue Flag logo must be used, in accordance with the FEE branding guidelines. The essence of each of the four categories of the Blue Flag criteria must be explained in this information. The length of the Blue Flag season must also be included.

The information could also be posted at other locations, e.g. at major access points, lifeguard stations, other beach facilities, or in parking areas. Tourist information offices should also have information about the Blue Flag Programme.

Contact details for the local, national and international Blue Flag representatives must be posted as well.

In areas of international tourism, it is recommended that the information be provided in relevant languages.

In the event that the Blue Flag is temporarily withdrawn, a relevant notice must be posted at the beach informing the public as to the reasons why the flag was withdrawn.

Blue Flag beaches could promote the Green Key Programme as another award run by FEE with a message such as: "Along with the Blue Flag, the Foundation for Environmental Education also develops another eco-label for various tourism enterprises: Green Key. Find more information at: www.greenkey.global (or the national Green key website of the country)"

Appendix B provides an example of how the Blue Flag information can be presented.

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Criterion 2. Environmental education activities must be offered and promoted to beach users.

Environmental education activities promote the aims of the Blue Flag Programme by:

- increasing the awareness of, and care for, the local environment by recreational users and residents.

- training personnel and tourist service providers in environmental matters and best practices.
- encouraging the participation of local stakeholders in environmental management within the area.
- promoting sustainable recreation and tourism in the area.
- promoting the sharing of ideas and efforts between the Blue Flag Programme and other FEE Programmes (YRE, LEAF, Eco-Schools and Green Key).

The planned environmental education activities for the coming season must be included in the application documents, and so must a report on activities carried out during the previous Blue Flag season (if applicable).

At least five different activities must be offered to the municipality or community - preferably during the Blue Flag season. The activities should focus on the environment, environmental issues, Blue Flag issues or sustainability issues. At least some of the activities should be carried out at the beach and have a direct focus on the beach environment.

The educational activities must be effective and relevant, and each year the local authority must re-evaluate the activities that were implemented and work towards constantly improving them.

Where the planned environmental education activities are of interest to and involve, the general public or beach users, these activities must be publicised in good time to inform the public about the opportunities they offer. Such activities must also be publicised on the Blue Flag information board, but could also be publicised in other areas in the beach area, in local centres, in newspapers and other media.

The environmental education activities must be clearly disseminated to the public. Preferably, the activities should be posted on the common information board. However, dissemination could include an updatable list posted at the kiosk or clubhouse, SMS notification or other means of communication. Whatever the platform for dissemination is, it has to be stated on the information board where the user can find out more about the activities.

Furthermore, these environmental education activities must be offered for free to participants. A small participatory fee is accepted if needed to cover costs such as lunches, water, etc. but no business benefits can be made through these environmental education activities. Business sponsorship of activities or requests for donations by small organizations are acceptable as long as the activity remains educational in its core and is not used for advertising a product/company. The intent is to keep these activities from becoming a tool for funding rather than a tool for education.

Local authorities/beach operators are encouraged to implement and/or support sustainable development projects in which public participation is a key element, e.g. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals initiatives.

If specific sensitive natural areas (including Marine Protected Areas) exist near a Blue Flag beach (e.g. mangroves or seagrass beds), it is strongly recommended that some of the educational activities address these sensitive natural areas.

Examples of good educational activities can be downloaded from the internal pages of the Blue Flag international website (www.blueflag.global).

Appendix C provides further background on the environmental education activities.

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Criterion 3. Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.

Bathing water quality information must be displayed on the Blue Flag information board at least once a week. Local authorities may also choose to display the water quality results virtually through incorporation of a QR code on the Blue Flag Information Board but it must be additional to the posting of the results on the board. It is recommended that a table or figure with easily identifiable symbols that correspond to the results be used both on the physical board and online. The information must also clearly explain how the water quality results relate to the imperative criteria for water quality, with specific reference to sampling frequency differences for enterococci and E. Coli and the conditions under which Blue Flag status can be withdrawn.

The authority in charge of providing the bathing water quality results must do so shortly after the analysis so that the data can be updated regularly. It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that the beach operator/beach management receives the information no later than one month after the sampling date. The complete and detailed data must be made available by the local authority to anybody upon request.

Appendix D provides an example of how this information could be presented.

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Criterion 4. Information relating to local eco-systems, environmental elements and cultural sites must be displayed.

The aim of this criterion is to ensure that beach users are well informed and educated about relevant environmental elements (including valuable cultural sites/communities), local ecosystems and any sensitive areas in the surrounding environment so that they are encouraged to learn about and experience the environment in a responsible way.

Information about coastal zone ecosystems, wetland areas, unique habitats or any sensitive natural areas must be displayed at or close to the Blue Flag beach. The information must include details about the natural area and a code of conduct for visitors to the area. If the full information is not available on the Blue Flag information board, there must at least be a short notice on the board informing the public about the nearby sensitive areas and where they can find further information.

Relevant environmental information could furthermore be displayed at tourist sites, at the natural areas, or in tourist information offices. The information can be published in tourist brochures, local newspapers or pamphlets created specifically for this purpose. In areas that are visited by a high number of tourists, it is recommended that the information be presented in more than one way, as listed above, and it should be presented in relevant languages.

In the case of sensitive underwater environments, specific information about these areas must be provided for divers and snorkelers.

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Criterion 5. A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.

A map showing the boundaries of the Blue Flag beach area and the location of key facilities and services must be posted on the Blue Flag information board. The map must be of good quality, easy to read and properly oriented. It is recommended that maps also be available through digital formats in addition to the one posted on the physical information board.

Pictograms should preferably be used.

The required map elements (where applicable) should include “You are here” pointers, and show the location of:

- lifeguards or lifesaving equipment
- the area patrolled (for beaches with lifeguards)
- first aid equipment
- telephones
- toilets (including toilets for disabled people)
- drinking water
- car and bicycle parking areas
- authorised camping sites at/near the beach
- recycling facilities
- location of water sampling point(s)
- access points and access for disabled persons
- zoning (swimming, surfing, sailing, boating, etc.) where applicable
- nearby public transport
- footpaths
- demarcation of Blue Flag area
- location of other information boards
- rivers and inflows
- local landmarks (where applicable)
- stormwater outlets
- nearby sensitive natural areas, etc.
- direction (North)
- scale bar

For guidelines on the design and suitability of maps for Blue Flag beaches, visit www.blueflag.global.

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Criterion 6. A code of conduct that reflects appropriate laws and/or regulations governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas must be displayed.

The code of conduct must address the activities of beach users and their conduct on the beach. The beach code of conduct must be displayed on the Blue Flag information board. The information could furthermore be posted at other locations, e.g. at all major entrance points, near to the relevant activity (i.e. a “No Diving” sign on a pier) or as information at the relevant sites. Internationally recognised symbols, e.g. pictograms, must be used wherever possible.

The code of conduct must include rules about the presence of domestic animals, zoning (when appropriate), fishing, litter management, the use of vehicles, camping, fires, etc.

Laws and/or regulations governing beach usage and management should be available to the public at the office of the local authority/beach operator.

The period when the lifesaving equipment and/or lifeguards, and first aid, are available must be clearly marked on the Blue Flag information boards and at the lifeguard station. An explanation of

the emergency flag system in use must also be provided.

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WATER QUALITY

The Blue Flag Programme requires that beaches achieve Excellent bathing water quality. The bathing water quality standards have been based on the most appropriate international and national standards and legislation.

Blue Flag is an international award - and it, therefore, has one minimum global standard for water quality. The standards described here for bathing water quality for beaches must be adopted unless stricter national standards are already in existence, e.g. testing for total coliform bacteria. In that case, the beach must comply with the more demanding national standards for bathing water quality.

Criterion 7. The beach must fully comply with the water quality sampling and frequency requirements.

A Blue Flag beach must have at least one sampling point, which must be located where the concentration of bathers is highest. In addition, where there are potential sources of pollution, e.g. near streams, rivers or other inlets, stormwater outlets, etc. additional sampling points must be established at these sites to provide evidence that such inflows do not affect bathing water quality.

All sampling points of the applicant beach must comply with the Blue Flag bathing water quality criteria.

Samples for microbiological and physical-chemical parameters must be taken.

Similarly, in the case of inland waters where the water is supplemented by outside sources during dry periods, the water quality of the outside source must meet the Blue Flag bathing water quality standards.

Samples should be taken 30 cm (12 inches) below the water surface except for the mineral oil samples that should be taken at surface level.

How often must a sample be taken?

For each sampling point, there must be no more than seven days between any two water samples of Enterococci and thirty-one days between samples of E. Coli during the Blue Flag season. This includes the gap between the pre-season sample and the following in-season sample. The Blue Flag Programme does not accept applications from beaches, irrespective of the length of the Blue Flag season, where less than five samples have been taken. This means that a minimum of five samples must be taken, evenly distributed during the season. The first sample must be taken within 31 days before the official starting date of the Blue Flag season.

Only one sample value per day is to be recorded in the percentile calculation.

When sample results raise a concern about a possible increase in levels of pollution, it is recommended to temporarily increase the sampling frequency in order to track any possible pollution incident.

In the event of short-term pollution, one additional sample is to be taken to confirm that the incident has ended. This sample is not part of the set of bathing water quality data. If necessary to replace a discarded sample, an additional sample is to be taken seven days after the end of the short-term pollution. Discounting of samples because of short-term pollution during the last assessment period is allowed for maximum 15% of the total number of samples provided for in the monitoring calendar established for that period, or one sample per bathing season, whichever is greater.

When calculating 15% of the total number of samples provided for that period, the result must be rounded up or down.

The rule is:

Anything lower or equal to 49 should be rounded down (for example: a result of 2,49 gives a possibility of discounting two samples).

Anything higher or equal to 50 should be rounded up (for example: a result of 2,50 gives a possibility of discounting three samples).

Both the original and the additional samples have to be sent as a dispensation case to the International Jury for the evaluation (see Appendix A on dispensation cases).

In case of an oil spill, abnormal weather or other extreme events which can have a serious adverse effect on the quality of the bathing water or the health of the bathers, the beach manager must temporarily take down the Blue Flag and clearly state the reason on the information board. It is recommended that the wording of this information is along the lines: "This beach has recently experienced abnormal weather/extreme event. Swimming is not recommended at this time due to the possibility of pollution/danger to the bathers."

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Criterion 8. The beach must fully comply with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis.

An independent person, officially authorised and trained for the task, must collect the samples.

An independent laboratory must carry out the analysis of the bathing water samples. The laboratory must be nationally, internationally, or state accredited to carry out microbiological and physical-chemical analyses. The testing method and data resulting from it must also be accredited.

In the event that the sampler or the laboratory is not independent, at the time of application, a dispensation must be requested and details provided as to why this is required, e.g. in some cases beaches are considerable distances away from the services necessary to meet this requirement.

Methods of analysis:

In the interest of increased quality and comparability of the bathing water quality data used for the evaluation of candidates for the Blue Flag, FEE finds that methods of analysis that ensure certain trueness, reproducibility, repeatability and comparability between methods should be used. FEE follows European (CEN) or International (ISO) standards in its recommendations regarding parameters and acceptable methods of analysis.

Water quality results must be provided to the National Operator as soon as they are made available but not later than one month after the sample has been taken.

A sampling calendar must be established prior to the start of the bathing season. Sampling must take place no later than four days after the date specified in the sampling calendar unless there are exceptional circumstances preventing this. In such a case, the National Jury must submit the beach as a dispensation case to the International Jury (*see Appendix A for more information on dispensation cases*).

Sampling history:

The water quality results for the previous four seasons must accompany all applications. In order to be eligible for the Blue Flag, the beach must show -through these reports- that the bathing water quality standards were met in the previous seasons.

For new countries or new beaches, results from a minimum of 20 samples per sampling point taken within the proposed Blue Flag season must be available for Blue Flag accreditation to be considered. The sampling history may be taken in one Blue Flag season in order to be able to apply the following year. The applicant beach may also choose to take fewer samples and wait to apply when 20 samples per sampling point have been collected (for example taking ten samples in year 1, 10 more in year 2 and applying in year 3). Remember that a minimum of 5 samples has to be taken per Blue Flag season and that the sampling frequency detailed in criterion 7 must be respected.

The water quality information of the current season must be posted on the Blue Flag information board, in accordance with Criterion 3. *See Appendix D for a recommendation for presenting water quality information on Blue Flag beaches.*

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Criterion 9. Industrial, waste-water or sewage-related discharges must not affect the beach area.

A bathing water profile must be compiled for every Blue Flag beach application. A bathing water profile includes identification of potential sources of pollution, a description of the physical, geographical and hydrological characteristics of the bathing water, as well as an assessment of the potential for cyanobacteria and algae formation.

It is recommended that there should not be any industrial, urban wastewater or sewage-related discharges into the Blue Flag area or immediate buffer zone/surrounding area. If there are discharge points in the area of the beach, these must be documented at the time of application.

Where combined sewage overflow discharges or other urban/industrial wastewater discharges are identified within, or immediately adjacent to, the proposed award area, information to warn the public that there is an intermittent discharge which could, in the short term, impact the bathing water quality must be provided.

The collection, treatment and discharge of urban wastewater in the community must meet national/ international standards and comply with national/international legislation. For EU member countries, there are requirements for the treatment and effluent quality given in the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC). A number of new EU countries have been granted dispensation from the EU Directive. Regardless of national/ international standards and legislation, this wastewater or other discharges must not negatively affect the environment or compromise the water quality standards of a Blue Flag beach.

Regarding industrial pollution, notification must be given about industrial facilities and plants in the vicinity of the beaches, stating their likely influence on the environment. Moreover, the appropriate authorities must confirm in writing that the area is being monitored to ascertain the environmental impacts of nearby industrial facilities and confirm that the facilities do not pose a public health risk or environmental hazard.

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Criterion 10. The beach must comply with the Blue Flag requirements for the microbiological parameter Escherichia coli (faecal coli bacteria) and intestinal enterococci (streptococci).

Beach sites applying for the Blue Flag Award must meet the microbiological parameters given below or their state's recreational water quality standard, whichever is stricter:

Parameter	Coastal and transitional waters Limit values	Inland waters Limit values
Escherichia coli (Faecal Colibacteria)	250 cfu/100 ml	500 cfu/100 ml
Intestinal Enterococci (streptococci)	100 cfu/100 ml	200 cfu/100 ml

- cfu = colony forming units (of bacteria)

Accepted percentile:

For the evaluation of an applicant beach, the Blue Flag Programme requires 95th percentile compliance with the above limit values. This is in accordance with the EU Bathing Water Directive (2006) as well as the recommendation of the World Health Organisation. The percentile has to be calculated for each parameter and also met for each parameter. For example, if the 95th percentile is below the limit values for Escherichia coli but not for Intestinal Enterococci, then the beach cannot be awarded with the Blue Flag.

Details on how to calculate the 95th percentile can be found in Appendix F. A calculation spreadsheet, however, is available on the internal Blue Flag database. All bathing water sample results must be entered into the spreadsheet, and the percentiles will be calculated automatically. This sheet must be sent to Blue Flag International with the application.

For EU countries implementing the Blue Flag, it is imperative that an applicant beach is classified as having 'Excellent' water quality.

As stated previously, discounting of a sample may be considered in case of extreme (weather)

conditions. Should this be necessary, applicant beaches must be sent in as dispensation cases. See *Appendix A for further details on dispensation cases.*

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Criterion 11. The beach must comply with the Blue Flag requirements for physical parameters.

Water quality can also be affected by physical and chemical parameters such as oil and floatables:

- There must be no oil film visible on the surface of the water, and no odour detected. Ashore and on land the beach must be monitored for oil and emergency plans should include the required action to take in case of such pollution.
- No floatables may be present, such as tarry residues, wood, plastic articles, bottles, containers, glass or any other substances.
- The presence of Harmful Algal Blooms or Red Tides which affect the water quality must be monitored and plans for advisories or beach closures be created. Advisories and closures must be communicated to the public through use of the Informational Board and communication resources.

Immediate action should be taken if abnormal changes are detected. This includes abnormal changes in the colour, transparency and turbidity of the water. Should physical and chemical pollution be detected repeatedly, the Blue Flag must be taken down for the remainder of the season, and the beach will not be eligible for the Blue Flag the following year unless the applicant fulfils the conditions for applying as a dispensation case.

Other tests can be conducted, such as the pH value of the water (its value ranges from 6 to 9 in most bathing waters).

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ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Criterion 12. The local authority/beach operator should establish a beach management committee.

The beach management committee should be charged with ensuring compliance with all environmental management criteria, including Coastal and Marine Protected Area requirements if appropriate. The committee should consist of all relevant stakeholders at the local level. Relevant stakeholders could be a local authority representative, hotel manager, beach manager, lifeguard, educational representative, local NGO, or other stakeholders such as community representatives, special user groups, Coastal and Marine Protected Area representatives, etc.

The beach management committee should co-operate with and support the local authority/beach operator and could institute environmental management systems and conduct environmental control visits of the beach and its facilities.

Where appropriate, a beach management committee may operate over a number of Blue Flag beaches within a local authority or an area/region, i.e. there is no need for a separate beach management committee for each individual Blue Flag beach.

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Criterion 13. The local authority/beach operator must comply with all laws and/or regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach.

The beach must comply with federal, state, and local laws regulations and/or executive orders pertaining to issues related to coastal zone planning, environmental management, floodplain and storm hazard management, wastewater management, environmental conservation, and others in order to receive and maintain Blue Flag status. The applicant must ensure that the facilities and activities under his/her responsibility comply with these laws and/or regulations. The management of the beach location, facilities, beach operation and immediate surrounding area must comply with official development plans and planning regulations. Applicable laws, regulations, and orders may include those for land-use zoning and planning, building codes, sewage/industrial waste effluent discharge, environmental health, conservation plans, operations licenses and permits, etc.

The location of facilities and use of the beach area and its vicinity must be subject to planning guidelines.

The beach, its facilities and management practices must comply with any applicable Findings of No Significant Impact or Records of Decision prepared pursuant to federal, state, or local environmental impact assessment requirements. At the time of application for Blue Flag status, the applicant authority must provide written evidence from the planning department building commission, or other appropriate government entity responsible for building codes and their enforcement that all buildings on the beach meet local current building regulations.

Existing beach facilities, construction and other use of the beach and its vicinity must be in compliance with laws regulating the use of the coastal zone or freshwater areas, including environmental conservation regulations. The inland beach area, including dunes, paths, and parking

areas must be properly maintained according to coastal zone management principles.

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Criterion 14. Sensitive areas and Species must be protected and managed.

Areas

Some sites at/near the Blue Flag beach may be very sensitive and require special management. In these cases, the beach operator must consult an appropriate conservation organisation or expert for advice on how to manage these sites. Where areas require special management, at the time of application, the applicant must provide confirmation that this consultation has taken place and that a the recommended management plan will be implemented.

However, the sensitivity of certain areas may prevent them from being part of a Blue Flag beach or from having information posted at the beach directing people to the area. An increased number of visitors could endanger wildlife and/or habitats, e.g. using land space for the construction of facilities, parking, paths, etc. As a general rule, Blue Flag accreditation is only given to sites that can demonstrate management of visitors and recreational use that prevents long-term irreversible damage to the local natural environment.

If a Blue Flag beach is in or near a Coastal and/or Marine Protected Area, it is necessary to consult with the Coastal and/or Marina Protected Area management in order to ensure compatibility with ecosystem conservation and biodiversity goals.

Species

The applicant should acquire a list of endangered, threatened or sensitive species that are found on or near the beach (contact the state natural heritage program) as well as the agency responsible for their protection. The respective agencies should be consulted for guidance in protecting and maintaining habitat and reducing disturbance to species when they are most vulnerable to disturbance such as breeding and nesting times. Beach management and operations should be conducted in accordance with endangered and threatened species recovery guidelines, best management practices and any additional guidance provided by consulted agencies. It is recommended these areas and species are included in environmental education and information criteria listed above.

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Criterion 15. The beach must be clean.

The beach and surrounding areas, including paths, parking areas, and access paths to the beach must always be clean and maintained. Litter should not be allowed to accumulate, causing these areas to become unsightly or hazardous.

The beach must comply with national guidelines or legislation concerning litter and waste management. Beach cleaning may be mechanical or manual, depending on the size, appearance, and sensitivity of the beach and its surroundings. In high use areas, where possible, mechanical sieving and deep cleaning of the sand should be carried out occasionally to remove small size waste, such as cigarette butts, plastic pieces, and Styrofoam, etc.

During stormwater flows, the outlets and surrounding areas must be kept clean.

Cleaning of the beach must be carried out with consideration for local flora and fauna, e.g. where turtles may have buried eggs in the sand. The use of insecticides or chemicals for cleaning the sand or surrounding environment is not allowed. Cleaning in Protected Areas as well as sensitive areas (sand dunes, etc.), must be done in accordance with the existing laws and regulations, and advice from the relevant authority.

For information about the management of algal waste and seaweed, refer to criterion 16.

To determine the cleanliness level of the beach, it is recommended that a Beach Litter Measuring system, or similar system, be used. (See Appendix G for further details).

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Criterion 16. Algal vegetation or natural debris must be left on the beach.

Algal vegetation is generally accepted as referring to seaweed. Seaweed and other vegetation/natural debris are natural and vital components of both freshwater and marine and beach ecosystems. Such natural debris must be considered as living environments and not approached as a recreational liability, hindrance, or aesthetic area to be kept tidy. When and where vegetation accumulation is persistent on the beach, it is recommended that a seaweed and vegetative/natural debris management strategy be developed as a part of the beach management plan. The management of seaweed or other vegetation/natural detritus on the shore should be sensitive to both visitor, ecosystem, and biodiversity needs. Natural disposal by tides and waves at the beach is accepted, and the decay of seaweed and vegetative/natural debris is necessary to support coastal environmental assets so long as it does not create a public health or safety hazard or significantly adversely impact environmental assets.

Therefore, seaweed and vegetative/natural debris should be allowed to accumulate but not to the point where it becomes a hazard; removal should occur only where and when, absolutely necessary. Conditions triggering removal must be clearly identified in the beach management plan and may include such triggers as: excessive accumulations (e.g., due to algal blooms), and the need to maintain access to areas of the beach for recreational activities or for disabled users. If and when seaweed or other vegetative/natural debris must be removed, it is recommended that removal focus on limited areas where the accumulation creates hazards and that other areas retain some of the seaweed and vegetative and natural debris.

Consideration must be given to its disposal in an environmentally-friendly way, e.g., through dune building, composting, or fertilizer use. Environmental specialists should be consulted when developing or revising the management plan for seaweed and other vegetative/natural debris on the beach.

Where seaweed is compiled and arranged on the beach to be dried for later use as fertilizer or dune stabilizer. It is also necessary to ensure that this area does not create a hazard for beach users.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
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All regions	
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Criterion 17. Waste disposal bins/containers must be available at the beach in adequate numbers, and they must be regularly maintained.

Waste disposal bins or litter bins (preferably with covers) should be of a suitable design and appearance as well as being functional. It is recommended that bins made of environmentally friendly products are used, e.g. bins made of recycled composite plastics or wood.

There should be an adequate number of bins on the beach, and they should all be regularly maintained, well secured, and spaced appropriately. Individual bin capacity, the number of users on the beach and how frequently the bins are emptied determine the number and minimum space between bins placed on the beach. During the peak tourist season, the spacing between bins and the frequency of emptying should be adjusted as necessary.

In summary, when choosing and locating bins, the following factors should be considered:

- Bin capacity.
- Environmentally friendly products.
- Type and source of litter.
- Volume of pedestrian traffic.
- Servicing methods and intervals (including peak times).
- Local environment, e.g. winds, high tides, scavenging seagulls.
- Accessibility, e.g. height, surface.

The collected waste should only be disposed of in licensed facilities that are approved by authorities on the basis of environmental requirements. The duty of the community receiving the Blue Flag is to make sure that the waste is properly disposed of.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 18. Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials must be available at the beach.

Should the community have a local recycling facility, containers must be made available at the beach for these materials, e.g. glass, cans, plastic, paper, etc. The receptacles should be properly designed and managed for the type of waste received, should be emptied regularly, and be well placed for accessibility.

The recycling facilities should accommodate the collection and separation of as many different types of materials as possible, three being the minimum.

On application, the local authority/beach operator must indicate whether the local authority has facilities for the recycling of waste. If no such facilities exist, the applicant must apply for a dispensation from this criterion.

Blue Flag encourages all local authorities/beach operators to promote recycling and waste separation at the beach, even if the community does not have a local recycling facility.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
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All regions	
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Criterion 19. An adequate number of toilet or restroom facilities must be provided.

The number of toilets/restrooms, including port-a-toilets, available at the beach must reflect the average number of beach visitors during the peak season, the length of the beach and the number and location of major access points.

The toilet or restroom facilities must be easy to locate through signage and through information on the map on the Blue Flag information board.

The presence of showers (on the beach or in the buildings), changing rooms and nappy changing facilities are furthermore encouraged. Restrooms/toilets may also be located in nearby shops, restaurants, cafeterias or other establishments open to the general public. Facilities for disabled visitors should also be provided (see criterion 32).

Toilet or restrooms facilities must be equipped with washbasins, soap, and clean towels (paper or cloth) or a hand-dryer.

Access to the toilet/restroom facilities must be safe.

Consideration should also be given to the design and maintenance of these facilities. They should be well integrated within the built and natural environment, and they must be regularly maintained so as to present a well-maintained appearance and to prevent vandalism of buildings.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 20. The toilet or restroom facilities must be kept clean.

The toilet/restroom facilities must be kept clean at all times. The frequency of checking and cleaning the facilities must reflect the intensity of use. Beaches with a high number of daily visitors must have their facilities checked and cleaned every day or several times a day.

The use of environmentally friendly cleaning materials, soap and towels is recommended.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 21. The toilet or restroom facilities must have controlled sewage disposal.

Sewage or effluent from the toilets must not enter the ground or the water untreated. In villages, communities, or in a municipality with sewage treatment facilities, the toilet facilities must be connected to the municipal sewer.

For facilities located outside areas serviced by the municipal sewage system and/or at remotely located beaches, individual treatment and regularly emptied holding tanks that prevent untreated sewage, effluent or seepage from entering the ground or the water -and which do not adversely affect the environment- are acceptable.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 22. There must be no unauthorised camping or driving and no dumping on the beach

Unauthorised camping, driving and dumping must be prohibited on the beach. Information about these restrictions must be displayed at the beach (as part of the code of conduct, Criterion 6).

Personal vehicles (except for those used for the purpose of cleaning, safety, and limited ability access, e.g. for moving lifeguard equipment, other power-driven mobility devices, or emergency vehicles) must not be allowed on Blue Flag beaches. For cases where vehicles cannot be entirely prohibited due to local or state regulations, this must be adequately justified, and they must be properly managed through permitting and enforcement. Areas for driving and parking, as well as car-free zones, must be designated and, whenever the situation requires it, police or traffic guards must control the beach. If vehicles are allowed, they must be prohibited from entering the high water zone at any time. The major part of the beach must be designated entirely vehicle-free. Sites which engage in managed private vehicle access must submit their application with a dispensation claim and any additional information requested from the National or International Juries (such as management plans, etc) for this criterion.

Where there are no physical barriers preventing access to the beach by vehicles and where there are problems with unauthorised vehicles, camping or dumping, bylaws must be put in place to prohibit these activities. Information about these by-laws must be displayed. The use of the beach or its nearby areas as dumps for litter and other waste is not accepted.

In the case of specially planned events that involve the use of vehicles on the beach, a special management plan must be drawn up and applied to prevent damage to the ecosystem, as well as risks to beach users. *See Appendix H for guidelines on events on Blue Flag beaches.*

Parking for emergency vehicles must be provided in close proximity to the beach.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 23. Access to the beach by dogs and other domestic animals must be strictly controlled.

Dogs or pets, other than assistance dogs are not allowed on a Blue Flag beach or in the Blue Flag area if it is part of a larger beach. If the presence of pets is permitted by the local and national legislation, animals are only allowed in the parking areas, walkways and promenades in the inland beach area and must under control.

If the beach is patrolled by mounted police measures must be taken to ensure that no faecal matter contaminates the beach.

Wherever possible stray animals must be managed, and systems should be in place to remove stray animals from the beach. Measures must also be put in place to prevent access to the beach by stray animals. If stray animals are able to access the beach and cannot be controlled, it is recommended that the beach operator/local authority erect signs informing the public about this fact. It is also recommended that information be displayed about what the public should do should stray animals be seen on the beach.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 24. All buildings and beach equipment must be properly maintained.

Consideration must be given to the appearance of buildings and structures at the beach. They should be well integrated within the natural and built environment, should adhere to construction standards and meet environmental and aesthetic requirements.

Equipment on the beach includes facilities or services not discussed in any other criteria, e.g. playgrounds and piers. Equipment must be regularly maintained and checked in order to ensure that it is safe to use. Consideration must be given to: the cleanliness of equipment, its condition, the environmental effects of paint and other materials used for maintaining the equipment/buildings and any potential risk associated with its deterioration and malfunction. Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products should be used.

All construction work or hazardous structures must be fenced off to prevent access by the public. When and if construction takes place during the Blue Flag season, all Blue Flag criteria must be met during the period of the construction. Also, construction activities must not affect beach users.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 25. Marine and freshwater sensitive habitats (such as coral reefs or seagrass beds) in the vicinity of the beach must be monitored.

If there is a sensitive habitat (such as a coral reef or seagrass beds) located within 500 metres from any part of a Blue Flag beach, a monitoring programme must be established to monitor the health of the habitat (coral reef or seagrass beds) at least once a season.

An expert organisation or relevant authority must be consulted regarding the monitoring and management of this sensitive area.

The “Reef Check” Coral Reef Monitoring Programme could be used. *See Appendix G for further details of the Reef Check monitoring system.*

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions where applicable.	

Criterion 26. A sustainable means of transportation should be promoted in the beach area.

This criterion refers to all actions that:

- encourage public and collective transport.
- encourage bicycling, bike renting and facilities for bike parking.
- support plans to organise traffic and reduce the peak traffic periods.
- develop pedestrian access.

The Blue Flag Programme encourages the promotion of alternative means of transportation, e.g. beach shuttles, bicycle rental or free bicycles. Such initiatives should be given particular attention in communities with high traffic densities in the beach area or where the beach is located in a sensitive area.

It is recommended that the local authority/beach operator implements a traffic management plan to reduce traffic volumes and the impact of traffic on land use and air pollution in the Blue Flag and

surrounding areas.

It is also recommended that information about the availability of sustainable transportation be made available on the Blue Flag information board.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
	All regions

SAFETY AND SERVICES

Criterion 27. Appropriate public safety control measures must be implemented.

The beach operator must ensure that safety measures comply with the any local, county, state, and federal legislation or regulations regarding beach safety.

Moreover, it is strongly recommended that the beach operator undertakes a safety risk assessment for each designated bathing area, see Appendix I. This safety risk assessment is to be carried out by the appropriate national authorities or, the United States Lifesaving Association, the Full Member organisation of the International Life Saving Federation (ILS). If the beach operator's lifeguard operation is currently certified by the United States Lifesaving Association and the applicant beach is actively guarded, USLA certification shall satisfy the requirement for a safety risk assessment.

The public safety control measures recommended by the safety risk assessment shall be implemented. For elements that do not directly impact safety, a phase-in period may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Irrespective of the above, a Blue Flag beach with an average of more than 50 beach users per day over a period of 4 weeks in the high season must be guarded/patrolled by an adequate number of lifeguards placed at appropriate intervals as recommended in the risk assessment and according to the beach characteristics and use.

Lifeguards must have appropriate national qualifications. provider agencies must be currently certified by the United States Lifesaving Association under the USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification Program (www.usla.org/certification). Lifeguards must only be employed for lifeguarding and not in combination with other duties, such as water sports, rentals and services, cleaning etc.

Lifeguards must be easily recognisable. It is therefore recommended that lifeguards wear the internationally recognised red/yellow uniform. Lifeguards must be provided with appropriate lifesaving equipment in accordance with USLA guidelines.

Bathing areas patrolled by lifeguards should be identified in a manner that is readily understandable to the public. The area must be defined on the map, on the information board and/or physically on the beach with markers or flags. Flags and signs should be in accordance with ISO 20712 and additional guidance from the International Life Saving Federation (www.ilsf.org). Additionally, Blue Flag international pictograms should be used.

On beaches, with low hazard risks and with average of less than 50 beach users per day over a period of four weeks during the high season public rescue equipment can replace lifeguards, unless legislation or the safety risk assessment states otherwise.

Public rescue equipment could include: throwable life rings or U.S. Coast Guard approved throwable devices, for example, as approved in the risk assessment. The equipment must be regularly inspected and must meet national/international guidelines.

Where public rescue equipment is provided, it must be clearly positioned, visible and located at regular intervals, allowing it to be reached quickly from any point on the beach. On beaches without lifeguards, maximum intervals of 100 metres between the equipment are recommended. Public rescue equipment must be accompanied by instructions for use and what to do in the event of a rescue. It is recommended that the location of equipment is identified by an emergency marker. The location of the lifesaving equipment/lifeguard tower must be indicated on the beach map on the Blue Flag information boards.

The period when the public rescue equipment and/or lifeguards, and first aid are available must be clearly marked on the Blue Flag information boards and at the lifeguard station(s). An explanation of the beach safety flag system in use must be provided.

The lifesaving equipment must include [information for who to call in an emergency and information on the location of the nearest](#) emergency phone unless the risk assessment states otherwise. The equipment must be regularly inspected and must [meet](#) national/international guidelines.

The beach operator must provide safety instructions which must be posted on the information board and other appropriate place(s) on the beach.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 28. First aid equipment must be available on the beach.

The first aid may be available by means of: a) a lifeguard on-site, and/or b) an attended first aid station with trained personnel, and/or c) equipment located in a shop or other beach facility at the beach, and/or d) [first aid box](#) directly available to the public on the beach.

First aid stations should have the following equipment a) adequate first aid stock (basic first aid supplies such as bandages, gloves, disinfectant, plasters, etc.) b) cold water and, preferably, hot water c) first aid bed d) oxygen cylinder and mask e) immobilizing trauma board (e.g. immobilizing blocks or spider harness) f) other equipment (shark attack pack), etc.

First-aid stations or the location of first-aid equipment must be clearly sign-posted so that beach visitors may easily locate them (including on the map of the Blue Flag information board). See Criterion 5. In addition, the period during which first aid is available must be clearly informed.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 29. Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks must be in place.

The emergency plan must provide a clearly identified procedure, facilitating efficiency in the case of an emergency. An emergency could result from oil spills, hazardous/toxic waste spills entering the beach from the sea, discharge of stormwater, hurricanes, algal blooms that could be dangerous, etc. An emergency in this context would be defined as an event which leads to a large scale impact on the beach or bathing water.

In order to quickly address pollution at the local level in coordination with local authorities, the following should be included:

- identification of individuals to contact in case of pollution.
- involvement of all administration services and individuals necessary to intervene.
- procedure for the protection or evacuation of people if necessary.
- procedure of public warning and information.
- withdrawal of the Blue Flag.

The emergency plan must specify who should be contacted in the case of a pollution incident. A responsible local person must be designated for this position. It must also specify who does what in the case of an emergency, including pollution incidents.

The emergency plan must furthermore prove compliance with other national legislation in the area, e.g. a national oil spill contingency plan.

As long as the hazard persists, the public should be informed of the pollution or potential danger by posting information at the beach, at all access points, in the media, tourist offices and through any other relevant means of communication. If the hazard is in the form of large scale polluted water, then the public must be informed that bathing is not safe and the beach should be closed to swimming. A case of pollution constitutes an infringement of Blue Flag criteria. To ensure the integrity of the Blue Flag, the flag must be temporarily withdrawn and information posted on the Blue Flag information board at the beach.

Emergency phone numbers for the police, first aid, and other relevant emergency numbers, along with the contact details for emergency services in the event of an oil or toxic chemical spill, must be posted at the beach, preferably on the Blue Flag information board.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 30. There must be management of different users and uses of the beach so as to prevent conflicts and accidents.

Beaches that support multiple activities must have management plans to prevent accidents and conflicts. This must include individual use zoning for swimmers, fishers, surfers, windsurfers and motor craft. At the same time, recreational use of the beach must be managed without a negative impact on the natural environment or the biodiversity of the beach, and with consideration for aesthetic issues.

Swimmers should be protected from all sea craft (motor, sail or pedal). Where necessary, zoning through the use of buoys, beacons or signs must be in place. The same must be done for surfing areas. Distinctions should be made between motor, paddle or sail craft. The use of these various activities must be separated.

Powerboats and powered craft should operate at least 100-200 metres away from the swimming area. The exact distance is to be determined by the local regulatory authority. Furthermore, patrons who operate powered craft must be provided with guidelines regarding the use of their craft and the location of different zones.

The relevant authority or designated persons, for example, lifeguards, must enforce the zoning of the different recreational areas in the water. Different activities on the beach must also be clearly marked and zoned.

Consideration must also be given to potential noise impact from various activities (motorised activities, stereos and kites, etc.).

If special temporary events are to be held on the beach, then these should take place outside of the main swimming areas. If special activity events prevent the beach from complying with any of the Blue Flag criteria, then the flag must be withdrawn for the duration of the event. When such an event takes place, users of the beach must be notified through public warnings at the beach and, preferably, in the local media prior to the event. *See Appendix I for guidelines for events on Blue Flag beaches.* Temporary events must not interfere with the site's compliance to the American's with Disabilities Act accessibility standards.

The beach itself must be managed in accordance with an environmental plan that protects sensitive species and habitats at the beach. This can be achieved through zoning or other preventative actions. In some cases, it may be necessary to restrict, disperse or otherwise manage certain activities. Beaches with sensitive dune or other habitats must be managed in such a way as to protect these sensitive habitats, e.g. protective fences. Recreational activities must be managed to prevent environmental degradation, e.g. coastal erosion or damage to vegetation, as well as to prevent birds and other wildlife, e.g. breeding turtles, from being disturbed.

Some particularly sensitive sites may require careful planning and management. In such cases, evidence must be provided to show that recognised local conservation organisations or groups have been approached and that a management plan has been drawn up.

Besides the use of physical separation of the different users, zoning must be clearly indicated on the map on the Blue Flag information board, and information could also be given at access and entry points (see Criterion 5).

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 31. There must be safety measures in place to protect users of the beach, and free access must be granted to the public.

The public must have access to Blue Flag beaches without being a client of a certain hotel or beach club. Access to the beach should preferably be free, although at some beaches public access is provided through charging a small and reasonable fee (no more than 30 US dollars a day).

Access to the beach must be safe. Beaches that are physically challenging must have facilities for safe access, e.g. secured steps with handrails. Similarly, there must be designated pedestrian crossings on busy roads in the vicinity of the beach.

Beach promenades and steps onto the beach must be complete and in good condition. The car park surface must be in good order. Parking places reserved for the use of disabled persons must be available and must be clearly marked. See Criterion 22 for information related to parking on the beach. Other access paths must also be safe, with regulations for cars and bicycles. Bicycle paths should be encouraged whenever relevant.

Where promenade edges are higher than 2 metres above the beach, warning signs and/or a barrier must be in place to prevent accidents. This is especially important where the beach surface is rocky. Consult criterion 33 regarding access for people with physical disabilities.

Visitors to the beach should be safe while on the beach. Users with limited abilities should be allowed to utilize necessary means of recreation as long as these means are not endangering other beachgoers. Information about safety must be readily available. The times of availability of lifesaving services and first aid must be clearly marked on the Blue Flag information boards or at the lifeguard station. In addition, an explanation of the emergency flag system, if in use, must be provided.

If needed, adequate security must be available at the beach in the form of trained and qualified guards responsible for patrolling. The guards must wear easily identified uniforms and should be able to present their licence as trained security personnel on request.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

Criterion 32. A supply of drinking water should be available at the beach.

There should be a potable water source at the beach, e.g. from a fountain, pipe, tap, etc. This source can be in the restroom/toilet block or on the beachfront, and it must be protected from contamination by animals. The source must comply with accessibility standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
	All regions

Criterion 33. At least one Blue Flag beach in each municipality must have access and facilities provided for people with limited ability

It is strongly recommended that all Blue Flag beaches have facilities designed for accessibility, granting people with limited abilities access to the beach, surrounding buildings and features, and the restroom facilities. It is a Blue Flag requirement that at least one beach in every municipality must provide these facilities. It is a Blue Flag recommendation that at this beach, if possible, there is at least one beach access route provided to the high tide level (tidal beaches), mean high water level (river beaches), or normal recreation water level (lake, pond, and reservoir beaches), as applicable.

Access to the beach must be facilitated by access ramps or other surfaces that are firm and stable, designed for users with various disabilities. It is recommended that the ramp/pathway design and surface material fit the natural environment and, wherever possible, environmentally friendly materials are used, i.e. recycled composite plastics.

Facilities must be designed for wheelchair use and other users with limited abilities and should comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act: Standards for Accessible Design, or Architectural Barriers Act: Accessibility Standards. The beach must comply with national regulations regarding access and facilities for people with disabilities. In addition, parking areas must have reserved spaces for accessible parking. If access ramps or pathways cannot be provided due to the topography, e.g. at steep cliffs, the local authority must apply for a dispensation for this criterion.

If none of the Blue Flag beaches in a local authority can provide access and facilities; that are accessible to individuals with limited abilities a request for a dispensation for this criterion must be

documented in the application.

IMPERATIVE CRITERION	GUIDELINE CRITERION
All regions	

APPENDIX A: Dispensation cases

All imperative criteria have to be complied with in order to obtain the Blue Flag. In the event of discussions arising out of the National Jury processes, and if an applicant has failed to fulfil some of the imperative criteria, the National Jury could forward a beach to the International Jury as a dispensation case. In the case of an application requiring a dispensation, the National Jury must forward the case to the International Jury with the necessary background documentation and an explanation as to what imperative criteria have not been fulfilled and giving reasons as to why a dispensation is requested.

Dispensation cases may arise when a beach has exceeded the required limit values of bathing water quality criteria because of a known, documented incident during the bathing season. Dispensation cases argued on the basis of incidents considered unusual but not atypical of the site are not considered.

Most frequently, request for dispensation is caused by exceptional/extreme weather conditions impacting on compliance with the water quality criteria. A National Jury can, in such cases, give a dispensation to omit a sample if the national authority's controlling bathing water quality regulations officially approve such a dispensation. Furthermore, an official statement from national weather authorities stating that the weather was exceptional must accompany the request for dispensation. For EU-member countries: if the request for dispensation of omission of a sample has been approved by the European Commission, and written proof of the European Commissions' approval is provided to the International Coordination, then the case is not considered as a dispensation case.

If a case of high pollution levels can be attributed by way of documentary evidence to other issues, such as an accident or another unavoidable incident, it is also possible to forward to the National Jury, such a candidate as a dispensation case. The documentation must show that the problem has been rectified and that the pollution was undoubtedly linked to the incident in question.

A beach can apply for dispensation when:

- facilities are under construction at the time of the application but will be finished by the start of the season.
- owing to extreme weather conditions, the imperative criteria on the beach are not met, e.g. signage or walkways, access to the beach has been damaged, etc. However, these must be rectified by the start of the season.
- a beach is not accessible to the physically disabled, yet it is the only beach in a local authority to run the Blue Flag Programme. The beach must present a plan on how and when the beach can fulfil the relevant criteria as a central part of the dispensation application.
- the location of the beach is such that the distance from services renders it unable to meet an imperative criterion, e.g. an accredited laboratory.

APPENDIX B: Information about the Blue Flag Programme must be displayed.

[Criterion 1]

THE BLUE FLAG PROGRAMME

This beach has been given Blue Flag accreditation. The Blue Flag is an environmental award, given to communities that make a special effort to manage their coastal/inland water environment and beaches with respect for the local environment and nature. To attain the Blue Flag, the community and its beach operators have to fulfil a number of criteria covering water quality, environmental information and education, safety, service and facilities.

This effort by the local community and its beach operators ensures that you and your family can expect to visit clean and safe environments at selected bathing sites. And it makes sure that the local community maintains a basis for sound development.

Facts about the Blue Flag:

The Blue Flag is awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a non-governmental environmental organisation, which is represented by national organisations in each of the participating countries.

The Blue Flag is an environmental award for beaches, sustainable boating tourism operators, and marinas. Only local authorities or private beach operators can apply for a Blue Flag for beaches. The criteria for Blue Flag beaches cover four main areas: a) water quality, b) environmental information and education, c) environmental management, and d) safety and services.

The criteria of the Programme are developed over time so that participating beach operators have to keep working on solving relevant environmental problems to get the Blue Flag. Blue Flag accreditation is only given for one season at a time, and the award is only valid as long as the criteria are fulfilled. When this is not the case, the responsible persons at the local level are obligated to take the Blue Flag down.

The national FEE member organisation monitors the Blue Flag sites during the season.

You can help the Programme by also taking actions to protect the environment:

Use the litter-bins on the beach and recycle waste if possible.

Use public transport, walk or rent a bike to get to the beach.

Obey the beach code of conduct.

Enjoy the nature of the beach and its surroundings, and treat it with respect.

Choose a holiday destination that cares for its environment - and an environmentally friendly hotel too, if possible. Along with the Blue Flag, the Foundation for Environmental Education also develops another eco-label for touristic enterprises: Green Key. Find more information at: www.green-key.org

Local, National and International Blue Flag responsible parties:

Name and address of the local responsible person, national Blue Flag operator and the International Co-ordination must be posted.

Text to accompany the names and addresses could be the following: "These are the names and addresses of the local, national and international Blue Flag contacts. It will assist the Programme, if you could report on how these beaches comply with the Blue Flag standards. In this way, you can help ensure that the Blue Flag standard continues to be met."

Types of Activities

There must be a mixture of different types of environmental educational activities for different user groups. Some activities must be carried out at the beach and have a direct focus on the beach or coastal environment. The different types of activities can be divided into five categories:

Activities for Passive Participation: This could include exhibitions, films, presentations, slide shows, conferences, debates, presentations by international experts, etc.

Activities for Active Participation: This includes guided tours, educational games, theatre/plays, cleaning days, coast observation days, diving/snorkelling orientation sessions, beach inspections, photography or drawing contests, nature conservation projects, green technology projects, "Adopt a Beach" programmes, community coastal monitoring programmes, etc.

Training Activities: This could be training for teachers, beach or marina staff, persons in charge of children groups, lifeguards, cleaners, law enforcement officers, specific national training programmes, etc.

Publishing and Media: The production of leaflets, stickers, interpretive signs, postcards, school and municipal newsletters, books, T-shirts, bags, posters, radio broadcasts, etc.

Blue Flag Environmental Information Centre: It is strongly recommended that Blue Flag beaches provide an Environmental Information Centre (station, kiosk), where specific information about Blue Flag and environmental education issues can be provided. Such a centre must offer both activities and exhibitions and provide environmental and nature information in order to qualify as an environmental interpretation or education centre. Information about its location and activities must be provided at the beach or in nearby tourist information offices. The centre should be open to, and have activities and information for the general public, not only local school children.

Target groups

The activities should target a wide range of different groups. It is important that the beach operator, together with other operators in the area, organise a programme to educate and raise awareness within the many different interest groups that influence the use of the local environment. These interest groups could be visitors, locals, tourism employees, fishermen, local industries, etc.

The types, number and target groups of activities should match the situation. For example, in a major tourist destination, more than one activity per season should be available to the general public.

Connection with existing programmes

The activities can be part of already existing environmental education programmes, implemented either on-site or in the local community (Sustainable Development Goals related activities, Eco-Schools activities, etc.). It is also recommended that the beach operator work together with local NGOs in setting up educational activities.

Information about Activities

Information about the publicly accessible activities must be made available at the beach and preferably also in local tourism newspapers or magazines or posted in local tourism offices. The published information should include: the kind of activities, when and where are they going to take place, who they are for, etc.

Not Acceptable

Activities that are not acceptable for meeting this criterion are:

Activities held to meet other Blue Flag criteria such as the general cleaning of the beach, waste management, recycling, and posted environmental information otherwise required on the information board (i.e. information on surrounding sensitive environments), etc.

Activities focusing only on tourism without a specific focus on sustainable tourism.

Activities otherwise implemented by the local authority or beach operator as part of the standard management of health, safety, transportation or tourism.

APPENDIX D: Recommendations for presenting water quality information on Blue Flag beaches.
Example of a coastal water beach:
[Criterion 3]

Beach: _____
 Contact person: _____

Local authority: _____
 Telephone no: _____

Date												
Escherichiacoli / Faecal coliform												
☺ < 250cfu/100ml												
☹ >250cfu/100 ml												
Intestinal Enterococci / Faecal streptococci												
☺ <100/100 ml												
☹ >100/100 ml												

<p>Blue Flag and bathing water quality</p> <p>This beach has met the Blue Flag water quality standards. The bathing water is continuously monitored for the different types of bacteria shown in the tables. The bathing water is tested at least every 31 days. In the table, you can see when the water has been analysed and how many bacteria were found.</p> <p>A small number of bacteria tells you that the water is very clean - a high number of bacteria tells you that the water may be polluted and could contain bacteria from sewage.</p>	What do the results mean?	
	Faecal coliform / E.coli	Faecal streptococci / Intestinal enterococci
	☺ Below 250	☺ Below 100
<i>Excellent bathing water</i>		
☹ Above 250	☹ Above 100	
<i>Is allowed a few times during the season</i>		

APPENDIX E: the 95th percentile

The 95th percentile is a calculation method used to obtain the average amount of pollution. In terms of Bathing Water sampling results, the value shows the results that are less than or equal to the limit values 95% of the time. The standards refer to values that would be exceeded by less than 5% of the time.

The 95th percentile is derived through the following calculation (based on the explanation in the EU Bathing Water Directive 2006):

1. Take the log₁₀ value of all bacterial enumerations in the data sequence to be evaluated. Zero values cannot be used and should be replaced by a value of 1 (or the minimum value allowed)
2. Calculate the mean of the log₁₀ values (μ)
3. Calculate the standard deviation of the log₁₀ values (σ)
4. The upper 95 percentile is derived from the following equation: $\text{antilog}(\mu + 1,65 \sigma)$
5. The resulting value must be within the limit values as stated above

A calculating spreadsheet is available on the Blue Flag Podio Library.

APPENDIX F: Beach Litter Measuring System – a method of mapping the status of litter on a beach [Criterion 15]

In order to determine the cleanliness on the beach, the Beach Litter Measuring System could be used by the beach manager or the National Operator when conducting beach monitoring visits.

The system differentiates between bulky litter (>10 cm) and fine litter (<10 cm). It takes a closer look at the amount of litter in defined representative areas on the beach. According to the amount of litter, beaches are classified into different cleanliness levels (A+ to D). The method combines taking pictures and making counts.

At a Blue Flag Beach, the cleanliness level should be A+ or A.

Step by step guidance on how to define your beach's cleanliness level:

Bulky Litter

1. Define an area of 100 m² (10 m x 10 m) for your bulky litter count and take a photo (Choose the dirtiest 100 m² that you can find on the beach).
2. Count the units of bulky litter (>10 cm) within the area.
3. Take a picture of the area (to keep as proof),
4. Determine the cleanliness level with the help of the beach litter indicator (see below)

Fine Litter

1. Define an area of 1 m² for your fine litter count and take a photo (choose the dirtiest area within the 1 m²)
2. Count units of fine litter (<10 cm) within the area
3. Take a picture of the area (to keep as proof)
4. Determine the cleanliness level with the help of the beach litter indicator (see below)

Beach Litter Indicator

Number of litter units per area	Cleanliness level
0	A+ Very Clean
1-3	A Clean
4-10	B Moderately Clean
11-25	C Dirty
> 25	D Very Dirty

General

1. Keep a record of your measurements (date, time, location, circumstances, weather conditions, cleanliness level(s) for bulky litter, cleanliness level(s) for fine litter, other comments).
2. Repeat these steps at different locations along the beach if possible.
3. Repeat the measurement at different times during a season and different times of the day if possible.

It is important to keep in mind that starting to use this system might require more time in the beginning.

Once you get some exercise or training, it will be a quick, easy and helpful tool.

For a more detailed version of the beach litter indicator or a description of the system, please visit the Blue Flag website or contact the Blue Flag International Head Office.

1 The Beach Litter Measuring System was developed by the Keep Holland Tidy Foundation and the Royal Dutch Touring Club.

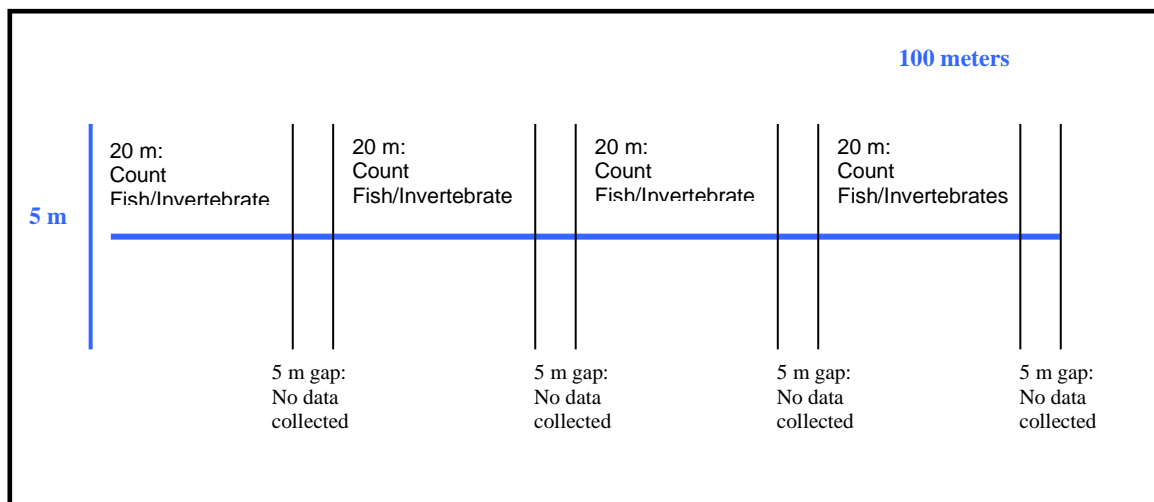
Below is a very brief description of the content of the “Reef Check” monitoring programme. For full information about the “Reef Check” system and information about national/international support, please consult <http://www.reefcheck.org>.

“Reef Check” is designed for use by volunteer, non-scientist snorkelers or scuba divers. A local “Reef Check” team should be established with a scientist and a group of snorkelers and divers trained to carry out the analyses. The team members must be skilled at identifying the indicator organisms and substrate categories. It is strongly recommended that the team attend a “Reef Check” training session. If there are already “Reef Check” teams established at the national or local level, these teams can be approached for support.

In order to carry out the monitoring, the following equipment is necessary: a copy of the instruction manual, indicator organism ID cards/books, GPS, transect lines, underwater paper and waterproof pencils/markers, buoys, plumb line and safety gear.

If possible, the monitoring should take place at two depths: shallow water (2-6 metre depth) and mid-reef (6-12 metre depth). Reefs in many areas are, however, not suitable for monitoring at more than one depth.

A 100-metre transect should be established (preferably parallel to the shore). The transect must be divided into 4 x 20-metre observation areas divided by 4 x 5-metre gaps. For re-survey, it is



important to document or permanently mark the transect start/endpoints.

The “Reef Check” coral reef monitoring program consists of four types of data collection methods: 1) Site description (environmental conditions and ratings of human impacts), 2) Fish counts, 3) Invertebrate counts, 4) Substrate type measurements.

The site description includes information about: location (overall and exact location), survey time, nearby population, weather conditions, rating of human impacts on the coral reef and the possible protection of the coral reef. The substrate survey includes the record of the substrate at points with 0.5-meter intervals along the 4 x 20-metre transect. The substrate must be classified in one of the following categories: hard coral, soft coral, recently killed coral, nutrient indicator algae, sponge, rock, rubble, sand, silt/clay, or other substrate. In the “Reef Check” manual, there is more information about how to conduct the substrate survey and classify the substrate.

The level of coral bleaching, presence of coral disease, presence of litter and coral damage must be

noted.

Each region has different indicator fish and invertebrate species that should be counted along the 4 x 20-metre transect. In the “Reef Check” website and manual, there is more information about the fish and invertebrate species to include in the counting and information about how to conduct the counts. Finally, it is recommended to supplement the survey with photo and/or video documentation.

APPENDIX H: Guidelines for events on Blue Flag beaches

[Criterion 30]

Should events be planned for Blue Flag beaches, it is recommended that the beach operator attempt to achieve a win-win situation regarding both hosting the event and maintaining Blue Flag status. Events on Blue Flag beaches are not incompatible with the management of the Blue Flag Programme. However, the event should not compromise Blue Flag standards. The Blue Flag should not be lowered simply because an event is planned on the beach.

The decision to allow events to take place on beaches is ultimately the decision of the beach operator managing that facility and would, as such, be guided by local by-laws and other legislation. Should the beach operator be concerned about potential impacts on Blue Flag standards,, early contact and discussion with the National Operator is recommended. It is reiterated that it is the responsibility of the beach operator to ensure that Blue Flag standards are met.

If necessary, additional resources, e.g. cleaning staff, portable toilets, etc. should be brought in to ensure that the standards do not drop.

Wherever possible, the Blue Flag area should be zoned (including the use of buoys – where appropriate – in the water) so that a designated Blue Flag swimming area is still retained and the beach can still fly the flag. It is not recommended that the whole beach be dedicated to the event.

Wherever possible, every attempt should be made to ensure that all the Blue Flag standards are still met on the beach during the event.

In terms of the criteria of Blue Flag, compliance with all environmental and building legislation also applies to any events and/or the construction of facilities on the beach. This includes the possibility of undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments or producing environmental reports on the impact of the event on the natural surroundings. In this case, permission from the relevant environmental authorities in the region would be necessary.

The public must be given advance warning of any events planned for Blue Flag beaches. This could be in the form of posters or other information at the beach, through announcements in the local media, or on local authority/beach operator websites if appropriate. A notice indicating details of the event, duration of the event, where more information can be obtained, where complaints can be made, etc. must be posted at the beach.

In case of an activity that takes place on the beach after hours, i.e. for those beaches that withdraw the flag at the end of the day when criteria are no longer met, the beach operator must ensure that the beach and the facilities are cleaned and returned to order before the flag is due to be raised the next morning, even if this means the cleaning teams must work through the night. So, if the flag is normally raised at 08h00 in the morning, the facilities must meet Blue Flag standards by 08h00 in the morning.

It is recommended that the local authority/beach operator consider a fee to be levied on the organisers of events hosted on Blue Flag beaches and that this income be used to make improvements to the beach or within the local area.

Appendix I – Guidance on ILS Safety Risk Assessment for Beaches [Criterion 27]

INTRODUCTION

The International Lifesaving Federation (ILS) is the world authority in the global effort to prevent drowning and works with national life-saving organisations to improve drowning prevention, water safety, water rescue, lifesaving, lifeguarding and lifesaving sport. FEE and ILS have therefore entered a Memorandum of Understanding where FEE recognises ILS as being the world authority in the global effort to prevent drowning.

FEE encourages National Operators and local authorities to work with ILS national organisations when possible.

ILS will undertake risk assessments all over the world and take care that information boards, according to ISO 20712, are placed at as many beaches as possible. When this is not possible, an independent risk assessment may be conducted. Below are guidelines produced by ILS.

BACKGROUND

Risk management can be defined as a logical and systematic approach of identifying, analysing, assessing, countering, monitoring and communicating risks associated with any activity or process. In its *Guidelines for safe recreational water environments (Vol.1)* the World Health Organization states: 'Assessment of hazard and risk inform the development of policies for controlling and managing risks to health and well-being in water recreation. ... The assessment of a beach or water should take into account several key considerations, including:

- the presence and nature of natural or artificial hazards,
- the severity of the hazards as related to health outcomes,
- the availability and applicability of remedial actions,
- the frequency and density of use,
- the level of development.

PRINCIPLES

The purpose of hazard and risk assessment is to assess the probability that certain events will take place and assess the potential adverse impact these events may have on people, property or the environment, or other adverse outcomes.

ILS sees the implementation of risk assessments for all aquatic locations as a key element of the strategies to reduce injury and loss of life or other adverse impacts on the aquatic environment.

A generic framework and the main elements of the risk management process identified are:

- Communication and consultation
- Establishing the context
- Risk identification
- Risk analysis
- Risk evaluation
- Development of a risk control measures plan
- Monitor and review

This framework is consistent with the international standard ISO 31000 – Risk Management – Guidelines on principles and implementation of risk management.

The basic rationale for conducting a risk assessment is:

1. Identify the hazards of a particular location and assess the risks of possible human interaction with the hazard.
2. Provide the basis for a risk management plan.
3. Improve safety and reduce the risk of death or injury at the location.
4. Ensure the best use of resources and encourage effective management and cost-effective operations.
5. Reduce the potential for litigation stemming from accident and management practices.
6. Provide guidance for the development of policy, procedure and practices.

A **hazard** is a source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause a loss.

The term **risk** is used to describe the probability that a given exposure to a hazard will lead to an adverse outcome.

The job of accurately analysing the potential personal risk to the public at a coastal and/or beach location is complex. The determination and evaluation of potential risks is made more complicated in coastal regions due to the continually changing nature of the environment. Coastal regions are dynamic environments where the presence and level of a potential danger varies with numerous factors such as time, water conditions, weather and human interaction.

In order to effectively assess hazards and their associated risks, the assessor must understand all the contributing factors that come together to create the danger, for example, the beach topography, the prevailing weather and wave climates, and the number of people who use the beach and their chosen activities.

Consideration is required to counter (control) and manage the risks to ensure visitors can enjoy the safest aquatic recreation possible. Solutions may include any one or combination of the following “hierarchy” of controls.

1. Removal of risk; hazards, people or both, where possible (Elimination).
2. Remove access to the location at which the hazard may present a risk (Isolation).
3. Share the risk with another party or parties, for example through contracts, partnerships or insurance (Transfer).
4. Install a barrier such as a fence or vegetation (Engineering control).
5. Management (Administrative) controls that may include:
 - a. Community education programmes to raise awareness of potential hazards.
 - b. International standard signage to ISP 20712, which will enable visitors to make informed decisions on whether they wish to proceed into an area or undertake a particular activity.
 - c. Supervision through the deployment of appropriately trained personnel, such as lifeguards.
 - d. Implementation of appropriate emergency management systems.
 - e. Use and appropriate positioning of public rescue equipment, such as lifebuoys/rings.
 - f. Zoning, such as the use of marker buoys and flags to define areas in which non-compatible activities should be conducted such as powerboats, swimming and sailing.
6. Retain and management of the risk (Residual risk).

REFERENCES

International Life Saving Federation (ILS), 2007, ILS Beach Risk Assessment Policy.
International Life Saving Federation of Europe (ILSE), 2007, ILSE Risk Assessment Guidelines.
International Life Saving Federation of Europe (ILSE), 2010, ILSE Designated Bathing Area Risk Assessment Report.
International Standards Organisation (ISO), 2008, ISO 20712 Water Safety Signs and Beach Safety Flags (Parts 1, 2 & 3).
Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), 2007, *A guide to coastal public rescue equipment*
World Health Organisation (WHO), 2003, *Guidelines for safe recreational waters Volume 1 - Coastal and freshwaters.*

Appendix J – Blue Flag Guidelines for further developments of your beach

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Information about the Blue Flag Programme and the other FEE eco-labels must be displayed. **The staff on the beach must be educated about Blue Flag and be able to provide information about it to the beach users.**

Twice a year, there is a meeting with the staff about BF measurements/environment/sustainability.

This is preferably done before and after the Blue Flag season, but for those beaches with year-long seasons, meetings can be held every six months.
The discussions can be verified by reports of minutes of management meetings.

Every employee knows about BF, can communicate about BF with the guests

There is an internal system in the beach management so that new staff is informed about the Blue Flag Programme, and that, especially for new employees, there is training about what Blue Flag criteria mean in their job. Part-time staff employed in high-season is also informed about Blue Flag.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The water consumption in the sanitary facilities and showers must be controlled.

1. There is a maximum flow of 9 /minute out of showers
2. There is a maximum flow of 6 litres/minute out of the taps.
3. There is a maximum flow of 6 litres per toilet flush.

The beach uses water-saving measures in taps, showers and toilets. The flow of water taps for washbasins is up to 6 litres per minute. The flow of showers is up to 9 litres per minute. For the flushing of all toilets, not more than 6 litres of water are used.

The beach management should also influence the water consumption of private companies or businesses on the beach, such as restaurants, which could then implement the Green Key criteria and obtain the Green Key certification.

Exceptions:

When toilets have a greywater system or have a stop button, a maximum of 9 litres per flush is sufficient.

In addition to the reduction of water consumption, the beach takes additional measures. These could include the use of pressure or sensor faucets, a system to stop the water flow easily, payment system (coins, Sep key), use of greywater, a water recycling system, etc.

There must be an environmental policy and an environmental plan for the beach. The plan should include references to water management, waste and energy consumption, health and safety issues as well as the use of environmentally friendly products wherever possible. All employees must be informed and educated about these issues.

→ same as for marinas and boats

The beach, including the lifeguard station and private businesses, registers its annual consumption data of energy, water, waste, and (optionally) cleaning products. These data are converted into indices. An excel sheet is used for this purpose.

The records must show the following information:

- quantities of gas, electricity, water,
- all charges for gas, electricity, water,
- cost per unit consumption of gas, electricity, water.

There is an energy control visit every 5 years

The beach management has commissioned a further study of the energy performance of the recommended measures. The measures are included in the sustainability programme (guideline 2).

Only environmentally friendly cleaning products (which are certified with an ecolabel) must be used for the cleaning of the facilities on the beach.

Sanitary and interior cleaning products must have an accredited environmental label or must be products not included in the blacklist (see attachment 1: Green Key blacklist).

Sanitary and interior cleaners must have an eco-label, for example. European Ecolabel, Nordic Swan and Blue Angel).

When outsourcing the cleaning operations, the existing contract should be reviewed with the above terms to be included in the next contract review, and definitely within one year after the initial assessment for the Blue Flag.

Exception:

Specific cleaners that are regulated by laws for health and safety, hygiene and/or food safety (HACCP), either periodically or in case of an emergency, are not covered by this criterion.

For daily cleaning activities, only fibre cloth products are used.

Only environmentally-friendly toiletries, paper towels and toilet papers must be provided in the sanitary facilities on the beach. Soap and other personal care products must be provided in dispensers with a dosing system.

Paper towels and toilet paper must be made of non-chlorine bleached paper or must have an eco-label.

Only energy-efficient lighting must be used. Sensors which regulate the use of the light should be installed wherever considered as being useful.

All lighting is energy efficient (PSL, TL, SL, LED, etc.). Not later than one year after the inspection of the beach, energy-efficient lighting is used in and around (= outdoors) the buildings. For bulbs not meeting the criterion, the beach provides a substitution plan.

Energy-efficient lighting has a minimum light output of 40 lumen/watt. PL, TL, SL and LED lighting satisfy this condition. Halogen lighting and traditional light bulbs are not to be used on the beach anymore.

If there is no suitable alternative, a beach may get a dispensation for this point. The beach operator must demonstrate that it can not be technically realized or that the required investment has a payback period of > 5 years.

In and around the buildings on the beach, there is a substantial use of lighting sensors to prevent unnecessary illumination.

- Explanation: Lighting Sensors can turn lights on/off based on, for example, the presence of people (motion sensor) or too little light (light sensor). In this manner, unnecessary operation of lamps is prevented.

The energy supply on the beach should be based on renewable sources.

The beach uses renewable energy sources.

- Explanation: This includes renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and water; through solar, windmills, photovoltaic solar cells (electricity generation) or similar renewable energy, tylen hose for heating (tap) water etc.
100% of the total amount of electricity is generated sustainably.
- Explanation: Sustainably generated electricity refers to electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and water. There are various names used: green energy, green electricity or natural electricity.

Green gas: The total amount of purchased gas is generated sustainably from biomass. Explanation: Green gas is gas produced from biomass. This "biogas" is brought into the natural gas, thus reducing the use of existing fossil natural gas resources. If you purchase green gas, then this is accompanied by a certificate of origin.

The beach and beach equipment/facilities should aim at being climate neutral.

The beach management carries out a CO₂ study for its activities (e.g. to set a fixed CO₂ footprint) to investigate if it can be carbon neutral.

Explanation: Working with CO₂ emission certificates is always the culmination of activities. Save first, then see whether the beach itself can generate renewable energy. The third step is to neutralize CO₂ emissions by purchasing CO₂ certificates for the remaining CO₂ emissions.

Artificially made green areas and gardens on the beach must be maintained sustainably.

Chemical pesticides and fertilizers cannot be used more than once a year unless there is no organic or natural equivalent.

As no chemical pesticides or fertilizers should be used on the establishment's premises, an alternative could be to use gas flames or mechanical herbicides. By using gas flames, the best effect is achieved if the plants are not burned down to the ground but rather just scorched.

Flowers and gardens must be watered in the early morning or after sunset

This criterion aims to reduce the water consumption, especially when tap water is used for watering. It is the best way to avoid evaporation and have the best impact on the roots of plants.

Rainwater is collected and used for watering flowers and gardens

This criterion also aims to reduce tap water consumption. An alternative water system to store and use rainwater limits the use of freshwater for watering.

When planting new green areas, endemic or native species are used.

Endemic species use less water than non-endemic, and their use preserves the biodiversity of the surroundings.

When making a plan for new green areas, think of the following components:

- a. introduction (including business data);
- b. a global inventory of paved surfaces, plant and trees species on and around the beach and a description of present landscape elements;
- c. a description of how current and future natural areas on and around the beach are handled (e.g., in terms of pruning, lawn mowing, weed control etc.);
- d. a management plan for nature on and around the beach. This plan looks at the desired future development;
- e. summary measures and costs of the plan;
- f. + appendices outline.

Artificially made beaches must be created and maintained sustainably.

A beach which has been artificially created must be managed in a sustainable way. Ecological evaluations must be undertaken in order to ensure a positive impact.

For example, the ecological impact of the sand brought to create the beach must be minimised as much as possible.

The facilities on the beach must be made of environmentally friendly materials. Local suppliers should be preferably used when equipping the beach with new buildings, infrastructure or furniture.

Encompasses buildings, furniture, infrastructure etc.

Also: Environmental friendly painting

For painting works, less environmentally harmful paints that have an eco-label are used. Explanation: When painting the buildings on the beach, use only environmentally friendly interior and exterior paint. The paints have a label such as Ecolabel, EU ecolabel or similar.

During new construction, reconstruction or renovation of the beach, the business will take into account the environment and sustainability of materials used.

Explanation:

- The purchased wood that is used for building is durable'
- Certified wood that has been approved by national authorities is used, for example, TPAC (Timber Procurement Assessment Committee) approved.
- The Energy Performance Coefficient (EPC) is at least 5% lower than required in national legislation.
- Other measures could be: buffering rainwater, water conservation, protection of biodiversity, promotion of environmentally friendly mobility or reduction of emissions and pollution by equipment used for building or by innovations in the use of the building.

Based on the sustainable procurement policy, the beach management makes demands on its suppliers. The beach management asks suppliers for a signed declaration of delivery of sustainable products and services.

Explanation: A sustainability declaration is a document describing the requirements of the beach management from suppliers and in which the supplier declares to be committed to this effect.

CSR

The beach management has a CSR policy, covering the areas of Human Rights, Labour Equity, Environmental Education, and Anti-Corruption.

There is a declaration of CSR policy by the beach management

The beach management has a CSR policy statement in which it defines its objectives on sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The statement must be prominently displayed.

→ Explanation:

A CSR policy is a statement of the senior management of the beach, indicating that sustainability and CSR are an integral part of business.

The statement pays at least attention to:

- general CSR objectives/sustainability outline, policy concern for people/planet/profit, and structural part of business objectives,
- implementation activities, which should be in accordance with company policies and procedures established,

- general rules regarding the implementation of the company's sustainability policy, with regard to the fulfilment of legal requirements, staff training and recording/monitoring of the environmental performance of the company.

The beach develops a CSR programme for the next three years

The sustainability program covers three years, and shows which environmental sustainability actions will take place to reduce the consumption of gas, water, electricity and waste (prevention) in that period. The policy also includes activities and measures in the area of procurement, transport management, community involvement, etc. Take the international Blue Flag criteria as a guide.

Every employee can provide input to CSR

The beach management has the policy that all staff members can provide input to CSR/Sustainability. For example, there is a "suggestion box" where the staff can submit their ideas about increasing sustainability on the beach.

The beach management takes at least two measures during the controlling period to promote community involvement and social responsibility.

Social/community involvement

The beach management takes at least two measures to encourage sustainable relationships in the immediate environment and to fulfil its commitment to perform better in the social field.

For example, the beach management:

- promotes good relations with local residents/stakeholders, and works on a long-term relationship with them (offers free facilities, organizes free events, provides an annual offering to compensate for any inconvenience).
- stimulates the local economy/
- works with other local organizations, such as local associations, environmental organisations, etc.
- is actively involved in a charity or conservation organization.
- provides free communication platforms for charity.
- distributes sustainable gifts and/or sale items.
- sponsors social/community organisations, directly or indirectly, materially or immaterially, or is committed to a social purpose
- participates actively in charity work.

Blacklist Green Key cleaning products.

FEE/Green Key

Blacklist for cleaning products in the Green Key Programme

The Blacklist is prepared by the consultant organisation, Ecoconso.

This list covers multi-purpose and sanitation products (typical cleaning products). For cleaning in any other specific area that needs special products, one must check for compliance with national legislation.

Surfactants:

Surfactants that are not readily biodegradable under aerobic condition

Surfactants that are not biodegradable under anaerobic conditions and that are classified with H400/R50 (very toxic to aquatic life), Alkylphenoethoxylates (APEOs), onylphenoethoxylates (NPEOs) and derivatives.

Quaternary ammonium compounds that are not readily biodegradable.

Sequestering or anti-scaling agents:

EDTA (ethylenediamine tetraacetate) and its salts, phosphates.

Acids:

Phosphoric acid, hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid.

Bases:

Ammonium hydroxide.

Solvents:

Detergents containing more than 6% by weight of VOCs with a boiling point lower than 150°C.

Chlorine:

Reactive chloro-compounds (such as sodium hypochloride).

Conservators:

Formaldehyde.

Antimicrobial or disinfecting ingredients added for other purposes than preservation.

Bioaccumulable preservatives classified as H410, H411, R50/53 or R51/53. Preservatives are not regarded as bioaccumulable if BCF < 100 (bioconcentration factor) or logKow < 3 (log octanol/water partition coefficient)