

# **St. John Ambulance ~ Malta**

St John Ambulance is a voluntary organisation, that forms part of the 'Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem', which was established by Queen Victoria in 1888. The St. John Council, chaired by His Honour Chief Justice Professor JJ Cremona Emeritus, is the governing body of the organisation. Under the Council there are three branches. These are The Training Association, First Aid & Nursing and The Rescue Corps.

The Training Association (also known as The Training Branch), was founded in 1882. This was the first branch of St. John Ambulance which was formed outside of the United Kingdom. Its aim is to teach First Aid to the general public and members of St. John Ambulance. First Aid courses conducted by St. John Ambulance are recognised and approved by the Occupational Health & Safety Authority. Training for its Trainers is closely monitored by the UK and at least twice a year National Trainer Verifiers come to Malta to ensure that all Instructors are up to standard and properly updated. In Malta the Training Association is run by the Director of Training H.E. Comm. Dr. Jaime H. Cremona. The Secretary of Courses is Mr. Franco J. Piccinino, Deputy Secretary of Courses is Ms Victoria Vincenti. We have two Training Development Advisors (TDA) which are Mr. Paul Spiteri and Mr. Franco J. Piccinino. These TDA's continuously monitor the training which is being conducted and periodically meet with Trainers to discuss their training procedures. Each year for the past 11 years The Training Association has broken the record which it had set the previous year in the amount of courses held and number of certificates issued. The University of Malta is now giving two credits for First Aid courses conducted by St. John Ambulance. Also some faculties have

made it a pre-requisite for their students in order to complete their course. Other courses are also available to children age 9 to 15 years at schools, Scouts/Guides and other youth organisations.

The First Aid & Nursing, formerly known as the “Brigade” was formed in 1909 with its first “Division” in Valletta. It has a well trained staff of qualified First Aiders, who are always ready to provide assistance, whilst carrying out public duties such as sports events, culture activities and other functions. First Aid & Nursing also provides the government with a large number of First Aiders, as well as a small fleet of ambulances, which would be deployed to assist in the event of a national emergency. Nurses and doctors also form part of this section and many of the nurses are also Trainers with the Training Association.

By 1915, with the First World War at its peak, and Malta being used as a Mediterranean Hospital for the many injured soldiers, the St John Ambulance Association offered intensive training courses in First Aid for military and civilian personnel and provided Surgeons and First Aiders from its Brigade to work in hospitals as well as in “Comfort Depots” for convalescing servicemen. The Second World War also saw St John Ambulance serving in Hospitals, First Aid posts and in the Civil Defence Corps and Decontamination Centres. Today, the First Aid & Nursing section is run by its Commissioner Mrs. Gemma Sirol, it has got four *open* Divisions, which have an average of 50 members each. These are Birzebbugia, Paola/Tarxien, Valletta and Vittoriosa. Open Divisions are those Divisions which members of the general public can join. There are also three closed Divisions which form part of private companies who’s employees are trained and ready to help in case of an emergency.

There is also a “Cadet” section consisting 11 to 17 year olds, who learn First Aid, but are not trained to treat the more seriously injured casualties, this is done by adult members (18 years old and over). Adult members are trained in more advanced techniques of First Aid and form part of First Aid teams or ambulance crews while on public duties, which may vary in nature and include sports marathons, musical concerts, duties at the Trade Fair grounds or on Beach First Aid posts, horse racing, football matches, village feasts, air shows, Royal visits, assistance to the disabled and the elderly, work with the film industry while filming is in progress, and many other duties. Children age 6 to 10 form part of the Badgers, where they learn First Aid and other valuable life skills.

To give a general idea of what this work involves, a yearly average of time spent on ambulance duties alone would total up to 1700 hours and would normally include the conveyance of about 30 persons to hospitals or health centres, plus having treated approximately 400 others on-site. One should remember that all this work is done on a voluntary basis, and that St John Ambulance only gets a small donation from the activity organiser for its service; a donation, which is used on fuel and maintenance expenses for the ambulances as well as on training material and first aid equipment.

The St John Rescue Corps, run by the Marquis Buttigieg de Piro, was established in 1991. It has approximately three hundred members (all over 18 years of age), who are trained in methods of rescue, and who, unlike their colleagues in the First Aid & Nursing section of St John, do not carry out public duties, but are on standby for deployment in national emergencies and situations. They also assist in beach post duties in summer and in duties where large amounts of people are expected to attend.

Many companies and organisations in Malta have encouraged their employees to join the St John Rescue Corps, as in most cases, the employees are retained in a Division which bears the name of the company and are trained in basic first aid, rescue and evacuation techniques. By sponsoring the Division the company or organisation get a team of Health & Safety conscious and rescue-trained employees in return, from which the company would surely benefit if accidents ever had to occur at the place of work.

Finally, the Headquarters Staff, who is responsible for the smooth running of St John Ambulance activities. The Chief Executive Officer is Mr. Franco J. Piccinino, who along with the Headquarters Staff provides support to all branches of the organization. All three Heads of the different branches reported directly to the Commander, Brigadier Carmel Vassallo, who is also the First Vice Chairman of the St. John Council.

Anybody interested in taking a first aid course or in having a course conducted at their company/organisation, or is interested in joining St John Ambulance, is kindly requested to phone 21245740 or write to the following address.

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5, Independence Square  
Valletta VLT 1520

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