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Wales

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Girl, 10, saved by water camera alert

Aug 31 2005

icWales

A girl has become the first UK swimmer to be saved from drowning by hi-tech underwater safety cameras, it emerged today.

The 10-year-old girl fell unconscious after plunging 12ft 6ins into the deep end of Bangor Swimming Pool, in north Wales.

Within 40 seconds, one of four underwater safety cameras spotted the girl and alerted lifeguards via a pager message.

A lifeguard dived into the water and pulled the girl to safety.

She was given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and treated in hospital but has made a full recovery since the incident on Wednesday last week.

It is said to be the first time a UK swimmer has been saved by the camera safety system, called Poseidon.

The system, which was fitted to the Bangor pool in March 2003 at a cost of £65,000, involves eight overhead and four underwater cameras.

The technology can detect movement, trajectory and texture of underwater objects.

It then compares images to a database of thousands of examples of swimmers in trouble.

If it finds a match, it alerts lifeguards using a pager message which also displays a diagram showing the location of the stricken swimmer.

The system has been fitted to eight UK pools and 120 worldwide.

Brian Evans, head of leisure services on Gwynedd Council, said: "The incident was what we would call a 'silent drowning'.

"The girl did not struggle or scream, and there was no visible occurrence that caused her to lose consciousness.

"She just jumped into the water and drifted down to the bottom, as if she was going to sleep.

"That is the worst case scenario for a lifeguard, and is exactly the sort of thing that Poseidon, our Third Eye, is there to deal with.

"The pool was very busy and the lifeguards were at full stretch. She may well owe her life to the system."

Mr Evans said Poseidon was introduced in Bangor because the pool is deep and has high surface glare, which reduces a lifeguard's view of the bottom.

He added: "The council was looking at reducing the depth of the pool, which would have meant removing the diving boards.

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Job title

e.g. secretary

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Location

(UK Postcode)

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Minimum price £

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Location

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Quick Vote

Do you wish you'd been born in a different, happier era?

Yes - modern living is way too stressful
 6.25%

Yes - life was far less complicated in the old days
 37.50%

No - I'm happy to be living in the here and now
 53.13%

No - there was nothing good about the old days

"We heard about Poseidon and realised it could provide the solution.

"It cost £65,000 to install, and there are running costs, but what happened with this young girl proves it was worth it. A life is priceless."

The girl, who has not been named, comes from Rochdale, Greater Manchester. She was believed to be in north Wales on a camping trip with a charitable foundation.

Francois Marmion, general manager of Vision IQ, which developed Poseidon, said: "It is virtually impossible for lifeguards to see everything that is happening in the pool all of the time, given the warm, noisy and crowded environment in which they work.

"It took 40 seconds for Poseidon to alert the lifeguard to this girl.

"Thankfully she made a full recovery, but just a minute or so longer under the water and she would have suffered brain damage or died."

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