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Computer camera saves 10-year-old girl from drowning in pool

By Geneviève Roberts

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As a 10-year-old girl sank unconscious to the bottom of a swimming pool, a new underwater camera that scans the entire pool proved it can save lives.

The computer system alerted the lifeguard via a text message and she dived in and rescued the girl within 40 seconds. Doctors say that if she had been left for any longer she would almost certainly have died, or suffered irreversible brain damage due to lack of oxygen.

It is the first time that the £65,000 Poseidon system, which detects within seconds whether someone has stopped moving, has been used to save a life.

The schoolgirl, from Rochdale, Lancs, fell unconscious after jumping into the 12-foot deep end of swimming baths in Bangor, Wales during a camping trip on 24 August.

Poseidon works by extra-sensitive cameras monitoring underwater sound volume, the movement of objects in the water and the trajectory of swimmers in action. If it detects a person in distress the on-duty lifeguard is sent a page within three seconds detailing the swimmer's exact location.

Lifeguard Karen Gibson, who carried out last week's rescue, said: "You can't see people on the bottom when there are people swimming, let alone in the summer holidays when there is so much splashing. This system is a fantastic help for us."

The girl was given mouth-to-mouth at the scene and recovered later at Gwynedd Hospital.

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