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A computer aided system has helped to prevent a drowning in a local authority swimming pool

At first, nobody noticed the teenage girl drowning in the North Wales council pool. Luckily, Poseidon, Gwynedd Council's safety system sounded the alarm.

The council purchased the Poseidon system for its Bangor swimming pool two years ago, but when an accident happened this month its investment paid off.

The girl had been swimming at the water's surface, but then sank to the bottom of the deep end. Poseidon monitored potential distress, detected that was immobile at the pool bottom and the alarm was sounded.

"First of all it was a classic silent drowning - where there was no sign of difficulty or struggle - so it is difficult for the lifeguard to detect," council leisure officer Brian Evans told *Government Computing News* on 31 August 2005. "But because of the system, we picked up that the girl was at bottom of pool within 10 seconds, and a lifeguard was able to respond quickly to pull her out."

Poseidon was developed by Vision IQ and designed to work alongside human lifeguards. Vision IQ says it is now used in more than 120 pools around the world. Evans said that the Bangor is the only pool in Wales to have installed system.

It uses underwater and overhead cameras to provides constant surveillance of the pool and then alerts lifeguards if something suspicious is happening, as well as pinpointing the exact position of the incident.

Francois Marmion, general manager of Vision IQ, claimed that health organisations worldwide record hundreds of drownings or near drownings every year, many in pools with professional lifeguards. "It is virtually impossible for lifeguards to see everything that is happening in the pool all of the time," he said.

In Germany last year Poseidon helped detect and rescue an elderly drowning victim by providing lifeguards with a "third eye" to prevent tragedy. In 2000, the system helped lifeguards save the life of a teenager in France who nearly drowned during a routine swim.

Source: *Kable's Government Computing*

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