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August 31, 2005



This picture shows the girl, who has not been identified, lying 12ft 6ins under the surface. Within seconds she was rescued by a lifeguard

'Silent drowning' pool girl saved by underwater cameras

BY PHILIPPE NAUGHTON, TIMES ONLINE
[Watch the pool rescue](#)

A young girl has been saved from drowning in a swimming pool by new high-tech underwater safety cameras and dramatic footage of the rescue was released today.

The 10-year-old girl lost consciousness in the deep end of the Bangor Swimming Pool, North Wales, last Wednesday and dropped quickly to the floor of the pool, 12ft 6ins under the surface.

Within 10 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 made a full recovery in hospital.

It is the first time that that a UK swimmer has been saved by the Poseidon safety system, made by a French company, Vision IQ. The system was fitted to the Bangor pool in March 2003 at a cost of £65,000 and involves eight overhead and four underwater cameras.

The Poseidon 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

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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 around 100 worldwide.

Gwynedd Council had considered reducing the depth of the deep end at Bangor because of visibility problems and surface glare, but that would have meant removing the diving boards.

Brian Evans, head of leisure services for the 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."

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.

"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."

M Marmion said the system had already helped save the lives of three swimmers in France and a man in Germany who suffered a heart attack. The company hopes the incident in Bangor will encourage more councils to install the system.

"We designed the system to save lives - that is the objective," he said. "It is the lifeguard who saves the life of course, but we can help them."

The girl who almost drowned in Bangor has not been identified, but is believed to come from Rochdale and was in Wales on a camping holiday.



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