



Pictures taken by underwater safety cameras show the 10-year-old girl lying unconscious at the bottom of the pool, and the rescue by a lifeguard Photographs: PA

Underwater cameras save girl in swimming pool

Paul Marinko

A new hi-tech underwater safety camera saved a 10-year-old girl from drowning in a swimming pool after she fell unconscious at the bottom of the deep end.

The girl collapsed after plunging 12ft 6ins into the deep end of the pool in Bangor, north Wales. But within 40 seconds one of four underwater safety cameras spotted her

and alerted lifeguards via a pager message.

A lifeguard dived into the water and pulled the girl to safety, where she was given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. She was taken to hospital, but has made a full recovery since the incident on Wednesday last week.

It is believed to be the first time a swimmer has been saved in this country by the Poseidon camera safety system which

was fitted to the pool two years ago at a cost of £65,000.

The system uses eight overhead and four underwater cameras and can detect movement, direction and texture of objects underwater.

It then compares images to a database of thousands of examples of swimmers in trouble and alerts lifeguards if it finds a match. The system has been fitted at eight pools in Britain and 120 worldwide.

Brian Evans, head of leisure services at 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.

"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.

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

François 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."