

# INDEPENDENT INSPECTION CALL FOLLOWING POOL TRAGEDY

**M**SI has campaigned for years to get the hotel tourism sector to accept the risks posed by swimming pool drain entrapment.

A company spokesperson said: "It's a tragedy that three members of the Diya family died in the same pool incident, and it's also a travesty the family has not been given access to the pool for an independent inspection – why?"

"While entrapment cannot, at this time, be officially confirmed, all the signs point to drain entrapment and the only way to discover the cause of the deaths is an independent inspection by a recognised UK expert."

Pool entrapment incidents have been happening for many years in overseas hotel pools. In 2017, there was an entrapment incident at the Valenciano Swimming Club in Carprese, Valencia when a 14-year-old boy was trapped underwater by suction from a drain. The boy fell unconscious and sustained a perineal tear as a result of the strong suction of the pump. It took a four-hour operation to save his life.

## DRAIN SUCTION

In another incident, a six-year old girl on holiday with her family in France drowned after her leg became trapped in the filter drain at the bottom of the hotel's pool. The incident happened when the girl jumped into the pool, landed on the drain of the

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– MSI

pool's filter pump system, whose safety grille had broken. A witness said the girl was "sucked into the drain."

Pool entrapment danger has been known for decades and it is believed that there are more than one million pools across Europe which are outdated, having a single drain which puts swimmers around the world at risk. However, the risk to swimmers can be significantly reduced by simply installing a Vac-Alert safety system which responds in milliseconds.

MSI again: "Some parts of the hotel and commercial leisure industry are still not recognising the need for a Vac-Alert, especially in older pools.

"For example, MSI tried to advertise the Vac-Alert in a Maltese newspaper but the advert was rejected because it was seen as bad for tourism.

The tide may be turning. The three deaths in the hotel pool in Fuengirola on Christmas Eve 2019 has intensified the focus on pool entrapment danger and sales of the Vac-Alert have significantly increased – at last the message is getting through.

"The hotel industry throughout Europe should not wait for another death to make their pools safer," say MSI. "If you haven't already done so, now is the time to act."

MSI

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# QUESTIONS OVER TRIPLE SPANISH HOTEL DROWNINGS



A special investigation into a family tragedy,  
by Allen J Wilson FISPE, Tech IOSH, MInstSRM

Following the tragic deaths of three family members at a Spanish hotel pool on Christmas Eve, police have halted official investigations declaring the incident was a tragic accident.

Gabriel Diya, 52, his daughter, nine-year-old, Comfort and son Praise-Emmanuel, 16, drowned in a pool at Club La Costa World in Fuengirola while on holiday in December.

The investigation into the incident ruled their deaths were a "simple accident", claiming there was no malfunction with the pool and that the deaths were caused by what they called "lack of swimming expertise."

But the wife and mother of the victims, Olubunmi Diya, said all three could swim, insisting there was

"something wrong" with the pool that made it difficult for them to get out.

Now a special investigation could help shed light on their deaths.

## ALLEN WILSON TAKES UP THE STORY:

"I was working for ITN who had asked the complex owner for permission to inspect site.

The complex owner procrastinated and delayed any decision, basically preventing us from carrying out an independent inspection.

As it was a public area, I walked around the pool where I was covertly filmed by an ITN camera operator.

As can be seen in the ITN video, shown on television on the night of the January 8, 2020, there were eight skimmer units on one side of the pool.

Each of these is designed to remove approximately 7,000 litres per hour, given a total removal in the region of 56,000 litres per hour.

There was only one single sump outlet and this was of the type seen in domestic pools with a capacity of approximately 12,000 litres per hour. This contravened the guidance from the Federation of Tour Operator standards (FTO) and EN15288.

The water level at the time of my inspection was below the mouth of the skimmers and this system was clearly valved off to prevent 'air locking' the pump plus avoiding cavitation that could also damage the impellor and pump interior.

It is my opinion that on the day in question, December 24th 2019 and

❗ A SINGLE SUMP OUTLET, similar to the one pictured, contravenes the guidance from the Federation of Tour Operator standards (FTO) and EN15288. Pic. Library



↓ YOUNG SWIMMERS are most at risk of swimming pool entrapment.

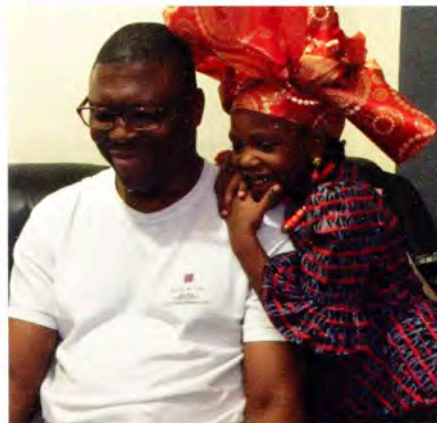


is evident from BBC news pictures that the water level was low and again the skimmers also must have been turned off. This would have created a tremendous suction from the sump outlet that bathers would not be able to overcome and would become entrapped on this pool outlet. Again in my opinion, I believe the nine year old became entrapped and her sixteen year old brother, bravely attempted to rescue her. The father then also attempted a rescue and was held below the water by his son and daughter. In a situation where someone is drowning they are possessed with phenomenal strength and would attempt to cling on to anybody close by. Another factor that contributed, but I am certain was not the root cause of this tragedy was water temperature. At the time of my 'walkabout' inspection, using a PIR thermometer, I surreptitiously measured the temperature at 18OC.

I spoke to an industry authority on Cold water drowning, Yan Kowals MISPE who told me "When the body is suddenly immersed in cold water it experiences a number of physiological responses that can rapidly incapacitate



↑ FOLLOWING A WAVE OF PUBLICITY both in newspapers and on-line, media interest in the story has waned. Pics. Facebook



and in rare cases even kill. The sudden lowering of skin temperature is one of the most profound stimuli that the body can encounter. The biggest danger is inhaling water and drowning, even if the casualty knows how to swim. Cold Water Shock causes an immediate loss of breathing control. The casualty takes one or more huge gasps, followed by hyperventilation (very rapid breathing that is hard or impossible for them to control."

This pool is evidently in use twelve months of the year. Many tiles were missing off the bottom, indicating poor maintenance. Ideally there should be two floor outlets with a flow rate no more than 0.5m/s and they should be at a distance apart that one bather could not block both of them. To rectify this would evidently involve the operator

in draining the pool and considerable expenditure all to rectify what was a poor design. What however they could do for a paltry 1,000 euros is fit an anti-vacuum valve in the plant room on the suction side of the circulation pump that in the event of a vacuum forming would open within milliseconds allowing air into the system, releasing the vacuum that had formed between the sump outlet and the pump.

At the time of my covert inspection, I noticed some A4 signs stating the pool was at that time, closed. These signs were in English and assumed that the reader could (A) read and (B) read English. There were no barriers around the pool discouraging entry and if I had so wished, I could have entered the pool.

My agenda is that accidents and incidents such as this should be investigated by unbiased, independent, competent investigators and not by those with a bias towards clearing the facility operator of any blame or responsibility.

I would state that I have not received or want any financial reward for any services, time spent, etc. connected with this tragedy and am willing to revisit site for a full inspection, at my own cost, if the opportunity arises." ■

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