

Wet Electronics

You probably already know that the average electronic device can basically drown in a miniscule amount of water. You can enhance your enjoyment of time spent in or near the water if you can make your electronic devices water safe.

Sanyo recently introduced the world's first consumer waterproof camera. Their Xacti E1 can shoot still photos and video in up to five feet of water. The camera's viewfinder is a 2.5" LCD display that is visible in bright sunlight. It has a 5x optical zoom, and it shoots 6 megapixel still photos and full motion 30-frames-per-second video. The camera's onboard software allows you to alter these settings to meet your specific shooting needs.

I was surprised by how much power Sanyo could pack into this very small camera. It produced very high-quality still and video movies under water and on dry land. Most impressive was the fact that the camera's lens and video screen didn't water spot as I quickly moved from shooting below and above the water line.

The Xacti E1 uses flash memory storage for both its video and still shooting functions. It uses MPEG-4 compression to squeeze 1 hour and 18 minutes of video, 338 images, or a mix of both onto a 1GB SD card. Since the newest SD cards already hold 8 GB, this camera's shooting capacity will continue to rise over time.

The camera's five-foot depth limit will prevent its use during serious

snorkeling. However it does make it possible for you to record family fun in, under, and near the water. (For an underwater demonstration of the camera's ability, visit my Web site at www.technologytoday.us.)

OtterBox also offers a wet-environment solution for non-waterproof electronic products. The company sells specially designed ABS plastic cases to encapsulate your iPod,



Photo courtesy of Sanyo

that location. If you are going to swim with your encapsulated iPod, you should use a waterproof headphone set such as the H2O Audio unit shown in the photo.

Two iPod case limitations that you should know about: When submerged, the water pressure prevents you from changing tunes and volume and if your iPod is dropped, it will sink like a rock. That presents a concern since the OtterBox iPod case is only guaranteed to keep your iPod safe in up to three feet of water.

Fun in the water with Sanyo's Xacti E1 camera (above) and OtterBox's H2O Audio headphones and waterproof device case.

Like most companies that offer guarantees, Sanyo and OtterBox will honor a guarantee if damage was caused through failure of their technology rather than a leak caused by a grain of sand or improper closing of their product's case.

Recalling the Facts

1. Why do you think different manufacturers set different water depth restrictions on their devices?
2. Why should you be super diligent and inspect all watertight seals before closing the cases on these units if you plan to take them underwater? ☺

Alan Pierce, Ed.D., CSIT, is a technology education consultant. Visit www.technologytoday.us for past columns and teacher resources.