pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

SWIMMING POOL WATER DISCHARGE GUIDELINES

Water from swimming pools and hot tubs often contains high levels of chlorine. Discharging chlorinated pool or spa water into streams, (irrigation canals or ponds, etc.) is harmful to fish and other aquatic life. The discharge of any sewage or industrial waste, including swimming pool water, to any waters of the commonwealth without a permit is a violation of the Clean Streams Law, the Act of June 22, 1937, P.L. 1987, as amended.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) does not require a permit for discharges from single residence pools, provided the guidelines outlined below are followed. Local municipalities should be contacted concerning potential local ordinances.

These guidelines cannot be construed to waive or impair any rights of DEP to prosecute a property (pool) owner and/or pool company for any stream damage that occurs as a result of a discharge. Penalties would be assessed under the provisions of the Clean Streams Law.

Pool Guidelines:

A. Disposal of Water to Sanitary Sewer

1. If the municipal authority grants permission, pool backwash water, pool cleaning wastewater and standing water may be discharged to the sanitary sewer system. Neutralize water before discharge by following these steps:

   a) Prior to disposal of pool water to a sanitary sewer, shut off the chlorination system if there is one, or stop adding chlorine.

   b) Hold the water in the pool or hot tub for at least two weeks to allow the chlorine to dissipate.

   c) Measure the chlorine level in the pool or hot tub prior to discharging the water. The water should not show any detectable levels of chlorine. A longer holding period may be necessary if chlorine levels continue to remain at detectable levels at the end of two weeks. Chlorine measurements can be made with a chlorine test kit (colorimetric).

2. Plan discharge for low-use times of sewer flow such as afternoon or late night hours.

3. Use small volume pump and control discharge so it does not spill out. (< 800 gallons per minute)

4. Discharge with hose into access "cap" of the private property sewer cleanout. DO NOT use public manholes or cleanouts.

5. Care should be taken to make sure the discharge goes into a sanitary sewer and not a storm sewer, which would discharge to a stream. If sanitary sewers are not in the immediate area, the wastewater should be hauled off-site for disposal at an approved treatment facility.

6. Water from backwashing pool filters should not be discharged to a stream, ditch or storm sewer. Backwash from pool filters must be discharged to the sanitary sewer, on-site septic tank and drainfield system (if properly designed and adequately sized), or a seepage pit.

B. Discharge of Water

1. If the discharge to sanitary sewer is not feasible, then the following guidelines must be followed before discharging the water:

   a) Prior to disposing or using the water for irrigation, shut off the chlorination system if there is one, or stop adding chlorine.

   b) Hold the water in the pool or hot tub for two weeks to reduce the chlorine level.

   c) Discharge or use the water for irrigation in an area where the water will not flow into a stream or storm sewer.

   d) Discharge or use the water for irrigating the property and ensure that it does not flow off the property.

e) Discharge or use the water for irrigation in a manner that will prevent nuisance conditions (such as creation of odors, and fly and mosquito breeding conditions). Nuisance conditions occur when water is held in the pool for a prolonged period.

2. The discharge should be at a rate which prevents erosion and optimizes filtration. In no event should pool water be directly discharged to waters of the commonwealth.

C. Standing water or accumulated rain and/or pool water from the previous season should be pumped from the top so as not to disturb settled solids. Solids on the pool bottom should not be discharged. After the water has been pumped, solids should be cleaned out manually. The discharge should not raise stream temperatures by more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit in a one-hour period or a total of 5 degrees Fahrenheit. The pH should be between six and nine standard units and total chlorine residual should be 0.0 mg/l.

D. Cleaning wastewaters that contain muriatic acid or chlorine that is used in cleaning pool surfaces should be treated prior to discharge. Muriatic acid wastewater should be neutralized to a pH between six and nine standard units. Chlorine rinses should stand for a period of 10 days to allow chlorine degradation prior to discharge. Total chlorine residual of the wastewater discharge should be less than 0.5 mg/l. Temperature should be monitored as described above (standing water). Chlorine rinse water pH should be between six and nine standard units.

Questions concerning pool guidelines should be directed to DEP's regional offices:

Southeast Regional Office
2 East Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401-4915
Main Telephone: 484-250-5900
24-Hour Emergency: 484-250-5900

Counties: *Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia*

Northeast Regional Office
2 Public Square
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-1915
Main Telephone: 570-826-2511
24-Hour Emergency: 570-826-2511

Counties: *Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming*

South-central Regional Office
909 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200
Main Telephone: 717-705-4700
24-Hour Emergency: 877-333-1904

Counties: *Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York*

North-central Regional Office
208 W. Third St., Suite 101
Williamsport, PA 17701-6448
Main Telephone: 570-327-3636
24-Hour Emergency: 570-327-3636

Counties: *Bradford, Cameron, Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union*

Southwest Regional Office
400 Waterfront Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745
Main Telephone: 412-442-4000
24-Hour Emergency: 412-442-4000

Counties: *Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland*

Northwest Regional Office
230 Chestnut St.
Meadville, PA 16335-3481
Main Telephone: 814-332-6945
24-Hour Emergency: 800-373-3398

Counties: *Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren*

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us, keyword: Wastewater.