

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.