



# pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## SWIMMING POOL WATER DISCHARGE GUIDELINES

Water from swimming pools and hot tubs often contain high levels of chlorine. Discharging chlorinated pool/spa water into streams, (or irrigation canals, ponds, etc.) is harmful to fish and other aquatic life. The discharge of any sewage or industrial waste, including swimming pool water, to a water 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.

It has been the Department's policy not to require permits for discharges from single residence pools, provided the guidelines outlined below are followed. Local municipalities should be contacted concerning local ordinances.

These guidelines shall not be construed so as to waive or impair any rights of the Department of Environmental Protection to prosecute the property (pool) owner and/or pool company for any stream damage that occurs as a result of the 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, you can discharge pool backwash water, pool cleaning wastewater and standing water 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 you have 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 doesn't 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 in making sure the discharge is to 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 you have 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 your property and ensure that it does not flow off your 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, pool water shall 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. Following pump down of water, solids should be cleaned out manually. The discharge should not raise stream temperatures by more than 2 degrees F in a one-hour period or a total of 5 degrees F, pH should be between 6 and 9 standard units and total chlorine residual should be 0.0 mg/l.
- D. Cleaning wastewaters containing muriatic acid or chlorine that is used in cleaning pool surfaces needs to be treated prior to discharge. Muriatic acid wastewater should be neutralized to a pH between 6 and 9 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 6 and 9 standard units.

Questions concerning pool guidelines should be directed to Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Regional Offices:

**Southeast Regional Office**  
 2 East Main St.  
 Norristown, PA 19401  
 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 18711-0790  
 Main Telephone: 570-826-2511  
 24-Hour Emergency: 570-826-2511

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

**Southcentral Regional Office**  
 909 Elmerton Ave.  
 Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200  
 Main Telephone: 717-705-4700  
 24-Hour Emergency: 1-877-333-1904

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

**Northcentral Regional Office**  
 208 W. Third St., Suite 101  
 Williamsport, PA 17701  
 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: 1-800-373-3398

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

For more information, visit [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us), keyword: Wastewater.