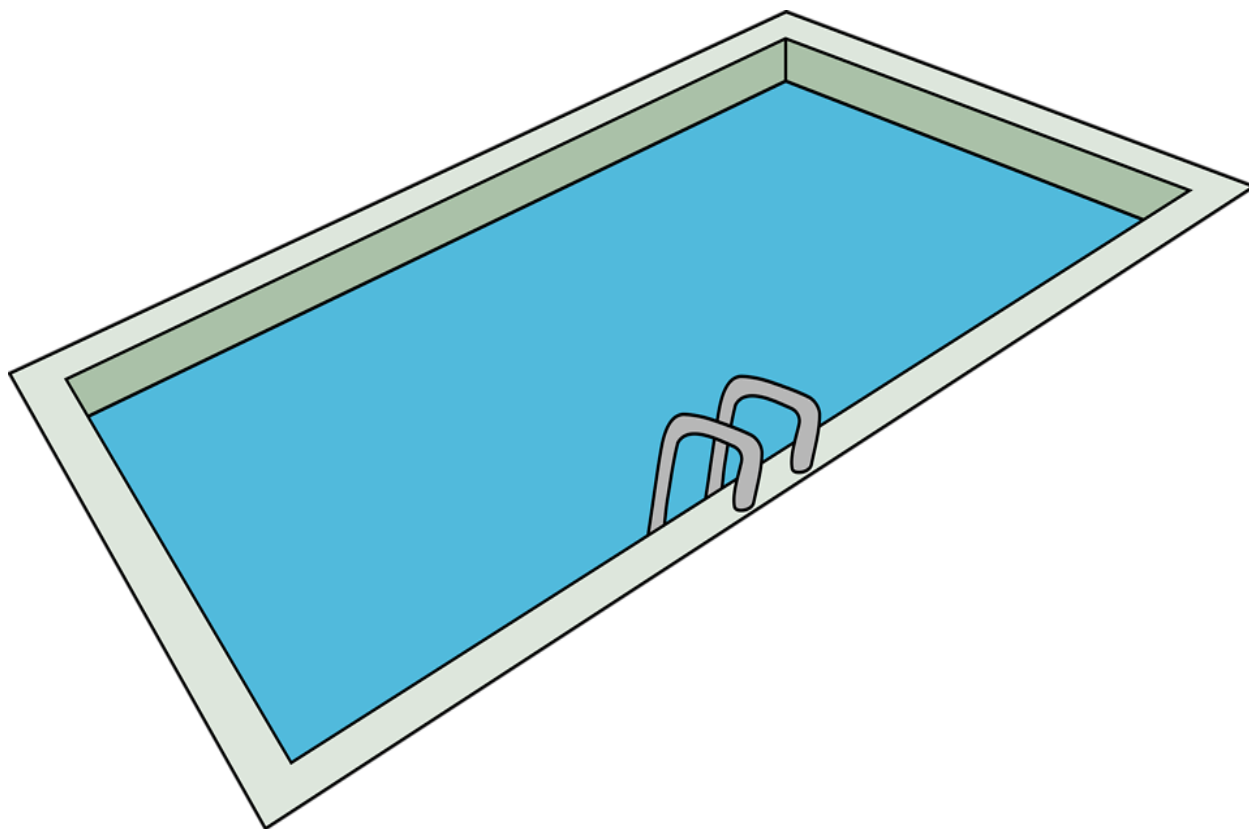




Swimming Pool Owner Guidance



Your Swimming Pool and the Environment – What Every Owner Should Know

Maryland Department of the Environment
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Introduction

There are thousands of pools and spas in Maryland which contribute to water pollution each year. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) wants to educate everyone who owns, operates or maintains a swimming pool about protecting the environment and preventing pollution.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? Chemicals such as chlorine, as well as washwater from pool filtration systems, can pollute streams and harm fish and wildlife when released to the environment.

WHAT HARM CAN MY POOL CAUSE? A single pool will only cause localized impacts on water quality, but Maryland has thousands of pools. Together, the effect on water quality can be significant.



What must I do?

The way YOU manage your pool does matter! Swimming pools owners and operators must be knowledgeable about the state issued swimming pool permit and apply for coverage as required. Please be aware that failure to comply with these rules may cause you to discharge pollutants that may violate the Clean Water Act.

KNOW WHERE YOUR POOL WASTES GO. Some pools are connected to the sanitary sewer line, so the wastes end up at a waste water treatment plant and are treated along with the sewage from your community. Environmentally, this is the best method of disposing of your pool wastes. Be sure to get permission from your local water and sewer authority before installing a connection. Avoid flushing wastes such as pool cleaning water, which have very high or very low pH, into the sewer. This can damage the collection system. If you do not have sewer service in your neighborhood or can't get permission to connect your pool to the sanitary sewer, your waste pool water can either go into a nearby stream or onto the ground. However, keep in mind that discharging wastes to streams or onto the ground can create environmental problems.

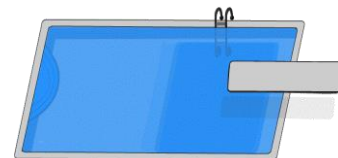


If your pool wastes discharge to surface waters, either directly or through a storm drain system, please take the following measures to minimize impacts on your local streams:

- Measure the pH and total residual chlorine level of your pool water before draining it or lowering the water level. Do not discharge the water after shock treatments or at any time when you can measure detectable concentration of chlorine or other disinfectants. Before discharging, make sure that the pH is between 6.0 and 9.0. The recommended method for dechlorination would be to allow the disinfectant to dissipate over a period of days and test to confirm its absence before releasing the water. Chemical products, such as sodium thiosulfate, can be used to quickly remove chlorine from the water – but you must take caution to not overadd the product. If you use acid to wash your pool, add soda ash to neutralize the waste to a pH of between 6.0 and 9.0 before releasing it.



- Monitor your disinfection system. If your pool has a disinfection system which uses copper or silver, monitor the disinfectant levels routinely to make sure they are within the manufacturer's guidelines. You should not discharge water with high copper or silver levels because these compounds are harmful to aquatic life even at very low levels. In this case, either hook up to the sanitary sewer or install a means of disposal into ground water through a dry well or similar system with the permission of your County's Health Department.
- Drain Your Pool Slowly. When draining or lowering the level of your pool, do so slowly using a low-volume pump or siphon. This will reduce adverse impacts on small streams through gradual introduction and assimilation of flow and pollutants.





TIPS

Keep up your pool maintenance by keeping your filtration and circulation systems in good operating condition. This will minimize the need for draining the pool when the water becomes too dirty to clean up with filtration and shock treatments.

Keep your pool covered when not in use for several days, as when you are out of town on vacation. This will minimize the need for back-washing the filter and will conserve water and disinfectant as well.

When possible, dispose of filter backwash onto wooded or well vegetated ground on your property. Avoid back-washing following shock treatments until the chlorine or disinfectant level has returned to normal. Be considerate of your neighbors by preventing runoff onto adjacent properties.

Keep track of your water consumption. If the amount of make-up water you add is more than you are likely to lose to backwash and evaporation, you may have a leak in the liner or plumbing.

Resources

Maryland Department of the Environment, **Water Saving Tips**.

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/waterconservation/Pages/pools.aspx>

Maryland Department of the Environment, **General Permit for Discharges from Swimming Pools and Spas**

<https://mdewwp.page.link/SIGP>

US EPA. Swimming Recreational Water Quality Criteria.

<https://www.epa.gov/wqc/recreational-water-quality-criteria-and-methods>

For more information

MDE wishes you a safe and enjoyable swimming experience. We hope you will use this guide to operate your pool in an environmentally sensitive way and that you will do your part to protect the environment.

If you have additional questions regarding stormwater discharges that might need a permit, call Industrial and General Permits Division 410-537-3323 or your County Health Department.

If you have questions regarding water discharged onsite to subsurface disposal systems such as septic systems, drywells, seepage pits, or drainage holes call: Groundwater Permits Division 410-537-3778.