

# POOLS SPAS

*from polluting our local  
creeks and rivers*

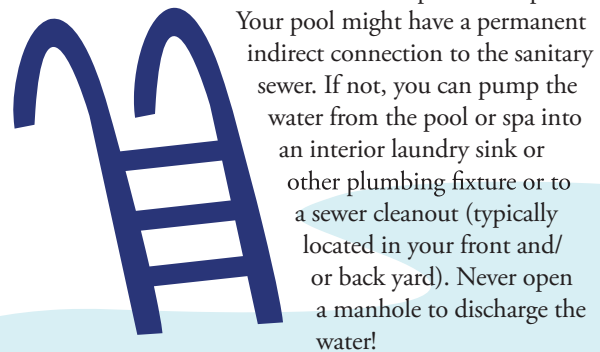
Did you know that you may be harming your local creek or river if you drain your swimming pool or spa water into the gutter? Water in pools and spas is treated with a variety of chemicals (such as chlorine and algaecides) to keep organisms from living in it; if that water is discharged to a storm drain, it will eventually reach a creek or river where the chemicals can cause harm. It is illegal to discharge chlorinated swimming pool water or pool water that contains biocides or other chemicals to the storm drain system.

This brochure explains where to discharge water when you need to drain your pool or spa. It also explains how to properly dispose of pool-related wastes and how to protect water quality while constructing and repairing a pool.

## DRAINING YOUR POOL OR SPA

### Using the sanitary sewer

If you need to drain your pool or spa, discharge of polluted pool water to the sanitary sewer is an option, since the sanitary sewer system is conveyed to a treatment plant where it is designed to remove most chemicals found in pools and spas.



When discharging water to the sanitary sewer, make sure the flow rate is slow enough that it does not cause the sewer to back up and overflow into your house, your neighbor's house or onto the street.

## Disposing unwanted pool chemicals

Most unwanted pool chemicals must be disposed as hazardous waste. Pool owners can contact the agencies listed on the back panel to find out where to dispose of hazardous waste. Pool maintenance companies and other businesses that generate small amounts of hazardous waste can dispose of it for a fee by contacting the recycling and waste programs listed on the back panel of this brochure.

## Limits apply to storm drains

You may discharge pool or spa water to a storm drain ONLY if the water is:

- Free of any chemicals in toxic amounts, including but not limited to chlorine, bromine, hydrogen peroxide based products, copper, silver, algaecides, fungicides, soda ash, cyanuric acid and muriatic acid.
- Free of debris, algae, or vegetation.
- Between pH 6.5 and 8.5 (pH 7 is neutral).
- At a flow rate that does not cause damage to the storm drain system or cause erosion downstream.
- Not heated.

To be sure you meet these conditions, you should do all of the following before discharging pool or spa water to a storm drain:

- Know for certain that you have not added ANY chemicals other than chlorine or muriatic acid to your pool. (Over time, chlorine and muriatic acid either dissipate or are converted to non-toxic forms.) Most chemicals added to pools are toxic to aquatic organisms. There are too many different pool chemicals to provide practical guidance on how to test for their presence or toxicity and how to evaluate test result. Also, testing may be prohibitively expensive.
- Be sure that your pool or spa water IS NOT treated with an ionizer or mineral purifiers.

- Remove/filter out any debris, algae, or plants in the water.
- Test the pH (using kits available at pool supply stores). If pH is not between 6.5 and 8.5, the pool or spa water may NOT be discharged to the storm drain.
- Reduce the chlorine concentration so it is below 0.01 parts per million (ppm); higher levels harm aquatic life, and the typical pool chlorine level is 2 to 4 ppm.
  - Spring or fall—when the water is cool—is the best time to dechlorinate water without causing algal growth.
  - You can allow the chlorine to naturally dissipate over 3 to 5 or so days or add a chemical dechlorinator (available from most pool supply stores—be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions).

These steps are important. Remember to maintain the proper chemical balance and filtration in your pool and spa. This will minimize the need to drain the pool and prevent unnecessary corrosion of copper pipes and equipment. If you discharge (or hire someone to discharge) pool water to the storm drain, you may be subject to enforcement action if the discharge causes toxicity, discoloration, turbidity, erosion, or other environmental harm in the downstream water body. If you hire a pool maintenance company, protect yourself by making sure they follow all discharge requirements.

**Note:** You are legally responsible for any harmful or toxic effects caused by a release of your pool water, even if you believed in good faith that the discharge was safe.

## Cleaning pool filters

Don't clean pool filters where the debris or wastewater will go into a storm drain. Wastewater from filter cleaning may be discharged to the sanitary sewer as long as solids are removed. Pool filter backwash connections that are plumbed to the sanitary sewer system must include a settling tank to remove diatomaceous earth. If you are hosing off a filter with

### Cleaning pool filters cont.

water, do so over a lawn, planter box, or other vegetated or dirt area that will absorb the wash water. Collect materials (such as spent diatomaceous earth filter media) on a filter cloth placed over the discharge surface and then throw the filter cloth and filter media in the trash upon completion of filter cleaning.

### Saltwater pools

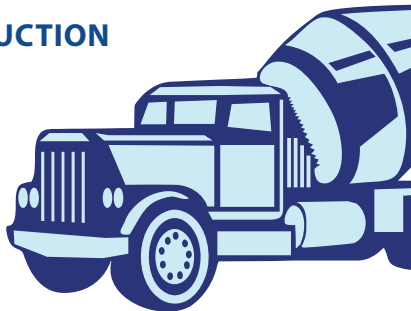
When draining a saltwater pool, the water may only be discharged to the sanitary sewer system - NEVER to the storm drain. Follow the criteria at the beginning of this brochure when discharging to the sanitary sewer.

## POOL CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

### Pool excavation dewatering

During pool construction, water may accumulate within the pool excavation. To avoid water accumulation, schedule pool construction work during the dry season (April 1 through September 30). Scheduling work during the dry season will also help minimize tracking of mud from your back yard onto the street. It is illegal to discharge sediment-polluted water from your pool excavation to the storm drain or waterway, or to the sanitary sewer (without permission). Use one of the following options when dewatering:

- Pump water into a portable containment device and haul it to an approved disposal area. Contact your local sanitary sewer district for an approved disposal area. See Contact Information on back panel.
- Pump water onto a vegetated area of the site for infiltration and filtration.



- If you are considering discharging to the sanitary sewer, you must contact the local sewer agency. Approval to discharge to the sanitary sewer may include limitations and requirements for treatment, discharge location, and discharge times. See Contact Information on back panel.

### Installing plumbing connections to the sanitary sewer

If your swimming pool has diatomaceous earth or sand filters, you should consider installing a permanent indirect plumbing connection to the sanitary sewer. Follow these guidelines:

- Obtain a sewer connection permit.
- Pool filter backwash connections must include a settling tank to remove diatomaceous earth, if used.
- Pool connections for rainfall overflow can not be connected to the sanitary sewer system.

Call the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District at 875-6470 or your local sewer agency if you have questions about permits or discharging to the sanitary sewer.

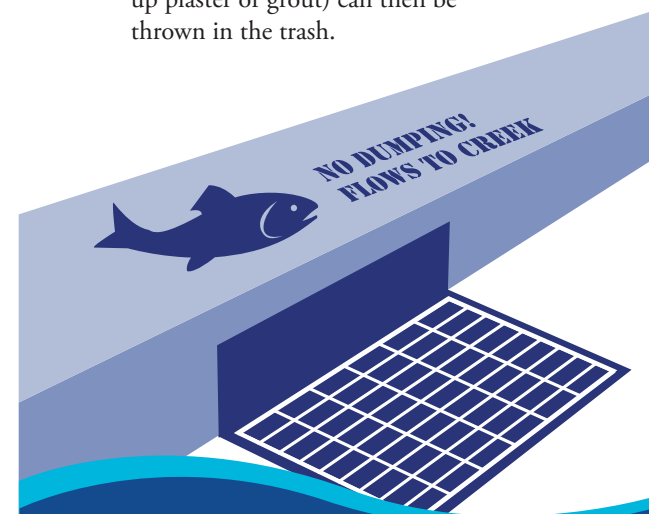
### Managing wastes

During pool construction, contain all waste materials and dispose of them properly. Following the tips below will help you manage most common pool construction wastes:

- **Sediment (soil):** If soil from the pool excavation work is stockpiled on site, cover the stockpile with a tarp (use sand bags or other weighted objects to hold the tarp in place). Covering the stockpile will help keep soil from being blown or washed off site where it can end up in the storm drain system. Dispose of the soil by hauling it to an approved disposal area.
- **Plaster, grout, gunite etc.:** Keep wastewater from plastering, grouting, guniting and other operations associated with pool construction and repairs from entering storm drains.

For example:

- Discharge non-hazardous wastewater to a dirt or vegetated area so the waste-water can soak into the ground (obtain permission from the property owner and do not create nuisance conditions such as mosquito breeding habitat). The dirt or vegetated area must have the capacity to absorb all wastewater without any runoff.
- If you are considering discharging to the sanitary sewer, you must contact the local sewer agency. Approval to discharge to the sanitary sewer may include limitations and requirements for treatment, discharge location, and discharge times. See Contact Information on back panel.
- As a last resort, you may have to collect wastewater into a portable containment device, and then haul it to an approved disposal facility.
- Never wash out wheel barrows, tools, or associated containers near the street. Discharges of these materials to the storm drain are prohibited.
- Small amounts of solid wastes (such as dried up plaster or grout) can then be thrown in the trash.



NO DUMPING!



### Sacramento Stormwater Quality Partnership

(including the County of Sacramento and the cities of Sacramento, Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, and Rancho Cordova)

(916) 808-4H2O (4426); [www.beriverfriendly.net](http://www.beriverfriendly.net)

### FOR BUSINESS

BERC helps businesses understand and comply with environmental regulations. This business service is free and confidential.

**Business Environmental Resource Center (BERC)**  
(916) 649-0225; [www.sacberc.org](http://www.sacberc.org)

**Non-emergency Illegal Discharges** (916) 808-4H2O (4426)

### Sanitary Sewer Discharges

Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCSD)	
Wastewater Source Control Section	(916) 875-6470
City of Galt	(209) 366-7260

### Hazardous Waste Disposal

[www.sacgreen.com](http://www.sacgreen.com)

Sacramento County & City of Rancho Cordova	(916) 875-5555
City of Sacramento	(916) 264-5011
City of Citrus Heights	(916) 727-4770
City of Elk Grove	(916) 478-2289
City of Folsom	(916) 355-8397
City of Galt	(209) 366-7260

### Stormwater Departments

Sacramento County & City of Rancho Cordova	(916) 874-6851
City of Sacramento	(916) 264-5011
City of Citrus Heights	(916) 727-4770
City of Elk Grove	(916) 478-3636
City of Folsom	(916) 355-7272
City of Galt	(209) 366-7260