

Responsible Swimming Pool Care

With warmer weather just around the corner, many Pennsylvanians and municipalities are getting their pools ready for summer fun. But almost every spring, as swimming pools are cleaned and prepared for summer use, there are fish kills in local streams that easily could have been prevented.

Did you know that the Clean Streams Law prevents the discharge of chlorinated water to storm sewers?

Private and public pool owners, as well as pool management companies, should remember that pool and chlorinated wastewater must be handled responsibly. Pool owners and professional pool cleaners need to dispose of old water correctly and to neutralize wastewater that contain harmful chemicals, such as chlorine. Most of all, they need to make sure the wastewater is going into the sanitary sewer, where allowed -- not the storm sewer.

When chlorinated water is drained from a swimming pool into a storm sewer, it quickly makes its way to a stream or other body of water, where aquatic life is damaged or killed. Discharging swimming pool water to the Commonwealth's waters without a permit violates the Clean Streams Law. Property owners and pool companies that violate this law may be prosecuted and penalized for damages.

If the local municipality grants permission, all wastewater—including pool backwash water, neutralized pool cleaning wastewater, and standing water—should be discharged to the local sanitary sewer system. If sanitary sewers cannot be accessed, the wastewater should be hauled off-site for disposal at an approved treatment facility.

In cases where sanitary sewers cannot be accessed and wastewater cannot be hauled away, the Department of Environmental



Protection offers detailed guidance for the on-site treatment and disposal of water containing chlorine or chemicals used to clean pools.

Questions regarding the handling of pool wastewater may be directed to the Water Management Program in DEP's Northcentral Regional Office at (570) 327-0532.

For more information on how chemicals in stormwater can impact our streams and lakes, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Stormwater.

Source Information for this Article Provided by "DEP Reminds Pool Owners to Handle Wastewater Safely" -- News Release dated April 30, 2008



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