Stormwater Pollution Prevention: Pools, Spas & Fountains

Water from pools, spas and fountains can pollute wetlands and waterways

Water in pools, spas and sometimes even in fountains are treated with a variety of chemicals (such as chlorine and algaecides) to keep organisms from growing and taking over. If that same water is discharged to a street or storm drain, it will eventually reach a wetland or waterway where the chemicals can cause harm. This is true of water that contains chemicals, is not pH neutral, comes from a saltwater pool or if it the water is not clear when drained.

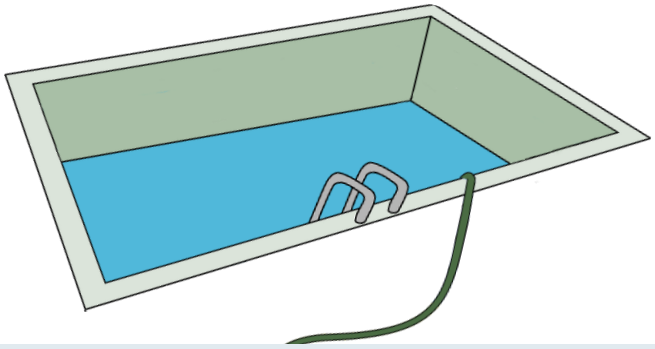
Follow these rules to prevent pollution of local wetlands and waterways!

Draining to the Sewer

If you need to drain your pool, spa or fountain, draining to the sewer is always the best option, because the sewer system conveys water to the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant where most chemicals and pollutants will be removed. Ensure that the pH is between 5.0 and 12.0 before draining to the sewer.

Your pool might have a permanent connection to the sewer, which is the best way to drain your pool. If not, you can pump water from your pool into an interior laundry sink or into your sewer cleanout (which is typically located within 3 feet of your house foundation). Not every home has a sewer cleanout. Never open a sewer maintenance hole in the street to drain the water!

When discharging water to the 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.



Saltwater Pools

Saltwater pools may ONLY be drained into the sewer system. They may NEVER be drained to the street or storm drain. The chemicals used in saltwater pools are not easily removed by at-home treatment and can kill plants and animals in wetland and waterways.

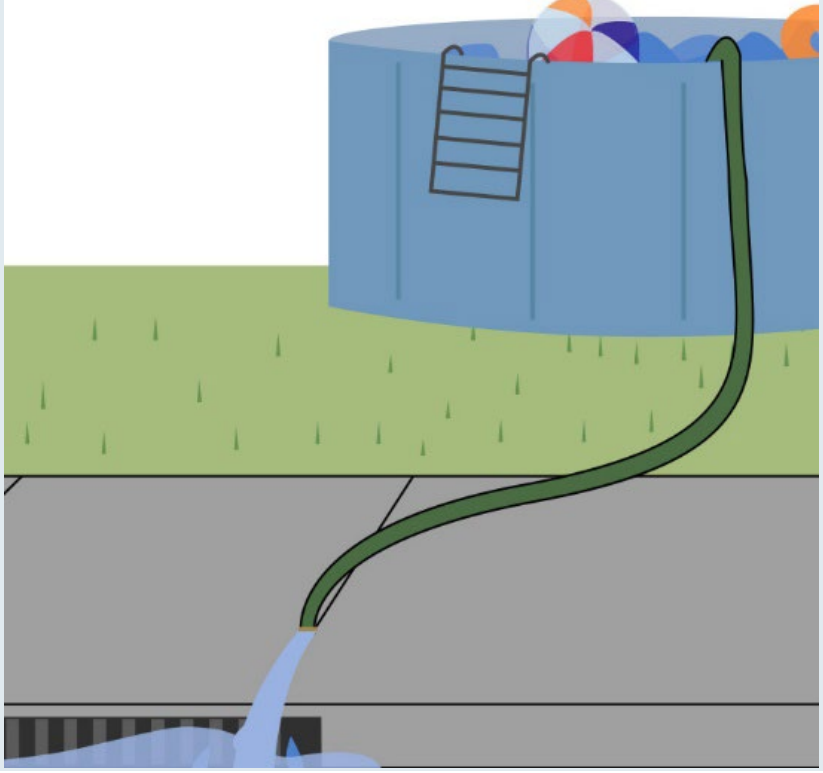
Cleaning Pool Filters

When you clean your pool filters, never clean them in your driveway or anywhere the water could run into the street and down a storm drain. Instead, rinse cartridge filters onto landscaping so that the ground will absorb the water. Do not clean filters in a sink unless you place a filter cloth over the drain. The filter media (usually diatomaceous earth) should never go down the drain. After cleaning the filter you can place the filter media in the trash.

Draining to the Street & Storm Drain

If you are unable to drain water from your pool, spa or fountain to the sewer, it may be possible to drain pool water to a storm drain under certain conditions.

Please keep in mind that this water is likely treated with a variety of chemicals (such as chlorine and algaecides) to keep organisms from living in it. It is illegal to discharge water that contains biocides or other chemicals to the storm drain system as it will harm the wetland and waterway ecosystems.



Make sure that draining your pool, spa or fountain will not pollute local wetlands and waterways by performing all these checks BEFORE draining water to the street or storm drain.

- ✓ **Make sure that you have not added any chemicals other than chlorine or muriatic acid to your pool.** Most chemicals added to pools are toxic to aquatic organisms. Chlorine and muriatic acid are okay since over time they either dissipate or are converted to non-toxic forms. If any other chemical has ever been added, including bromine, hydrogen peroxide based products, copper, silver, algaecides, fungicides, soda ash or cyanuric acid, you may not drain the water to the street or storm drain.
- ✓ **Be sure that your pool or spa water IS NOT treated with an ionizer or mineral purifiers.**
- ✓ **Remove or filter out any debris, algae or plants in the water.**
- ✓ **Test the pH of the water.** Kits are available at pool supply stores. If the 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).** Levels higher than 1 ppm can 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 days or add a chemical dechlorinator (available from most pool supply stores—be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions).
- ✓ **Ensure that the pool water will drain at a flow rate that does not cause damage to the storm drain system or cause erosion.**
- ✓ **Clear the path to the storm drain of any debris.** Leaf debris and trash that is in the path of the flow of the water should be cleared to ensure that debris is not washed down the drain with the flow of the pool water discharge.
- ✓ **If the pool or spa was heated, allow the water to cool completely first**. Never discharge hot or warm water to the street or storm drain.

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