

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality  
GUIDELINES FOR THE RELEASE OF SWIMMING POOL WATER**

With proper Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation, swimming pool (as used herein the term includes hot tubs) releases that reach surface waters are not expected to contain pollutants in concentrations that are toxic or would cause or contribute to violations of the Virginia Water Quality Standards, (9VAC25-260). Therefore, Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) permits are generally not necessary provided the following guidelines outlined below are followed. Use of these guidelines does not relieve the property (pool) owner or pool management company of responsibility for any environmental impacts and associated penalty liability that occur as a result of a release. ***Prior to releasing pool water contact your local government (environmental/sanitary section) to obtain any local approval(s) that may be necessary.***

Guidelines

A. Disposal of Pool Water to Sanitary Sewer Systems

- The disposal of pool water (resulting from filter backwash and/or pool draining) or wastewater (resulting from pool cleaning activities) into a sanitary sewer system is highly recommended. The local sewer authority should always be contacted for approval and/or specific requirements prior to disposal into the sanitary sewer system.
- If disposal to a sanitary sewer system is unavailable, the release of pool water to well vegetated areas on your property is encouraged (see Section B below).

B. Release of Pool Water to Well Vegetated Areas on Your Property

- Pool water releases should be directed in such a way to prevent direct discharges to storm sewer systems or surface waters. Direct discharges are discouraged and should only be considered as a last resort for pool water disposal.
- There should be no release of floating solids, visible foam, or visible oil sheen in other than trace amounts. Solids on the pool bottom should not be released; they should be cleaned out manually and disposed of properly.
- A pH between 6.0 to 8.0 standard units should be maintained for all releases.
- Heated pool water should not be released. Water temperatures should be allowed to stabilize to ambient conditions prior to the releasing pool water.
- For facilities using chlorine for disinfection, the pool water should not contain any detectable levels of total residual chlorine (greater than 0.10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) or parts per million (ppm)). Please note that total residual chlorine is not the same as free available chlorine.
- For facilities utilizing bromine for disinfection, the pool water should not contain any detectable levels of total residual bromine (greater than 0.10 mg/L or ppm).
- Releases should be monitored and controlled to prevent flooding or erosion damage from occurring on adjacent or downstream properties.
- Releases should be directed in such a way to prevent creating nuisance conditions (e.g. creation of odors, creation of fly and/or mosquito breeding conditions, etc.) on adjacent or downstream properties.

- The release of filter backwash to surface waters is prohibited in certain localities. Prior to releasing filter backwash water contact your local government (environmental/sanitary section) for approval and/or specific disposal requirements.
- Pool water treated with algaecides should be released with caution (algaecides containing copper and/or silver are very toxic to fish and other aquatic life). If the algaecide label contains a warning against discharging the treated water into lakes, streams, ponds, or other water bodies, the water should not be released. This water should be disposed of by hauling to a publically owned treatment works. Contact the local sewer authority about disposal options prior to hauling this water.
- Wastewater associated with pool cleaning activities (e.g. acid washing) should not be released. This wastewater should be collected and disposed of by hauling to a publically owned treatment works. Contact the local sewer authority about disposal options prior to hauling this wastewater.
- Pool water from saltwater facilities should not be released. It is recommended that these waters be disposed of by hauling to a publically owned treatment works. Contact the local sewer authority about disposal options prior to hauling this water.

### Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be implemented as necessary to meet the guidelines above, by anyone releasing pool water. The following BMPs will help to ensure that pool releases will not negatively impact water quality.

- Minimize pool filter backwash releases by keeping the pool and filters clean. In addition, backwash filters only when necessary.
- Minimize pool draining releases by properly maintaining pool filtration equipment in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.
- Minimize pool cleaning activities by covering pools when not in use.
- Reduce pool releases by collecting the water for reuse (e.g. irrigation of plants, shrubs, lawns, and/or gardens).
- A filter bag or similar filtration device can be used to remove suspended solids or other debris. This device should be utilized, maintained, and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and local requirements.
- An oil absorbent boom, pad or similar device can be used to remove oil from the pool water. After its use, this device should be disposed of in a properly permitted facility.
- Use a swimming pool test kit to measure pH. Chemicals used to adjust pH (such as soda ash) are available through swimming pool and spa care vendors.
- Turn off temperature control (i.e. heating) equipment and allow water temperatures to stabilize to ambient conditions over an extended period of time (approximately 10 days) prior to releasing the pool water.

- Stop adding chlorine or bromine and allow it to naturally dissipate over an extended period of time (approximately 10 days) prior to releasing the pool water. During that time, use a swimming pool test kit to measure total residual chlorine or bromine levels. In addition, chemicals that will quickly dissipate chlorine or bromine (such as sodium thiosulfate) are available through swimming pool and spa care vendors.
- Direct pool water releases into on-site level spreaders; this helps to promote overland sheet flow and prevent erosion.
- Direct pool water releases to well-vegetated areas on your property; this helps to prevent erosion and/or nuisance conditions from occurring as well as encourages plant uptake.
- Drain pools slowly, over a few days, using a low volume pump, siphon or valve setting; this helps to optimize plant uptake/filtration of the water. In addition, it encourages shallow ground water recharge.
- Visually monitor pool releases throughout their duration for signs of water quality problems (e.g. excess erosion caused by the releases) and institute corrective measures as necessary.
- Contact the appropriate DEQ Regional Office if an adverse environmental impact occurs (e.g. fish kill). Visit [www.DEQ.Virginia.gov/get-involved/about-deq/contact-us](http://www.DEQ.Virginia.gov/get-involved/about-deq/contact-us) to find office locations and permit staff.