

# Handling Swimming Pool Wastewater

## What You Should Know

Water from swimming pools can contain high levels of chlorine, which is harmful to fish and other aquatic life if discharged into streams or ponds. The discharge of wastewater, including swimming pool water, to the City sewer, or Pennsylvania's rivers or streams without permission from the City or State is illegal. Violations of local and state requirements for handling swimming pool wastewater may subject the property (pool) owner and/or pool company to prosecution or monetary fines for any stream damage that occurs as a result of the discharge. Unauthorized discharges to the City's sanitary or storm sewers are punishable by fines up to \$10,000.



## Where can I discharge my swimming pool wastewater?

When emptying your swimming pool at the end of the season, or for maintenance, it is important to ensure that this wastewater is not allowed to enter any streams or ponds where it could harm aquatic life. Pool wastewater must either be pumped to the City sanitary sewer, or directly to your property.

## General Guidelines for Pool Pumpouts

1. Pumpouts may *only be conducted during dry weather*. Pool pumpouts during wet weather may contribute to sewer overflows and result in direct discharge to local rivers or streams.
2. Pump from the water surface (top) to avoid disturbing settled solids. Solids on the pool bottom should not be pumped to the sewer, but cleaned manually after pool water has been removed. Dispose of any solids with household solid waste (trash).

## **For discharges to the City sewer:**

1. *Prior to any discharge contact the Water Department's Industrial Waste & Backflow Compliance* and obtain permission to discharge pool and pool cleaning wastewater.
2. Use a small volume pump and control discharges so it doesn't spill out (<800 gallons per minute)
3. Discharge with a hose into access cap of the private property sewer drain. Use of public manholes, inlets or cleanouts is strictly prohibited and could result in monetary fines.
4. Care should be taken to ensure the discharge is to a sanitary sewer and not a storm sewer, which would result in a discharge to a river or stream.

## **For discharges to your property:**

If discharge to sanitary sewer is not feasible, then the following guidelines must be followed before discharging the water:

1. Shut off the pool chlorination system if you have one, or stop adding chlorine. Hold the water in the pool for two weeks to reduce the chlorine level.
2. Discharge or use the water for irrigation in an area where the water will not flow into a stream or storm sewer (street inlet). When discharging or use the water for irrigating your property and ensure that it does not flow off your property.
3. Discharge or use the water for irrigation in a manner that will prevent nuisance conditions (such as creation of odors, and fly and mosquito breeding conditions). Nuisance conditions occur when water is held in the pool for a prolonged period.

## **Still have questions? Please contact PWD's Industrial Waste Unit at:**

Philadelphia Water Department  
Industrial Waste & Backflow Compliance  
1101 Market Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: 215-685-6236  
Web: <http://www.phila.gov/water/iwu>

