

Pool Draining Tips to Protect Water Quality

With summer right around the corner, many Oceanside residents will be readying their swimming pools in anticipation of the season's heat. As part of this process, some pool owners like to drain old swimming pool water which has been sitting all winter. Though not a necessary task, the following tips are provided for you to properly drain pool water in order to protect the water resources in your community.

Whenever possible, it is best to drain your pool onto your landscape. This recycles your pool water, conserves irrigation water, and avoids the environmental risks associated with draining your pool to the street. Before draining your pool water to the street or to your landscape, be sure to follow the guidelines outlined below.

While draining pool water to the street is a common practice, it can prove harmful to the environment if the pool owner does not properly plan and prepare prior to draining. When pool water is drained to the street, it can carry other pollutants such as oil, grease, sediment, bacteria and trash down the storm drain and into the nearest creek, river, or the Pacific Ocean. Swimming pool water also often contains harmful additives and chemicals. If the water is not properly treated to remove these pollutants prior to draining, they can cause further damage to the health of our waterways and to the plants and animals that live there.



Also, prior to draining to the street, residents are asked to sweep the curb and gutter between the discharge point from their yard to the storm drain down hill from their home. This will remove any pollutants from the gutter that may be carried up by the drained pool water to the storm drain.

For **chlorine pools**, chlorine levels must be lowered to less than 1 part per million prior to draining. This can be done naturally, by simply allowing the pool water to sit in the sun for a minimum of three days. Alternatively, de-chlorination kits can be purchased at home supply stores at a very reasonable cost. These kits have the tools you need to reach the appropriate chlorine levels before draining your pool to the curb and gutter.

Some people have **salt water pool systems** which may be preferred due to the lower amount of chemicals required for their operation. However, these pools must not be drained to the storm drain system due to their high salt content relative to the fresh water systems they drain into. Total dissolved solids (TDS) must be below 500 parts per million in order to drain into the street.

“Green pools,” which are pools in which algae is growing, also must not be drained to the street. In these instances, algae must first be killed and removed. This is usually done by chlorinating the swimming pool until the algae is gone, then lowering chlorine to the allowable discharge level. Cartridge filters or diatomaceous earth (DE) filters should be rinsed onto a pervious surface such as landscaped areas or grass. While DE is actually beneficial in your garden, it can build up in storm drains and clog them. DE residues can be scooped up and simply thrown in the trash or put to use fending off worms in your garden.

For more information on how to reach acceptable chemical and TDS levels, call your pool maintenance specialist. For questions about safe pool drainage, call the City of Oceanside's Urban Runoff Hotline at 760-435-5800. By taking these simple steps, you can enjoy your pool, stay cool, and protect the environment, too!