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Alachua County Environmental Protection Department

Best Management Practices for Residential Swimming Pool Maintenance

This fact sheet is designed to provide background information and best management practices for home pool maintenance.

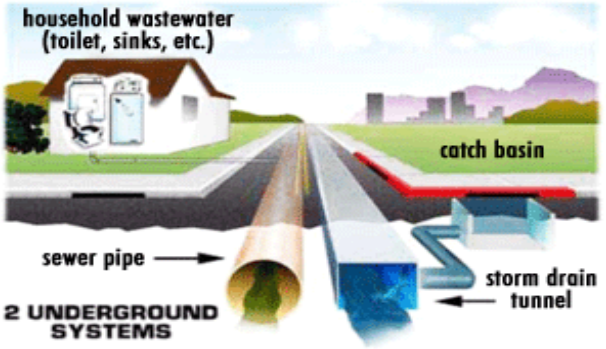
Potential sources of water pollution from pool servicing activities include toxic chemicals, nutrients, and sediments entering the storm drain systems and discharging into nearby surface water bodies, and erosion.

Following the Best Management Practices outlined on this sheet will not only help you to comply with the Water Quality Code, but also to make a significant impact towards improving water quality in Alachua County. Ensuring a high level of water quality in both surface and ground waters is important for humans and wildlife alike.

Alachua County Water Quality Code, Chapter 77 (Ordinance 02-27) prohibits non-stormwater discharges into stormwater management systems.

The Storm Drain System was built to collect and transport rain to prevent flooding in urban areas. In many areas anything that flows or is discharged into the storm drain system goes directly into local creeks without any treatment.

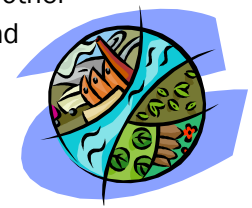
The Sanitary Sewer System collects and transports sanitary wastes from interior building plumbing systems to a wastewater treatment plant for disinfection and treatment.



Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods and practices such as good housekeeping, spill prevention, or treatment measures to prevent or minimize pollutant discharges.

Illegal Discharges or Illicit Connections discharge non-storm water to municipal storm drain systems and contribute to water pollution.

Urban Runoff is rain and any other water that passes through and out of developed areas into the storm drain system and eventually to creeks and other waters.



Best Management Practices

Landscaping Making use of native plants to form a good buffer zone or vegetation around your pool will help keep any contaminants from leaving the area. This is especially important on sloped lawns, and particularly when a waterway is adjacent to or within the property. A bermed area or depression may be constructed and then well vegetated to help hold pool discharges for soil infiltration and away from streets, waterways, ditches or storm drains.

Disinfection systems Chlorine based systems. Chlorine is used in liquid, solid, & powdered forms or produced by electronic generators. A very toxic chemical, chlorine must not be allowed to enter storm drains or waterways. Never mix chlorine with other chemicals because of the risk of explosion or dangerous fumes created. To dispose of chemical containers (chlorine or bromine e.g. sticks or Yellow Treat), rinse 3 times with pool water, emptying each time in pool, before disposing.

Silver & Copper ion systems Some silver & copper ion systems use cartridges (e.g. Nature2). Silver and copper ions are very harmful to water quality. Take spent cartridges to the Household Hazardous Waste Center (352) 334-0440.

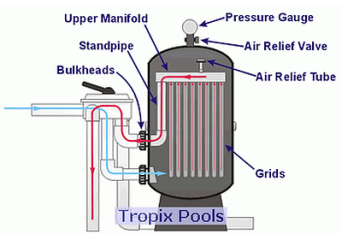
Other Chemicals Used In Pool Care and Maintenance

pH adjusters. Properly dispose of muriatic acid containers. Rinse empty jugs 3 times with pool water and dispose with trash. If soda ash or baking soda is added, follow the same disposal recommendations.

Algaecides. Use chlorine shocks to avoid algaecides containing metals harmful to water quality. If such algaecides are added, a sequestering agent must be used to remove the metals.

Store all pool chemicals in a secure, dry, and cool place. Never hose spills into a sewer or stormwater drain. Take unused or unwanted chemicals to the Household Hazardous Waste Center for disposal (352) 334-0440.

Filter Maintenance – backwashing or cleaning. Sand filters should be backwashed into the city sewer system, a low spot in the yard, or a swale. Hose filter cartridges away from stormwater drains, streets, or waterways. When cleaning diatomaceous earth (DE) filters, DE must be kept out of waterways or stormwater systems since it is very harmful to aquatic species. Bag used DE and dispose with trash Dispose of debris collected in hair baskets, vacuums, or skimmers in the trash rather than storm drains or waterways.



Decks Sweep or blow your deck instead of using water. When water is necessary for cleaning, use flow control to minimize water usage. When using chlorine, acid, soap or chemical cleaners direct **diluted** wash waters to a grassy area. Concentrated cleaning agents can not be discharged to the environment.

Draining Your Pool: Allow chlorine levels to drop to zero before draining your pool. Do not add chemicals or disinfectants for one week prior to draining. Test your water before draining to determine chlorine, stabilizer, and TDS (total dissolved solids, usually salt) levels before draining your pool. It is illegal to drain chlorine to a stormwater system, a creek, or any water body either directly or indirectly.

Drain your pool onto your grass, preferably so the water drains to swales or rain gardens where the water can slowly percolate into the ground. Rain gardens are not recommended for pool water in which high levels of cyanuric acid (stabilizer) or salt exist (common with liquid and electronic generator use) unless you have salt tolerant species planted. As a last resort, in small yards or on severe slopes, contact your wasterwater utility for information about discharge to the sanitary sewer.

Thiosulfate may be used to rid the water of chlorine if your stabilizer level is high. Chemical removing products may be needed for contaminants added to pool water, such as copper left from algaecides. No adequate way exists to disperse of the silver and copper in the water that may result from the use of mineral systems. The best practice is to gradually drain your pool to a swale or rain garden over more than one day. Wait for dry conditions to avoid ponding or offsite runoff that will occur during wet conditions.