

Is Your Pool Ready? **by Bob Buettner**

It's that time of the year when pool operators start thinking about their swimming pools. Consider the following inspection guidelines upon opening your pool:

Check Water Level

Maintain proper water level, which usually is in the middle of the skimmer opening. Test pH, total alkalinity, calcium hardness and sanitizer levels. Swimming pool for total dissolved solids (TDS), Cyanuric Acid, metals such as copper and iron, and phosphates.

Add chelating and sequestering agent to prevent metallic stains in your pool, especially after adding fresh water.

Properties should vacuum their pools weekly, or more frequently based on weather and bather load.

Skim Surface, Floor

Use a skimmer net of leaf rake to collect floating debris. Remove accumulated debris on the pool bottom with a leaf bagger or leaf rake to avoid staining and prevent clogging the main drain or vacuum equipment.

Clean Tile

The ring or scum line that forms on the tile is a combination of oils, dust and scale (calcium). For plaster pools, use a liquid tile cleaner. If the pool has a pebble finish, consult your builder for the appropriate cleaner.

Remove heavy gray or white deposits (scale) on tile in plaster pools with a soft pumice stone or liquid tile cleaner. Heavy scaling indicates a serious water problem. Check water balance and make sure the tile and vertical depth marker are in good condition.

Brush Pool, Steps

Inspect the pool surface for stains or scale buildup. Check for chipped or missing plaster. Examine the condition of the paint membrane on painted pools.

Failure to brush can often result in the formation of stubborn dirt stains and algae. Spending 10 to 15 minutes twice a week brushing the pool walls, steps and bottom saves time by making the weekly pool cleaning less extensive. Using a nylon-bristle brush, start at the shallow end and work toward the main drain.

Inspect Skimmer, Pump Strainer Basket, Circulation System

Check the skimmer and pump strainer baskets for cracks. Clean both daily. This ensures proper filtration and efficient suction for brushing and vacuuming. Failure to clean baskets could damage them and possibly the pumps.

Ask yourself these questions when conducting a seasonal inspection:

- Is the skimmer cover in good condition?
- Are the skimmer weir, float valve and diverted installed and operational?
- Is the pump lid and lid O-ring in good condition? Replace the O-rings and gaskets. Use suitable lubricant on pump lid O-ring.
- Is the equipment leaking? Prevent future problems by replacing in the pump every spring.
- Are the chemical feeders operational and in good condition? Inspect hoses, clamps and fittings.
- Is the flowmeter installed and operational?
- Are the valves in good condition and operational?
- Are the ORP and pH probes clean (if there is a controller installed)?
- Is the heater operational and in good working condition?
- Is the lighting operational?

- Are the Ground Fault Circuit interrupters operational?
- Are the return inlets missing?
- Are the ladders and handrails secured?

Service Filter

Circulation and filtration systems operate more efficiently and last longer if backwashed or cleaned regularly. Properties should generally clean these when the filter pressure gauge indicates a rise of 8-10 psi above starting pressure. Bleed trapped air from the filter using the air-relief valve. Manually clean the filter per manufacturer's recommendations. Use a cleaner to maximize filter efficiency. Make sure the backwash valve is operating properly and the pressure or vacuum gauges are operational. (A pressure gauge should drop to zero when the pump is shut off.)

Inspect, Clean Deck

Inspect the deck for cracks. Check the condition of expansion joints. Look specifically at the condition of the coping and deck depth markers. Rinse the pool area before swimmers enter. Do not allow dirty water to get into the pool. Scrub coping with stiff nylon brush per pool builder recommendations.

Wash down concrete or stone decking with 5-percent chlorine solution (1 fluid ounce of bleach to 20 ounces of water) or concrete/surface-specific cleaner to kill bacteria and prevent infection.

Vacuum

Vacuumping gives your pool the most thorough cleaning during normal maintenance. Properties should vacuum their pools weekly, or more frequently based on weather and bather load. Automatic pool cleaners make this step easy and can save a property up to 90 percent on facility labor costs.

Inspect Safety Equipment, Signage, Chemical Storage

Ask yourself the following:

- Are required safety signs in place and in good condition?
- Is the approved non-telescopic pole with body hook in place?
- Is the approved life-ring, with sufficient rope attached, installed and readily available?
- Are the gates self-closing and self-latching?
- Is the emergency shut-off switch installed and operational?
- Are ANSI/ASME A112.19.8M-approved drain covers installed?
- Is an emergency phone installed and readily available?
- Is a logbook of daily records available?
- Do the gates open away from the pool or spa?
- Is the 15-minute spa timer installed and operational?
- Is the MSDS book up-to-date and readily available?
- Are chemicals properly segregated and stores?

Test & Adjust Water Balance, Sanitizer Levels

Compare these to state water quality levels. Replace test solutions annually. Store test kits in cool, dark place. Test total alkalinity, pH, calcium hardness, free available chlorine (FAC) and total available chlorine. (The National Spa and Pool Institute recommends the ideal FAC level for pools to be between 2.0 - 4.0 ppm.)

Other tests to consider are: TDS (Total Dissolved Solids), Cyanuric Acid, salt (if the pool has a chlorine generator), copper and iron, phosphates and nitrates.

Adjust the pool water balance and sanitizer level by following the direction's on the product's label. Wait 2 to 4 hours between chemical additions.

S.O.A.P.

Maintain clear, clean, safe and sanitary water by following this simple strategy:

- Sanitize. Always maintain a 2.0 – 4.0 FAC level.
- Oxidize. Shock or superchlorinate on a regular basis to ensure your sanitizer residual is at its peak performance.
- Active enzymes. Enzymes break down suntan oils, hair products, body oils and perspiration, and decaying organic materials. It removes and prevents the scum line from forming.
- Phosphate removers. Phosphates are food for algae. If none exist, algae cannot grow in a normally sanitized pool.

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