



# DISCHARGE GUIDELINES FOR POOL & SPA WATER

*A Message from the City of Tucson, Department of Transportation*

**Sanitary Sewer Discharge of Water from Swimming Pools:** Pima County's Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department has approved swimming pool water discharge into the public sewer (sanitary sewer) collection system using the following guidelines:

- Plan discharge for low-use times of sewer flow such as afternoon or late night hours.
- Use small volume pump and control discharge so it doesn't spill out.
- Discharge with hose into access "cap" of the private property sewer cleanout. **DO NOT** use public manholes or cleanouts.

Sanitary sewer discharge is a preferred method to manage this water. Pima County treats what is collected in the sewer system, and much of this water can be reclaimed for irrigation use.

**Irrigation Use of Backwash Water:** Filter backwashing results in frequent, small quantity release (approx. 75 gallons) of impure water from a pool or spa. Backwash water commonly contains elevated levels of chlorine, pathogens and other potential contaminants that should not be released off-site. In most cases, the amount of backwash water generated by pools and spas can be readily absorbed into soil around the pool area. This water can be used to irrigate salt-tolerant plants (see the back of this flyer for further information). Remember to move the drain hose frequently, since backwash water discharge to one location can create stagnant water areas that can produce mosquitoes. Surface flow of filter backwash off of your property is not allowed under state and local discharge permit requirements.

## **Emptying Pools & Spas by Drainage to Street, Stormdrain, or Wash Only When No**

**Other Disposal Option is Available:** It is still wise to use pool drainage water for landscape irrigation on your property whenever possible. And, wherever available, the sanitary sewer should be used to accept pool water you need to drain. If no other alternative exists, follow the guidelines below:

**In the City of Tucson, you may drain your pool or spa using off-site surface flow only if you meet ALL of the following conditions from state and local regulations:**

- You do not have access to a private sewer cleanout.
- Owner shall allow the pool or spa to remain untreated for at least 72 hours (3 days) after the last chlorine addition. This waiting period meets the requirement to de-chlorinate prior to the discharge.
- The pH level of the water must be monitored by the owner and must fall in the range of 7-8. The owner or service company shall measure pH prior to discharge and adjust it to the acceptable range with standard pool chemicals. Monitor pH throughout the discharge and adjust it, as necessary. Easy to use pH kits are available at stores that sell pool chemicals.
- If a pool or spa has been acid washed, this highly acidic water cannot be discharged off-site.
- Discharged water shall be clear (not cloudy or discolored) and free of algae and any contaminants.
- Discharge should be directed by means of a temporary flexible hose, to a stormdrain, drainage channel, or along the curblin gutter of a paved street. Pool or spa discharge may not drain into unpaved/strip-paved alleys or streets where it can cause erosion or contribute to ruts as vehicles drive on wet muddy surfaces.
- Discharge shall be monitored and controlled to ensure that it does not transport sediment or cause erosion of the banks or bottoms of the affected drainage channels or washes.
- Discharge shall not run onto other private property, across a sidewalk, or impair street access!!

**ONLY when all of these conditions are met, may the pool or spa be drained to surface drainage. Under no circumstances will a pool or spa be allowed to be permanently connected to a stormdrain or wash.**

To learn more about the state's De Minimus General Permit, which allows this type of discharge, visit the ADEQ website at: <http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/gen.html#demi> If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact the City of Tucson, Department of Transportation, Stormwater Management Section at 791-4251.

## Where should I use my pool/spa drain or backwash water?

Swimming pool and spa backwash water contains chemicals used to control microorganisms and the pH level of the water. Many species of plants are sensitive to these chemicals. However, water from swimming pools and spas can be used to irrigate several salt tolerant plants.

The following lists of sensitive, moderately sensitive, and salt tolerant plants provided below are derived from various publications provided by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service.

<b>Plants sensitive to salt:</b> <i>Do not use backwash water</i>	<b>Moderately sensitive plants:</b> <i>Limited use of backwash water</i>	<b>Salt-tolerant plants:</b> <i>Can use backwash water</i>
Fruit Trees	Glossy Privet	Oleander
Star Jasmine	Pyracantha	Evergreen Euonymas
Roses	Lantana	Rosemary
Algerian Ivy	Xylosma	Bougainvillea
Fraser's Photinia	Juniper	Natal Plum
Chinese Hibiscus	Bottlebrush	Texas Ranger
Willow	Most Acacia Species	Olive
Hopbush	Palo Verde	Native Mesquite
Jojoba	Yucca	Desert Broom
Others...	Others...	Saltbush
		Aloe
		Deer Grass
		Bear Grass
		Ice Plant
		Japanese Honeysuckle
		Others...

When using backwash water, observe the plants and soil for symptoms of salt accumulation:

**For the soil**, watch for a dense, hard, cracked appearance or grayish-white color indicating a possible salt accumulation. A common symptom of salt accumulation is slower water infiltration.

**For the plants**, look for dry, dead areas on the edges and tips of the leaves or a blotched appearance. These symptoms may indicate salt accumulation in the soil. However, symptoms can also be caused by a variety of other factors including disease, herbicides, or insects.

**To avoid salt buildup**, remember to move the discharge hose frequently.

A good source of further information on salt tolerance and related issues is your local Cooperative Extension Agent (626-5161). Feel free to contact the City of Tucson, Department of Transportation, Stormwater Management Section at 791-4251.