



County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health



Swimming Pools Impacted by Smoke and Ash

Pool Maintenance and Re-use: The following guidelines are recommended for the maintenance of pools impacted by smoke and ash contamination or fire damage. Do not allow use of the pool until the following steps have been completed.

1. Clean skimmer baskets of debris and skim water surface of pool with pool net to remove floating debris.
2. Brush sides and bottom of pool to loosen contaminants. Vacuum pool.
3. Backwash and clean filter, discharging waste to municipal sanitary sewer only. Connected to a septic tank system, discharge the backwash to a pervious surface (gravel, lawn, open space) to allow for infiltration without erosion. Backwash to the storm drain system (alleys, driveways, streets, storm drains) and creeks is prohibited by law.
4. Check pH and adjust to between 7.2 and 8.0.
5. Check free chlorine level and adjust to minimum of 2.0 parts per million (ppm).
6. Ensure the recirculation system is operating properly by checking filter pressure and/or flow meter.
7. Reopen pool to bathers when pH levels are 7.2 to 8.0 and free chlorine is level 2.0 ppm.
8. Due to the amount of smoke and ash in the air, these steps may need to be repeated after cleaning the filters.
9. Alternatively, a swimming pool service company may be contracted to clean the pool. Check for their business license and experience in servicing pools. Pool service operators likewise are prohibited from discharging backwash to the storm drain system.

Deck Cleaning: Clean the pool deck and dispose of the debris with the rest of the solid waste. Don't hose down the deck to storm drains. You may spray lightly first to minimize dust and ashes from becoming airborne, then use a stiff brush or broom to sweep up and put in trash. A mop and bucket could also be used for clean up.

Draining Pools: Draining of pools is only recommended when necessary. Ideally, pool or spa filters and skimmer baskets and nets should be used to remove ash and debris through normal maintenance practices. If your filtration system is inoperable, and you must drain the pool, the options below should be considered. Please call the San Diego Regional Stormwater Hotline at (888) 846-0800 for additional information.

1. Sanitary Sewer -- If you're connected to the sanitary sewer, check with your local sewer agency to determine if they will accept your pool water into their system.
2. Infiltration -- If you can't filter the water or discharge it to the sewer, you may be able to infiltrate it into your lawn or garden, or another permeable surface. These surfaces will act as a filter to remove pollutants. Make sure that infiltration occurs at least 100 feet away from wells, septic systems, and building and home foundations. When you're finished infiltrating water, residual ash and debris should be collected and put in the trash.
3. Storm Drain System -- Discharging to the storm drain system should be considered only if you've determined that none of the above options will work. Local stormwater ordinances generally allow the discharge of pool and spa water into the storm drain only if the water contains less than 1.0 ppm of chlorine, is between 7.2 - 8.0 pH, and does not contain other pollutants such as algicides, acid wash, or ash and debris. Under all circumstances, the best attempt possible should be made to remove ash and debris from water before discharging it. This should include manually cleaning debris and ash with a skimmer net, as well as filtering smaller particles through a cheese cloth, a "sock" filter, a grassy or vegetated area, or other material that will remove particles while allowing water to slowly flow through.

Mosquito Breeding: Pools with standing water could breed mosquitoes. Please call the County of San Diego, Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 to have staff come and stock the pool with mosquito-eating fish until the power and pool recirculation system are restored.

Damaged Pool, Enclosure or Recirculation System: Pools that have had damage to the recirculation system, the pool enclosure or the pool shell must contact the Plan Check Unit of the Department of Environmental Health at (619) 338-2364 for evaluation.

Department of Environmental Health, Food and Housing Division
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