



The Pool Safety & Sanitation  
Newsletter of the Alexandria  
Health Department

The Lifeline

**AUGUST 2012**

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## Is Your Pool Green?



Is your pool green? Does the water appear cloudy or simply not as clear as you recall it being at the beginning of the pool season? Do the pool walls—especially hard-to-reach areas such as corners, deep end, skimmers, and behind the ladders—look yellow, green, red, or black? Are there slippery spots in the pool? If so, problems with water chemistry, equipment malfunctions, and/or inadequate brushing of pool surfaces might be promoting the growth of algae in your pool.

Algae is particularly noticeable toward the end of the summer. Hot sunny weather raises the temperature of the water, promoting algal growth. Your pool was tested during the pre-opening inspection to insure there were no zones that disinfectant-treated water could not reach due to poor circulation, but now the system might not be circulating the water as well as it did initially.

Algae often manifests as cloudy green water. Poor water clarity is one of the most hazardous conditions that can arise in a swimming pool. Superchlorinating while the pool is closed and maintaining an effective free disinfectant residual in the water will hopefully correct this unsightly and hazardous nuisance. Maintaining the water temperature at less than 80°F (26.7°C) also helps prevent algae from reappearing.

Pool operators trying to minimize disinfectant expenses sometimes underestimate the amount of disinfectant needed to complete the season without having to replenish the supply. Alexandria aquatic health ordinance requires that an effective disinfectant residual be maintained 24 hours per day, so do yourself and others a favor by adhering to the rule. Doing so will help keep the algae away.

Keeping the hair/lint basket clear of debris, filters clean, skimmer baskets clear, and flow rates supporting a minimum 6 hour turnover time for a pool (2 hr for a wading pool; 15 min for a spa) are straightforward ways that you can keep the recirculation optimal toward helping you combat algal growth. If you suspect a skimmer or return inlet is blocked, notify your supervisor immediately.

Algae developing on a walking surface is a slip hazard. Identify areas where water tends to pool on decks and keep these areas dry by regularly brushing away the water before algae has a chance to appear.

Pool cleaning is a constant requirement and an endeavor that involves tedious labor, so brushing is rarely, if ever, a pool operator's favorite poolside activity. Although algacides are a convenient way to diminish algal growth, copper sulfate algacides introduce copper ions to the water. These copper ions can color hair an unfashionable shade of green, so apply cautiously.

## Common End of Season Issues

By now many of you have had a chance to get acquainted with your facility and familiarized yourself around the pool. You may have developed a knack for how to best respond and correct issues that could potentially arise at the pool you have been assigned to most in the 2012 pool season. However, there are several reoccurring themes that have been an issue in this last stretch of the pool season which you should take into consideration. Some issues that you would likely come across are total dissolved solids (TDS) exceeding 1600 parts per million (ppm), low or no chlorine supply on premises, insufficient certified guards, and general maintenance of pool premises.

**"...ensuring liquid soap for each shower fixture and hand sink is everyone's responsibility."**

Because the pools have been used throughout the season, the accumulation of dissolved solids will become increasingly problematic. The acceptable range for TDS is 0 – 1600 ppm. In circumstances where TDS exceeds 1600 ppm, a quick way to correct this issue is to drain the pool partially and refill the pool with fresh water. The second issue that you may likely encounter is inadequate chlorine supply. Your Health Inspector will visually observe for chlorine supply in the upcoming routine evaluations and may determine a subsequent unannounced visit is appropriate. By no means should any pool be operating with a free chlorine level less than 1 ppm (or 2 ppm if using cyanuric acid) in the water. The third issue is not having enough certified guards. Many lifeguards will head back to school prior to the end of the pool season and so finding a replacement may be difficult. During hours of operation a pool operator(s) and an appropriate number of individuals each certified in lifeguarding and cardiopulmonary resuscitation are required to be on site at all times. The last issue that should be taken into consideration is the general maintenance of the pool and the equipment required to run the facility. Property is bound to deteriorate as it gets used and equipment tends to get disorganized and misplaced. It is important not to allow this to occur as each and every individual required item has its important use in running a safe pool.

## Imagine Life Without Soap

Handwashing with soap is among the most inexpensive and effective ways to prevent diarrheal disease and pneumonia, and a staggering 1.4 million deaths can be prevented each year by handwashing with soap. Yet, the American Society of Microbiology studies showed that only 33% of middle and high school females and 8% of males used soap while washing their hands. The question arises of how many times soap was not used simply because the dispenser was empty or non-functional. Liquid soap suspends dirt and soil, the washers' hand friction helps pull the soils away from the skin, and finally the warm running water helps shed the suspended germs down the drain. As operators of a recreational aquatic facility, it is of the utmost importance that liquid soap be provided for hand and body washing. If soap is not available, countless millions of germs and bacteria that would otherwise be shed down the sink and into the water treatment system will relax comfortably in your pool until the chlorine kills it—hopefully before it enters someone's body through ingestion or inhalation. Though there is often a gray line and differing operating procedures between the pool management and property management companies at each pool, ensuring liquid soap for each shower fixture and hand sink is everyone's responsibility. If you notice that a soap dispenser is empty, please refill it or alert the responsible party as soon as possible.