

DEP reminds pool owners about wastewater rules Dumping into storm sewers violates Clean Streams Law

With pool season upon us, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is advising pool owners to dispose of chlorinated wastewater properly.

“Pools will open in just a few weeks,” said acting DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo. “Sometimes as swimming pools are cleaned and prepared for summer use, we see fish kills in local streams that could easily have been prevented.”

Proper disposal of wastewater or the powdery material used to filter pools is a topic often discussed with customers at Valley Pools & Spa in North Versailles, said Eric Cassidy, vice president.

“We explain to people they’re not allowed to drain their pools into storm sewers,” Cassidy said. “One thing in our area, since the pools aren’t used year-round, there’s not a lot of people draining their pools to clean them.”

Diatomaecous earth system filters use a fine powder to filter water in pools, Cassidy said. “Water doesn’t break it down ... it’s like powdered fossils.”

The powder is ground up shells, and they’ll chew up hopper blades at water treatment plants, said Bill Cole, who has been selling pools in North Huntingdon for 40 years.

“It’s an absolute must when you sell a pool to let the customer know they can’t dump into storm sewers,” he said.

Pool owners and professional pool cleaners should dispose of old water correctly and neutralize wastewater containing chemicals such as chlorine and muriatic acid, the DEP said.

“Most importantly, they need to make sure the wastewater is going into the sanitary sewer, where it’s allowed — not into storm sewers,” Abruzzo said.

When chlorinated water is drained from a swimming pool into a storm sewer, it can quickly make its way to a stream or other body of water, where aquatic life can be damaged or killed.

The discharge of swimming pool water to local waterways without a permit is a violation of the Clean Streams Law. Property owners and pool companies must obtain a permit from the local municipality before disposing of any pool wastewater. This includes pool backwash water, neutralized pool cleaning wastewater and standing water.

Pool wastewater should be discharged into the local sanitary sewer system, the DEP said. If sanitary sewers are not available, the wastewater should be hauled off-site for disposal at an approved treatment facility or otherwise discharged according to the department’s guidelines.