

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Dept. of Environmental Protection

Commonwealth News Bureau
Room 308, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg PA, 17120

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

06/7/2006

CONTACT:

Deborah Fries
(484)250-5808

DEP REMINDS POOL OWNERS TO HANDLE WASTE WATER SAFELY

Clean Streams Law Prohibits Discharge of Chlorinated Water to Storm Sewers

NORRISTOWN -- Private and public pool owners, as well as pool management companies, should remember that pool and chlorinated wastewater must be handled responsibly, Environmental Protection Regional Director Joseph A. Feola said today.

"Just about everyone's ready to go swimming," Feola said. "But almost every spring, as swimming pools are cleaned and prepared for summer use, we see fish kills in local streams that easily could have been prevented.

"Pool owners and professional pool cleaners need to dispose of old water correctly, and to neutralize wastewaters containing chemicals such as chlorine and muriatic acid. Most of all, they need to make sure the wastewater is going into the sanitary sewer, where allowed -- not the storm sewer," Feola said.

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

A recent incident in which pool chemicals were introduced into a storm sewer in Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, resulted in the death of 130 fish in the East Branch of the Indian Creek in Philadelphia.

The discharge of swimming pool water to the waters of the commonwealth without a permit is a violation of the Clean Streams Law. Property owners and pool companies that violate this law may be prosecuted and penalized for damages.

If the local municipality grants permission, all wastewater -- including pool backwash water, neutralized pool cleaning wastewater and standing water -- should be discharged to the local sanitary sewer system. If sanitary sewers cannot be accessed, the wastewater should be hauled off-site for disposal at an approved treatment facility.

In cases where sanitary sewers cannot be accessed and wastewater cannot be hauled away, the department offers detailed guidance for the on-site treatment and disposal of water containing chlorine or chemicals used to clean pools.

Questions regarding the handling of pool wastewater may be directed to the Bureau of Water Management in DEP's Southeast Regional Office at (484) 250-5970.

For more information on how chemicals in stormwater can impact our streams and lakes, visit DEP's Web site at www.depweb.state.pa.us, Keyword: "Stormwater."

2006