

Alternatives to Seasonal Draining of a Pool

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Historically, when larger pools have been closed for the season, they have been completely drained, and allowed to remain empty until the next season. I would like to encourage re-thinking that method, and offer a few suggestions to either protect the pool better, or utilize it more.

In this day and age, we are more thoughtful and conscious about conserving our natural resources and expenditures. For those reasons alone, an alternative to dumping hundreds of thousands of gallons of treated water should be considered.

An equal, or greater concern is the pools structure itself. Most pools have some type of under-drain, or de-watering system to help alleviate the risk of floatation. Hydrostatic water pressure can most assuredly float a pool, or worse, portions of it. Uneven lifting can cause severe structural damage.

There also remains the risk of inward pressures exerted against the shell by freezing earth, or expansive soils surrounding the pool. Many pools have been fractured as a result of not having a compensating pressure on the inside to help stabilize potential lateral movement.

Another problem with draining a pool is that it leaves no protection to the inner surface. If there are any hairline cracks or larger, a spalling condition, or other signs of deterioration, the situation will only worsen with an empty pool. Those defects are under constant stress with freeze/thaw cycles. So the condition is compounded when the surface is left exposed to the elements.

The solution can be addressed basically in one of two ways.

1. Do you want to close your pool for the season with the least amount of damage and maintenance?
2. Do you want to use your pool on a year-round basis, and maximize your investment to the greatest potential?

If you want to seasonally close and open it, I would suggest the following:

- Clear the filtration, circulation, and disinfectant system of any water.
- Lower the water level in the pool 6-12 inches to allow for rain and snow.

- Cover the pool with a mesh-type anchor cover.
- In the spring, remove the cover, raise the water level, start the equipment, vacuum the silt to waste, and balance the water.

If you want to utilize your pool throughout the year, there are a number of considerations, depending on use and budget. The main elements are heaters for water and space, lighting and temporary or permanent enclosures.

A temporary enclosure would be a tension, or air-inflated dome. They are relatively easy to install and remove, depending on weather and activities. Also, domes are generally less expensive than conventional methods of construction. Permanent enclosures can be built with any number of designs and materials. The possibilities are endless, contingent on imagination and budget. Typically, permanent structures are more multi-purpose, taking in other features and activities beyond swimming and diving.

For either of these investments to be calculated into value engineering and life cycle, your routine maintenance will change. Gone are the days of draining, scrubbing, painting, refilling, loading with chemicals, waiting, and missed schedules each year. If you are into painting, epoxy, with greater durability and longer life, is the preferred method. Again, it reduces costs on labor, water and chemicals.

The alternative to painting would be to sandblast the surface, removing all existing paint coatings. Then, resurface with a lower maintenance, more permanent material. A concrete overlay, plaster, or synthetic system offers reduced, long-term benefits.

Seriously consider your options, and if you would like to discuss this topic, or renovation/restoration, modification, slides, water features, fountains, aquatic and therapeutic exercise equipment, please call **913-362-3332** or **Email** curt@aquaticconsultantsinc.us