

Pool Pump Maintenance



How to avoid problems with your pool pump.

Swimming pool pumps are fairly durable by design. They are made to survive the heat, cold, sunlight and rain, but there are still some things that can damage your pool pump or significantly degrade its performance.

Full or broken trap baskets - it is important to keep the trap basket emptied. A full basket will keep the pump from receiving proper flow. It is also important to replace the basket if it shows ANY signs of damage. Even a small crack in the trap basket can allow a lot of material to get through and will result in a clogged impeller that will require a service call to resolve. The pump basket should be emptied at least weekly or whenever it starts to get full of leaves.

Loss of prime - if your pool pump "loses prime" (i.e. is running without any water flowing through it), then you need to get it re-primed immediately or turn it off and call for service. If the pump runs for more than 15 minutes without prime, it will start to heat up the water in the pump pot. If it is allowed to go for a long time, the water can almost reach the boiling point. If left this way for long, the hot water can damage the pump components.

Mechanical seal leak - if the mechanical seal fails on your pump, it will begin to leak water onto the shaft of the motor. This water will travel up the shaft and into the front bearings of the motor, and will fairly quickly ruin those bearings. Bad bearings will make a motor give out either a very high shrill pitched noise, or a grinding noise (which will not make your neighbors very happy). If you see a leak under your pump, turn the pump off (if it is not freezing weather) and call for service immediately.

Freeze damage - your pool should be equipped with freeze protection that will turn on the pump if the air temp drops to 38 degrees (this is an adjustable setting). During freezing weather, keep an eye on your pool to make sure that the freeze protection has indeed activated. If you lose power and cannot run the pump during freezing weather, it will be necessary to disable the main power switch and pull the drain plugs on all the pool equipment to prevent freeze damage to your pool equipment.

Pool drainage - your pool equipment should be set on a concrete pad that is above ground level, in an area that is not prone to flooding. Sometimes, over the years, landscaping and construction creates a situation where water is channeled right into the equipment area and the pump ends up partly submerged after a heavy rainstorm. Be on the lookout for this.

Leaf buildup - be sure to keep the equipment area free of leaf buildup. This is important

for two reasons. First, the motor on the pump is air cooled. If the pump is buried under a pile of leaves, it will not ventilate properly and may also be subject to corrosion due to humidity. Second, leafy material presents a fire hazard. We have seen several situations where a few sparks out of the motor caused fires that severely damaged the pool equipment, fence and house.

Sometimes people ask if they should build a shelter around their equipment to protect it from the elements. This is not needed in this area and sometimes these structures create more problems than they solve. First, if you have a roof over your equipment, then the heater needs to be treated as an indoor heater and vented out with a roof-type stack. Second, if the equipment room is not well ventilated, heat and moisture will build up and do significant damage to the equipment. Third, structures often make it a lot more difficult to service the equipment.