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EXPERT ADVICE



SALT WATER POOLS

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

According to Health Canada, there are two ways to sanitize a pool: chlorine and bromine. Pool owners can add chlorine or bromine to the pool water in four different ways —by puck, granular, liquid or with a chlorine generator (salt).

A salt system — also known as a chlorine generator, SWG or salt chlorinator — is a little chlorine factory attached to the swimming pool's plumbing system that creates chlorine from salt. With a salt chlorine generator 2,800-5,000 ppm of salt is added to the pool water. The salt water travels through the "salt cell" where the electrolysis process breaks the salt down into chlorine gas and sodium hydroxide. This means a salt water pool makes its own chlorine to disinfect, as salt itself cannot effectively sanitize pool water.

THE GOOD

Salt chlorine generators offer many advantages, including dependable chlorine, buoyancy and soft feeling water. They are great for second homes and cottages where no one is around to maintain the pool, as they ensure a chlorine reading upon return.

However, there are some problems associated with using a salt chlorine generator. These problems are not of the unit itself, but issues they cause.

THE BAD

Salt water systems aren't new. Unfortunately to some pool owners their benefits have been exaggerated. Smart marketing and selective information absorption has consumers thinking they'll save money, time and more. While that isn't all untrue, it isn't true either.

5 MYTHS OF SALT WATER POOL:

Myth 1: Set it and forget it. Bad idea. Homeowners must test and adjust output as required. Salt pools often have higher chlorine readings than traditional chlorine pools. Weekly testing and adjustment is important for every pool owner.

Myth 2: No need for shocking. Please do. The "mini" shock created by the cell is not enough to properly shock your pool. Using the shock button on the unit reduces cell life.

Myth 3: Other pool chemicals are not required. Not true. Even the manufacturer's documentation references the importance of proper monthly water balance. All pools need to be balanced monthly.

Myth 4: It is cheaper than traditional chlorine. A side by side comparison of a pool on a proper maintenance regimen shows traditional chlorine as cheaper.

Myth 5: It is less work. All water care treatments are based upon a one, two, three easy once a week treatment. Salt users just aren't adding a chlorine puck, so subtract two minutes.

THE UGLY

High chlorine bleaches liners, cats covers, tools and toys. Corrosion of autocover tracks, ladders and metals can appear. We even see rusted walls on salt-friendly aboveground pools, so think twice before installing a SWG on a pool not fully buried into the ground.

It's not all bad. A SWG is a good solution for pool owners who cannot regularly maintain their pool. With proper water care and an understanding of the chlorine generator, a lot of the aforementioned issues can be reduced. To avoid unplanned expenses, pool owners should be informed of the costs, care and usage of salt generators, and each situation assessed for compatibility. ■



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