



How do you winterize or shut down an outdoor in ground swimming pool?

By Mike Bryson, September 2007

Pool closing time is usually a sad time of year as the weather is getting cold, the leaves are changing color and the warm memories of summertime fun are fading away.

This is not usually the time of year that people like to think about their swimming pools, but this is really the most important time of the year to pay attention to the pool to avoid unnecessary problems and costly repairs come springtime.

Frequently Asked Questions about Pool Closings

- **What kind of chemicals do you put in the pool?**
 - o We suggest the use of a concentrated shock treatment along with a winter algaecide and stain treatment product.
 - o Also make sure you adjust the pH and Alkalinity of the water.
- **Do you put any Antifreeze in the pipes?**
 - o No, you should not have to.
 - o The only way that you can guarantee that your underground pipes don't freeze is to blow all the water out of the pipes with a high powered air compressor or shop vac.
 - o The only time you would need to add Antifreeze is if you were going to leave water in the pipes. Then you would have to add it to keep them from freezing, but this is not recommended.
- **Do you drop the light, lower the light, remove the light?**
 - o No, you do not have to lower the light.
 - o A long time ago, before people used compressors or shop vacs to blow all the water out of the pipes, they had to lower the water in the pool down past the returns. Then they used to have to remove the light and drop it to the bottom of the pool because if the pool water froze, it might expand and actually crack the light.
 - o Now days, since you can use the compressor to blow out the pipes, you can keep the water level in the pool high up so you're light can stay where it is.
 - o There is much less of a chance that the light will develop a leak if you just leave it alone.
- **Why do you have to lower the water in the pool if the pool has tile around the top at the water level?**
 - o If you have tiles and you do not lower the water level, then if the water freezes it can expand outwards and actually crack the tile.
- **Do you have to lower the water in a vinyl liner In ground pool?**
 - o No, the only time that a pool needs to have the water lowered is if you have a gunite or cement pool with tile around the top, at the water line.
 - o If you have tiles and you do not lower the water level, then if the water freezes it can expand outwards and actually crack the tile. That's the only reason.
 - o If you have a liner in the pool then there is no need to lower the water level. When you use high powered compressors to blow all the water out of the pipes and plug the return jets and the skimmers there is no need to lower the water.

- o The higher you can keep the water in the pool, the better it is for your pool cover and there will be much less of a chance of the cover falling in.
- **Should I acid wash my DE filter before closing?**
 - o You should backwash it out before you close it down, that gets all the gunk and old DE out of the filter.
 - o If you want to have the filter 'acid washed', that's usually something you do at the pool opening.
 - o You don't want to have the filter cleaned and then have it sit for the next six months with acid residue in it. Most people want to have it cleaned out right before they start up the pool in the spring. It is best to wait till then.
- **Should I vacuum the pool before I close it?**
 - o We do not recommend closing the pool if there is a lot of debris in it, then you should vacuum it all out.
 - o Most people vacuum the pool right after they open it in the spring and only have to do it once.

Ideally, your closing starts a week before you actually get down to putting the cover on. Get your water balanced chemically first. That week allows you to do this.

On closing day: Vac the pool and drain it to just below the pool returns. They are typically the lowest point in the system. When drained to that point, add in a winterizing chemical kit (Your pool supplier will have them), they typically contain an algaecide, shock and sequestering agent . Remove ladders and rails. You may remove the diving board if you wish, or cover it in opaque plastic sheet and secure it. If you totally remove it, place something over the diving board jig bolts and lube those bolts or tape with duct tape that jut up through the deck. This can prevent stubbed toes and saves the jig bolts from corrosion.

You're done at the pool for the moment. Head over to your pool equipment. If this is a sand filtered pool, you ought to have done a backwash, during the draining process, to clean out the filter. If a D.E. pool, then the same applies to clean off the elements. You can remove them later for a thorough cleaning. If a cartridge filter, just remove the cartridge and clean at your leisure. For all filter types, there will be a drain plug, remove it and keep it out.

Over to the pump. All pumps will have 2 plugs, one midway back on one side and one directly in front. Remove them and place them in the pump basket along with your filter drain plug. It's a nice, safe place that you won't lose them in, as you'll leave the pump basket right where it is. This next part all depends on your pool plumbing, you'll have to decide the best route as they are all plumbed differently and the many different ways to blow out lines would be a book unto itself. You'll need to tap into both the return and the suction lines. Typically for the returns, you disconnect a line between your filter and heater (if equipped) and for the suction, you can go directly in from the front of the pump, without disconnecting anything. Doing it this way, will allow you to blow all the water out of the heater, pool returns or attached spa. Same goes for the suction line for skimmer, in wall suction for a pool cleaner and attached spa suction (if equipped). You can rent a line blower from a rent all or your local pool shop, or you can use a medium sized shop vac that has a blow feature. The shop vac hose is actually the same diameter as the inside diameter of most pool plumbing (1 1/2 inch) so it makes a good fit. Blow out the lines, until you only see a tiny dribble at the pool, both suction and return. Plug with your Teflon taped winter plugs, all lines ending at the pool. Put something squishable (empty chemical containers or an old partially filled inner tube) into the skimmer to protect it from freeze damage. Remove the pressure gauges from the filter and put them in the pump basket with your equipment plugs.

There are 3 basic types of pool heater, electric, gas and solar. If it's gas. Open the drain cocks on both sides of the heater header and disconnect the pressure switch from it's compression fitting. No need to store it, you can hang from its electrical wires. Turn off both the gas valve on the interior and the gas feed line going to the heater. Toss a couple of moth balls inside the heater chamber to deter mice and spiders from nesting and clogging gas orifices as well as pulling out insulation.

Any pipes you disconnected during the blow out process should be hooked back up. If the equipment is located in a sheltered environment, nothing else need be done. If out of doors, some form of lean to would be a good idea. Don't wrap up the equipment in plastic. There's no cross flow ventilation and it will expedite corrosion. Just something over head works. Sweep out leaves from the area around the pump motor as well. They also promote corrosion.

These were generalized instructions on how to properly close in ground pools. Please note however, that all pools are somewhat different and your pool may need specific care not mentioned here. You can also talk to your pool suppliers for more information. Remember it's better to be safe than sorry & prevention is better than cure!