

FACT SHEET

Abandoned Pools

Brought to you by the PHTA Recreational Water Quality Committee (RWQC)

I. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of water level, existing swimming pools that are not maintained are considered abandoned. This Fact Sheet will address the effects of abandonment.

There are two major categories of abandonment: temporary (closed for the season, unused) and indefinite (abandoned property).

A temporarily abandoned (or temporarily closed) pool can be caused by factors such as executive orders or actions from federal, state or local authorities which could impact the use of aquatic facilities. They can also be caused by businesses and entities that may be temporarily closed. Additionally, condominiums and Homeowner Associations (HOAs) may be required to temporarily close pool and spa areas due to larger public health concerns, such as pandemics.

An indefinitely abandoned pool creates an ideal breeding and feeding ground for mosquitoes, which are notorious for carrying and transmitting the West Nile Virus and Zika Virus.

Hazards to avoid in temporarily abandoned pools include those mentioned above and those associated with actively circulated water not being properly maintained.

II. CONSEQUENCES

Without proper pool maintenance (which includes circulation and treatment of water) various germs which can be blown into the pool such as *Pseudomonas* can grow. It can also create a breeding ground for mosquitoes, other pests and the diseases they may carry. This presents a risk not only to bathers but to the entire community at large.

A working circulating pump is necessary for proper pool filtration and sanitation, as well as for the control of mosquito-borne pathogens such as West Nile Virus – see Recreational Water Quality Committee (RWQC) Fact Sheet, 2020.

Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water. This can happen nearly anywhere; however, mosquito larvae need to consume organic matter and microorganisms in order to mature to adulthood; and these items are only present in abandoned, unfiltered, untreated pools.

Most people who contract West Nile Virus will develop West Nile Fever, which is relatively mild and unlikely to require medical attention. Symptoms include a low-grade fever, body aches, headache, and fatigue. A lesser number of infected people (about 1

PHTA Fact Sheets are for information purposes only. The Fact Sheets are based on the best information available at the time of publication and represent a consensus of the volunteer members of the applicable PHTA committee(s). Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that the information is current when used.

The Fact Sheets do not constitute any promise, representation or warranty that a product or application referenced will in fact comply with applicable federal, state, or municipal laws, codes, rules and regulations concerning the intended use of such produce ("Laws"), nor any assurance,

representation or guarantee regarding or relating in any manner to the safety of any product or application that is referenced. Not every acceptable procedure is included, and special circumstances may warrant modified or additional procedures.

Fact Sheets are intended for the use of trained professionals in the pool and spa industry, in conjunction with prior training and knowledge. Where appropriate, industry members should seek the advice of knowledgeable persons to ascertain whether a product or application is appropriate or will in fact comply with applicable Laws. The use of information or recommendations in

this Fact Sheet is voluntary, and its applicability and suitability for any particular use is the sole responsibility of the user. Nothing in the Fact Sheets should be interpreted as expressing either approval of, or disapproval of, any product or service.

The PHTA expressly disclaims liability to any and all persons and entities for personal injury, property damage, and any other damage of any kind or nature, (whether or not such damages are direct, indirect, consequential or compensatory) resulting from, or in any way relating to these fact sheets.

PHTA **FACT SHEET**

in 150) will develop West Nile Encephalitis or West Nile Meningitis, which can result in high fever, confusion, convulsions, severe headache, partial paralysis, inflammation of the brain, swelling of the spinal cord, and even death.

III. PRECAUTIONS

A well-maintained pool eliminates food sources for mosquito larvae, and therefore reduces the proliferation of mosquitoes, the West Nile Virus and Zika Virus.

It is recommended that the following precautions be taken by homeowners and commercial pool operators when encountering any type of abandoned pool:

- Maintain the manufacturer-recommended levels of sanitizer in pools. This controls microorganisms, which may serve as food for mosquito larvae.
- Ensure that filters are working properly.
- Regularly skim, vacuum, scrub, brush and backwash to eliminate any organic matter.
- Conduct testing to ensure proper water balance.
- Drain, clean, and cover (or backfill) indefinitely abandoned pools, to prevent refilling with rainwater that becomes stagnant, creating mosquito-breeding surfaces.
- Empty other water-holding structures like bird baths, flowerpots, and pool covers to discourage the proliferation of mosquito populations on the property.

Temporarily abandoned pools should be maintained according to current public health guidelines, standards and/or regulations.

When conducting indefinitely abandoned-pool cleanup, the wearing of mosquito-resistant clothing and mosquito repellent containing DEET is recommended. It is also best to perform cleanup operations during daylight hours, since mosquitoes tend to bite after dark.

IV. REFERENCES

1. West Nile Virus Fact Sheet by the PHTA Recreational Water Quality Committee, 2020.
2. Other Mosquito-Borne Diseases link on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, 2016.
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/mosquito-borne/other.html>