



Splashing Through The Snow

Take advantage of winter to prepare pools for summer

As the colder weather arrives, most people are looking forward to colorful foliage and preparing for the holidays. Those operators with seasonal facilities have likely already closed them, or will be closing them for the season shortly. Indoor facilities may even see a decline in patronage due to fewer people traveling during the colder months. Ironically, this is a great time to be thinking about your pools and spas.

This is a real opportunity to consider repairs, replacements, or updates that you may want to perform in the spring. Some purchases to evaluate are pool/spa covers, chlorine generators, and new energy-efficient products. These items not only aid in pool operations, but also offer cost-effective savings in the long run. Preparing now allows plenty of time to allocate enough money in next year's budget to cover these expenses.



Pool Covers

Pool and spa covers come in different shapes and sizes. For the winter, a safety cover with the proper pool-cover anchors is recommended for outdoor pools. A safety cover not only prevents intruders

from gaining access to a pool over the winter months, but also provides an operator a greater likelihood of returning to a clear pool at opening. Newer, advanced-grade mesh safety covers are woven in a way that helps reduce the chances of algae

growth over the winter. Essentially, this helps reduce chemical consumption when the pool is open in the spring because the water is already clear, which also saves money.

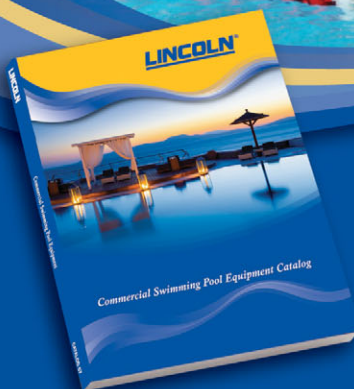
Some pool and spa covers are used for energy conservation. These covers—known as “solar covers”—assist in retaining heat generated either by the heater or through natural sunlight. The theory is that collecting heat during the day and maintaining it overnight requires less energy to be used the following day, which helps save on energy costs and presents a more temperate pool in the early hours for bathers. These types of covers are great for both indoor and outdoor spas.

Chlorine Generators

Although the economy may be on the rebound, increased prices in items such as chemicals seem to indicate otherwise. A great way to reduce chemical costs is to install a chlorine-generator system. Salt systems are becoming more and more popular, both among commercial and



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residential pool owners. In fact, in south-eastern states like Florida, salt systems are used almost exclusively. With a chlorine-generator system, a salt cell is installed in the circulation system, and pool salt is added directly to the pool instead of using chlorine. The salt—when combined with water—forms chlorine, which is used to disinfect and sanitize the pool water. Once complete, it breaks apart and reforms into salt. The only salt that needs to be replaced is from splash-out, backwash, or whatever is brought out by the bathers. A salt system usually pays for itself in as little as one year, depending upon the size and seasonality of the pool.

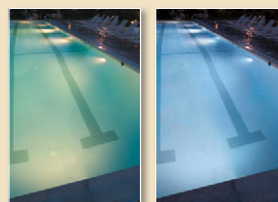
Energy-Efficient Products

While everyone is looking to save money, people are also looking to save the environment. Since green is the new black, one way to “go green” with pools and spas is to consider some of the new energy-efficient products on the market. One such product is the variable-speed pump. Many state codes dictate that commercial pools and spa must operate a circulation system 24 hours a day. A variable-speed pump

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presents the option to reduce the speed of the pump during hours when the pool is not open, which helps save on energy consumption. Check with local health officials to make sure this option is acceptable in your state, and meets the state turnover rate.

Equipment Exam

The colder months are also a great time to inspect the facility to ensure everything is in working order. Safety equipment, including all of the components, should be examined. These include:

- Solid pole with shepherd hooks—Is the shepherd hook securely bolted to the pole?
- Rope and floats—Is the rope intact? Are all floats present?
- Ring buoys and throw ropes—Is there still enough rope attached to the existing ring buoy?
- Signage—Are the signs legible and up-to-date?
- First-aid kits—Are they fully stocked?
- Backboard, head immobilizer, and straps—Are all the straps still present? Are there any cracks in the backboard?
- Pool rules and regulations—Are there any updates or omissions that should be made to the existing policies based on the occurrences from the past season?

ADA Compliance

This is also a great time to make sure the facility complies with all federal, state, and local laws. Changes to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design will have an impact on the way parks and recreation departments operate pools and spas. For instance, section 242 mandates that pools with more than 300 linear feet have at least two accessible means of entry; those with fewer than 300 linear feet must have at least one accessible means of entry that includes either a pool lift or sloped entry that complies with the standards. Meanwhile, wading pools are required to have at least one accessible means of entry that complies with sloped-entries standards. For spas, at least one accessible means of entry must be provided that complies with pool lifts, transfer walls, or transfer-systems standards. This law

goes fully into effect in March 2012. Reviewing the guidelines prior to making any changes to a facility is highly recommended because there are also many exemptions.

The colder months present a wealth of advantages to prepare pools and spas for the coming season. Taking the time now ensures a safe and fun season. **PRB**

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Trevor Sherwood, Pool Operation Management owner, provides consulting, training, inspections, and expert witness services for pools, training 2,000 CPO's annually. He assisted in rewriting the Massachusetts State Bathing Code in 1998, and made recommendations for the New Jersey State Bathing Code revisions in 1999 and 2010. This year, he became lead instructor for a grant issued by CSPC to the Northeast Spa & Pool Association to train health officials on the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act.

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