

# The Truth About Salt Pools

## **What does the salt do?**

Salt itself is not a sanitizer, and contrary to popular belief a salt pool is NOT a chlorine free pool. The salt generator uses electrolysis to break down the salt in the water. Then the resulting chemical reaction produces hypochlorous acid and sodium hypochlorite, aka chlorine, which acts as a sanitizer for the pool. When using a salt generator, it is required that you use salt made especially for a salt generator you can NOT use just any salt. Otherwise you could risk staining your pool surfaces, water discoloration, and interfere with chlorine production.

## **Maintenance**

One of the biggest mistakes made with salt water swimming pools is when customers try to save money by reducing the pump run time. Reduced pump time means reduced chlorine and if enough chlorine is not being added to the swimming pool, frequent algae problems will persist.

Another mistake people might make is getting a salt generator that is too small for their pool, one size does not fit all. It is better to have an oversized salt generator than an undersized one because an oversized one will run less and therefore have a longer life. A unit too small will mean algae problems because it will be struggling to keep up with the chlorine consumption from sunlight and usage.

It is critically important to keep the salt generator cell clean! The cell is very prone to debilitating scale buildup that will greatly reduce the life of the cell. Owners must check the cell regularly and if there is visible calcium buildup on the cell plates, they will have to physically clean the cell with Muriatic Acid. In addition to reducing the lifespan, if the cell is not kept clean, the salt generator will stop producing the necessary level of chlorine to keep the pool clean.

The overall cost of a salt pool vs a traditional chlorine pool will cost more because of all the extra replacements required by having a salt pool. The cell will need to be replaced every 2-3 years for about \$500-\$800, plus the cost of chemically cleaning it every so often. Then there is the cost of the electricity usage which can add on \$5-\$11 every month. Salt systems are also estimated to cause over \$1000 worth of damage from waste water alone, not including the replacements of O-rings, heaters, pumps, gaskets, liners, etc.

## **Water Balance**

Maintaining water balance in a salt water pool can be more critical than a traditional pool. Muriatic acid is used weekly for maintaining pH and Alkalinity at their proper levels and cleaning the salt generator. Salt pool owners will also need to use a chemical called stabilizer, necessary to protect the chlorine from the sun, keeping it in the pool. Without stabilizer it will be difficult to maintain the proper level of chlorine to sanitize the pool. Occasional algaecide, clarifier, stain and scale control, and shock will be used with a salt chlorine pool as well in order to keep the water clean and clear.

Another issue that many salt pool customers may not realize is that salt water pools have consistently higher pH levels than that of pools using conventional chlorine. Owners will need to test the pH once or twice a week and add muriatic acid as needed in order to keep the pH between 7.2 and 7.8. Proper maintenance of the pH is not only critical for bather comfort, but also for the pool equipment as well. If pH levels are not maintained properly it will ruin heaters, and other pool equipment, costing you more money in the long run.

Finally, customers should also understand the damage salt water pools cause, if you are draining your pool it is not advised to drain into a storm drain or your gutters and you must be careful if you are draining in your yard. The water from the pool will kill your grass and anything else will go directly to local streams, lakes, and rivers. Salt is always present in the water and can damage local wildlife and your areas ecosystem. In fact, there are some places who have banned salt generators because of the high potential for ground water pollution.

# “Salt Pools”

## Advantages

1. Will work on ANY filtering system.
2. Gentle on Eyes, Skin and Clothing.
3. Do not have to add chlorine directly to the pool to maintain the chlorine level but still have to shock the pool and balance the water.
4. The water feels softer.
5. You will swim faster because of the increased buoyancy from the density of the salt in the water.

## Disadvantages

1. Salt water systems require cell replacement every 2-3 years at a cost of \$500-\$800.
2. The cost of the electricity to run the salt generator can add \$5-\$11 every month plus whatever chemicals to clean the cell and maintain the water.
3. Salt water systems require chemicals weekly, in fact they can require more chemicals than your typical chlorine pool.
4. Sodium absorption through the skin has been proven to present health risks such for people with high blood pressure, stroke history and other circulatory system issues.
5. Salt systems are estimated to cause \$1000 worth of damage from waste water alone. Causing damage to your plants, and other living organisms. It can also damage concrete, wood, metals, etc.
6. Salt does what salt does, it corrodes, and requires more frequent replacements of equipment, liner, and almost anything it touches on a regular basis, compared to using other sanitizers for your pool.