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POOL & SPA
MARKETING

VOLUME 49 • NUMBER 5 • SEPTEMBER 2025

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50 Last Drop

on the cover



Designed by Action Home Services (AHS), this serene backyard escape is tucked among vibrant trees and gardens. This aerial view highlights a gracefully curved pool framed by natural stone decking and flourishing greenery.

PHOTO COURTESY ACTION HOME SERVICES (AHS)

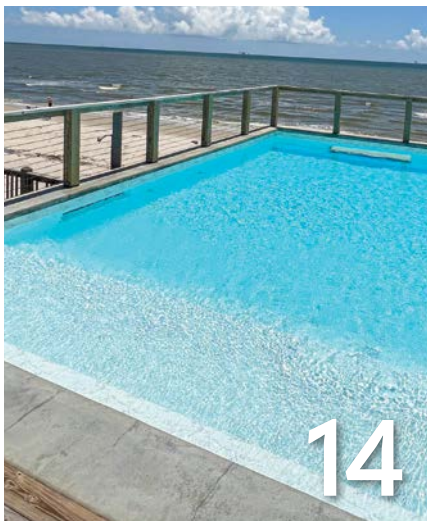
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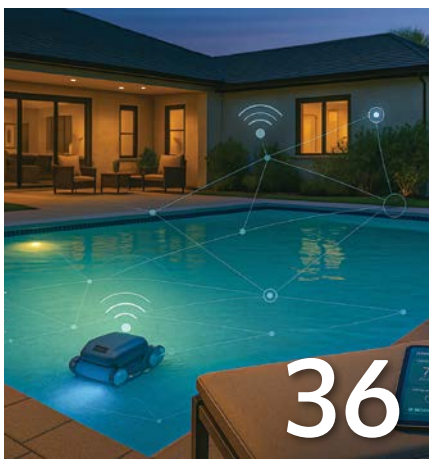
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Best Practices Pool Pros Need to Know



Digitizing the Deep End

The AI Pool Revolution



From Freeze to Fire

How to Prepare Pools
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Shifting Seasons, Smarter Strategies

As summer winds down, many pool professionals are already shifting gears—winterizing installations, preparing service programs, or reassessing product lines for the year ahead. This issue aims to support you during that transition. Whether you're a builder, retailer, technician, or distributor, you'll find practical guidance in the pages ahead that supports the work you do and the decisions you make.

We start with a look at how virtual tools are transforming the way pool businesses operate. On page 22, Matt Burge, CEO of Pool Inspector App, discusses the rise of Software as a Service (SaaS) in the industry, framing digital tools not as optional add-ons but as new “invisible equipment.” These platforms streamline inspections, enhance safety documentation, and simplify client communication. “As definitions of ‘equipment’ evolve,” he writes, “it is clear that digital tools are now integral to safe and efficient pool and spa operations.” This piece is essential reading for any professional considering how to scale, streamline, or stay competitive.

On page 14, RENOLIT's business development manager, Tony Jordan, revisits a growing construction trend—insulated concrete form (ICF) pool wall systems paired with reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membranes. This method is gaining popularity for its structural strength and quick installation, especially in colder regions where energy savings and freeze-thaw resistance are key concerns.

In a standout feature on page 40, Terry Arko, the product training and content manager for HASA Pool Inc., addresses one of the biggest challenges facing today's industry: unpredictable weather. From wildfires to ice storms, climate change is altering seasonal patterns and forcing service professionals to rethink long-standing practices. As Arko states, “Today's pool pro must be prepared for anything, anywhere. From floodwaters to wildfires, freezes to fall heatwaves, the weather no longer follows rules.” His comprehensive article offers practical strategies to protect equipment, safeguard clients, and ensure safety.

Our feature on page 36 highlights the potential—and limitations—of artificial intelligence (AI)-based pool monitoring systems. From automatic alerts to predictive maintenance, the future is here. However, it raises questions about data accuracy, privacy, and integration. This article provides a helpful introduction for anyone exploring smart technology in their services.

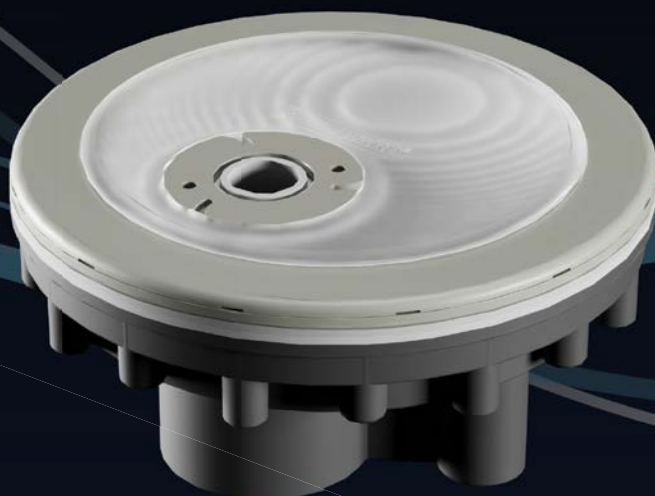
Additionally, in this issue, we profile a vibrant independent retailer (page 8) and share an informative article on fiberglass pool winterization (page 30).

Wherever you are based, September is a natural time to reflect and plan ahead. Let this issue guide you through that process.

Making waves, together. 

Jason Cramp
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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From Backyard Dreams to Outdoor Masterpieces

How AHS Became Ontario's Go-to for Luxury Landscapes

By Tanya Martins

PHOTOS COURTESY
ACTION HOME SERVICES

Founded in 2015 with just a few tools and a big vision, Action Home Services (AHS) has grown into one of Ontario's most trusted names in outdoor design and construction. Based in Toronto, AHS delivers stunning backyard transformations—from custom pools and spas to full-scale landscaping—through a fully in-house, turnkey approach that prioritizes craftsmanship, innovation, and client satisfaction.

Pool & Spa Marketing (PSM): Tell us more the shop's history, including its founding date, location, and a brief company description?

Action Home Services (AHS): Action Home Services (AHS) was founded in Toronto in 2015 with a mission to elevate outdoor living spaces. Over the past decade, we have grown into a trusted name in landscaping and exterior remodelling, offering premier design-build services in Ontario.

PSM: What sets your company apart and makes it stand out from others in the industry?

AHS: Our commitment to excellence, customer satisfaction, and meticulous craftsmanship distinguishes us. We offer a turnkey solution, handling everything from design to execution, and back all our services with a satisfaction guarantee. We also provide a 10-year warranty on our workmanship, ensuring long-term peace of mind for our clients.

PSM: Could you share some details about the shop's size, such as its total square footage, retail space, number of employees, and so on?

AHS: AHS operates out of a central headquarter in Toronto, with more than 372 m² (4,000 sf) of combined office and warehouse space to support our logistics, design, and construction teams. We employ professionals across various departments,



Top left: The grand residence features a stately brick facade, manicured landscaping, and a sweeping circular driveway that leads to a striking patterned entrance plaza

Top right: Director John Karpov from Action Home Services (AHS).

Bottom: The team at Action Home Services (AHS).

including project management, landscape design, customer service, and skilled trades. During peak season, we also expand our workforce with additional seasonal crews to meet high demand and maintain timely delivery of all projects.

PSM: Could you describe the range of services your business offers?

AHS: We do everything for your outdoor space—from pergolas and lighting to pools and spas. We design, build, and maintain a full range of exterior renovation and landscaping services, all turnkey. Whether it is a single upgrade or a complete transformation, we tailor every project to the client's vision and property.

PSM: What types of pools and hot tubs does your company specialize in?

AHS: We specialize in the design and installation of custom in-ground pools, focusing on vinyl liner and concrete pool systems. Each project is tailored to the client's needs, whether it's a modern geometric layout or a natural freeform design. We also integrate

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Top: An inviting backyard oasis nestled in lush greenery, this aerial view captures a beautifully designed kidney-shaped pool surrounded by natural stone decking and vibrant landscaping. A cozy wooden deck with a stylish gazebo and lounge seating provides the perfect retreat for outdoor entertaining.

Bottom: This covered patio features a stylish pergola with adjustable louvred roofing, cozy cushioned seating, and a striking linear fire pit as its centerpiece.



premium hot tubs and spas into our backyard landscapes, offering both built-in and standalone options. Our team ensures every installation is seamlessly blended with surrounding hardscaping and features like waterfalls, jets, lighting, and smart control systems to elevate functionality and luxury.

PSM: What recent projects has your shop been actively involved in?

AHS: Right now, we're working on over 50 unique residential projects across Ontario, each one showcasing our full range of services. From heated driveways and custom outdoor kitchens to luxury pools, sports courts, and intricate landscaping transformations, our team is hands-on, delivering premium outdoor living solutions. Whether it's hardscaping, lighting, or complete backyard makeovers, we bring top-tier craftsmanship and creativity to every job.

PSM: What are some of the most memorable or challenging projects your business has undertaken?

AHS: Some of our most memorable work includes multi-level backyard transformations, heated driveways, custom outdoor kitchens, pools, dream landscape designs, and fully tailored sports courts. We don't fear challenges—we use them to create our best work.

PSM: To what extent does your shop handle the pool/spa installation process in-house?

AHS: We manage the entire pool and spa installation process fully in-house. From the initial design and permitting to excavation, plumbing, structural work, and finishing touches, every stage is executed by our own team of trained specialists. We also handle all the necessary paperwork and approvals required for pool installation permits, ensuring a smooth and stress-free experience for our clients.

This vertical integration allows us to maintain consistent quality, adhere to project timelines, and ensure clear communication with our clients throughout the process.

PSM: What equipment is currently used by your company to complete its projects?

AHS: AHS uses a full range of professional-grade equipment to efficiently and safely complete projects of any scale, season, or complexity.

Our equipment includes:

- A complete lineup of snow removal machinery, from compact snowblowers to industrial-grade plows
- All types of trucks, from standard pickups to tri-axle dump trucks for heavy-duty hauling
- A wide range of heavy machinery, including Bobcat and Kubota equipment for excavation, grading, and material handling
- Multiple trailers for transporting materials and machinery
- Other specialized tools and attachments to handle diverse project needs

PSM: Can you describe the planning and design process that your shop follows?

AHS: We begin with a detailed on-site consultation to understand the client's vision, needs, and property. Next, we create customized 2D layouts and 3D renderings to help visualize the final result before construction begins. Once approved, we finalize the schedule, secure permits, and organize all resources. Our team handles everything—from material selection to logistics—ensuring smooth execution and clear communication throughout.

With regular updates, flexibility for adjustments, and full co-ordination, we deliver a seamless experience from concept to completion.

PSM: How has your business evolved or expanded since its inception?

AHS: Since its inception in 2015, AHS has grown to be one of the most trusted full-service landscaping companies in Ontario. We started with basic interlocking and property maintenance, but through consistent quality, strong client relationships, and a passion for outdoor design, we expanded into pool and spa installations, custom carpentry, outdoor lighting, and full backyard transformations.

Over the years, we've invested heavily in technology, equipment, and staff training, allowing us to handle complex projects entirely in-house.

PSM: How has technology impacted your business operations?

AHS: Technology plays a key role in streamlining our operations and improving the client journey. 3D modelling allows clients to clearly visualize their projects, while CRM systems keep communication, scheduling, and documentation organized and transparent.

We use drones for site documentation and marketing visuals, laser levels, and digital measuring tools for on-site accuracy. Virtual consultations and screen sharing make collaboration easy, even for busy clients.

These tools boost efficiency, precision, and overall client satisfaction, making our process smarter and more scalable.

PSM: What is the most crucial element for achieving and sustaining long-term success in the industry?

AHS: Consistent quality, clear communication, and ongoing team development are the foundation of our success.

We focus on craftsmanship, transparency, and reliability in every project—big or small.

Staying current with trends, materials, and technology keeps us ahead, while continuous training ensures top-tier service. For us, every project is a chance to build trust, deliver value, and strengthen long-term relationships.



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PSM: What are your future goals and aspirations for your swimming pool and hot tub business?

AHS: Our goal is to continue positioning AHS as a leading name in premium backyard transformations throughout Ontario. In the pool and spa division, we aim to broaden our service offerings by streamlining the installation process, expanding our in-house capabilities, and developing standardized solutions for faster project turnaround without sacrificing quality.

We're also focused on elevating customer experience by investing in design technology, personalized consultations, and improved project transparency through digital tracking tools.

PSM: Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your business or your personal journey as a business owner in this industry?

AHS: Building AHS has been more than just growing a company—it has been about creating a team, a culture, and a reputation that we're proud of. What started with a few simple tools and a strong work ethic has evolved into a business that helps transform lives by transforming outdoor spaces. We don't just build patios, pools, or landscapes—we build places where families gather, memories are made, and homes come to life. The most rewarding part of this journey is seeing our clients genuinely happy with the results and knowing we were part of something meaningful. 🌊

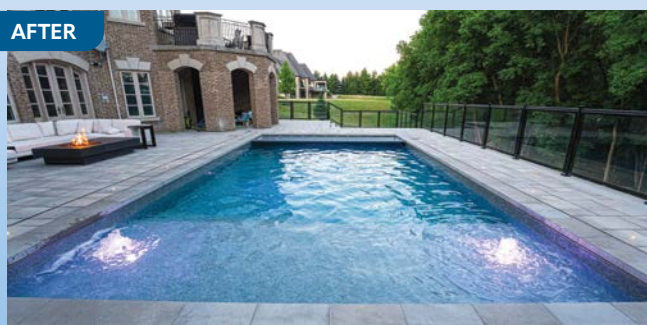
PHOTO ESSAY

BEFORE



BEFORE: Excavation phase shows subgrade preparation for in-ground pool installation, including overdig for formwork and mechanical access.

AFTER



AFTER: Final result features a custom rectangular pool with integrated lighting, flush coping, perimeter trench drain, and architectural slab pavers over a compacted base system.

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Capitalizing on the ICF Boom



By Tony Jordan

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ALL3POOLS

How Reinforced PVC Membranes are Redefining Pool Construction

A growing number of pool builders are turning to insulated concrete forms (ICFs) combined with a reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane to construct durable, watertight pool wall systems. This approach offers a long-lasting and visually appealing waterproofing solution that can be custom-installed on site.

These construction materials—the foam forms for the structure and reinforced PVC membranes—are readily available, allowing pool professionals to build quickly and efficiently. This flexibility enables installation of pools in virtually any size or layout, including compact backyard models with resort-style features that are increasingly in demand.

A key driver behind this method's success is the growing popularity of reinforced PVC membranes. Long used in Europe, these membranes are gaining traction in North America for their durability, esthetic appeal, and efficient installation. Combined with ICFs, they offer professionals—including architects, engineers, specifiers, and contractors—a versatile, customizable system with greater control over schedules and construction costs.

The ideal combination

ICF construction has gained momentum over the past decade as a practical and adaptable building method in the pool industry. Originally developed



for residential foundations, ICFs use interlocking expanded polystyrene (EPS) blocks to form a framework for reinforced concrete walls. This system allows pool builders to create custom shapes and sizes without using prefabricated kits or liners.


All3Pools of Missouri has been constructing ICF pools for more than a decade and recently began using reinforced PVC membranes in its projects.

"We've adopted a commercial reinforced PVC membrane finish on our pools," says Patrick Quigley, CFO and co-founder of All3Pools. "The material is designed to provide a smooth, seamless surface that is resistant to chemicals, UV light, and wear, making it ideal for both residential and commercial pools."

This combination aligns with shifting consumer habits.

Left: Workers pour concrete into insulated concrete form (ICF) walls during pool construction.


Right: Tools and equipment are staged inside a pool during the installation of a reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane.



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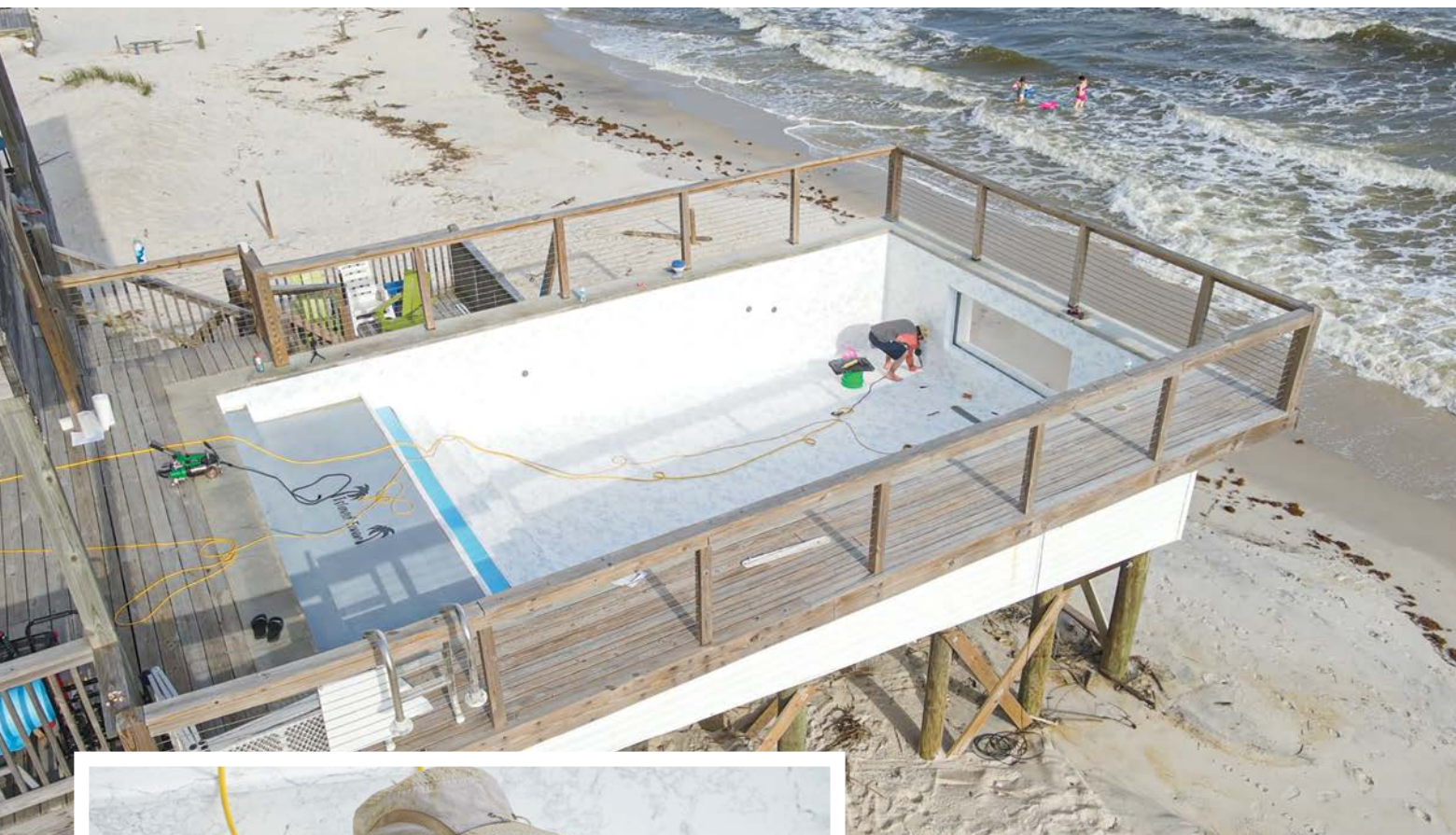
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Top: A partially completed inground pool shows the installation process of a reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane over insulated concrete form (ICF) walls.

Bottom: A crew member uses a heat-welding tool to join seams in the reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane.

“Over the next few years, consumers are likely going to stay in their homes and add a pool to their backyard rather than move to a new home with a pool to improve their long-term equity and avoid a higher mortgage interest rate,” says Aaron King, CEO and co-founder of All3Pools. “An ICF pool can be easily configured to any size or shape, and all the materials are readily available, so builders don’t have to wait on a kit or a custom-fabricated pool liner. This ICF with a reinforced PVC membrane combination gives pool builders a greater ability to control their schedule and costs.”

ICF systems and reinforced PVC membranes offer flexibility, watertight integrity, and long-term durability. With fast installation times, low maintenance requirements, and upscale esthetics, the pairing is quickly becoming a go-to solution for builders looking to meet rising demand with greater efficiency.

A renovation game-changer

Reinforced PVC membranes are gaining traction in new builds and as a practical solution for pool renovations. These membranes can be applied over various existing surfaces—such as plaster, tile, and gunite—allowing professionals to restore aging pools quickly and cost-effectively. Lightweight and adaptable, they offer a relatively simple learning curve and require minimal equipment, making them an attractive choice for many contractors.

All3Pools not only builds ICF pools finished with reinforced PVC membranes but has also identified the value of using these membranes for renovations—a segment with strong growth potential in the coming years.

“The material has relatively low barriers to entry and has already helped many pool professionals

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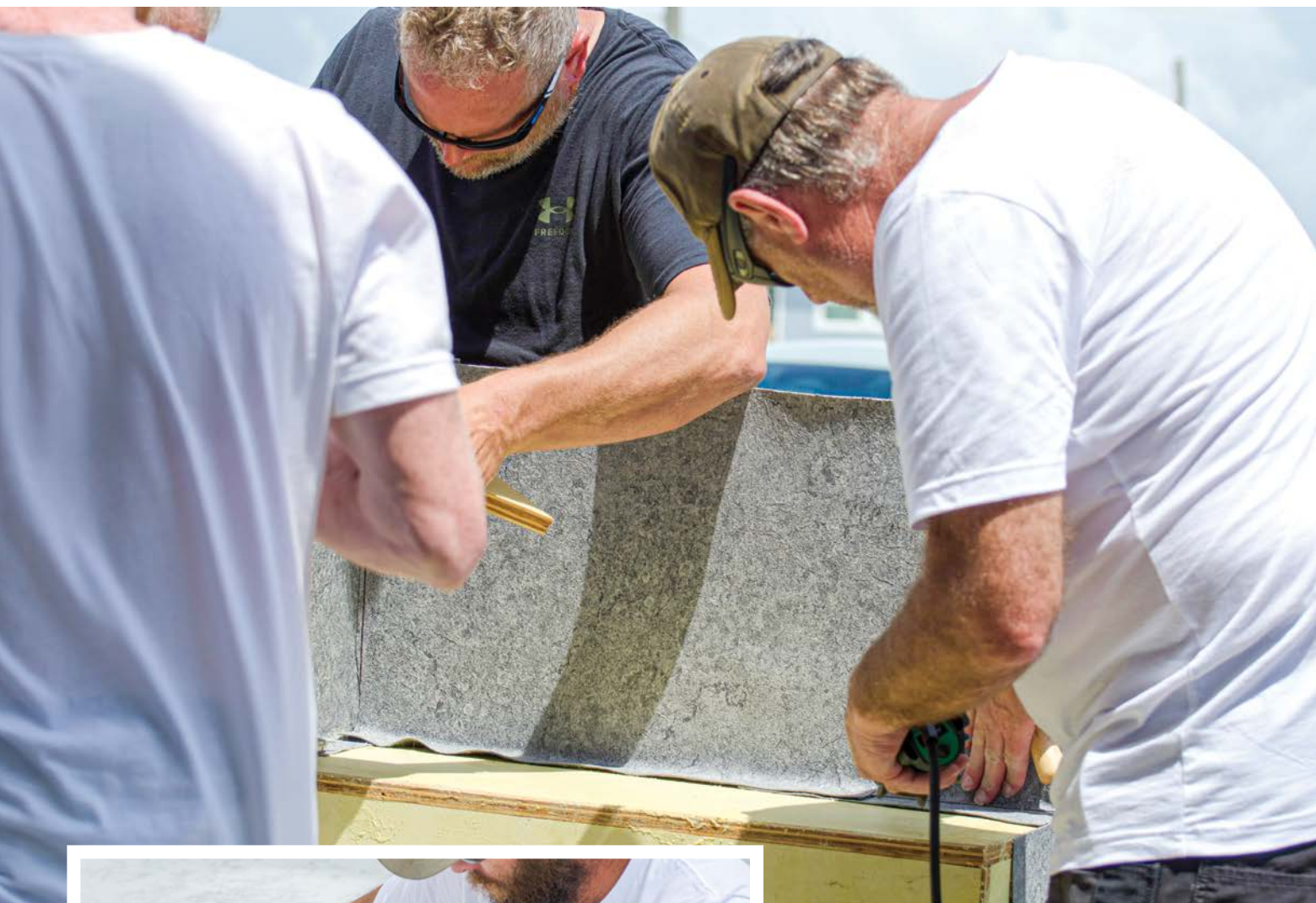
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Top: Multiple crew members work together during the installation of a reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane.

Bottom: Reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane is applied over an existing surface during a pool renovation.

renovate gunite, plaster, and tile pools that would otherwise be costly to repair,” says King. “Reinforced PVC membranes offer a fast, efficient, and cost-effective alternative.”

To support broader adoption, All3Pools regularly hosts training sessions open to builders who want to learn about these new systems and incorporate these methods into their renovation offerings.

“This system can be applied over a wide range of existing surface materials to waterproof and restore the appearance of older pools,” he says.

The growing availability of durable and visually appealing reinforced PVC membranes has contributed to increased interest in this solution. “There is a learning curve, like anything else,” says King. “But it’s not overly difficult and doesn’t require expensive equipment.”

Compared to traditional methods such as replastering or retiling, reinforced membranes significantly reduce overall renovation time,

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Two workers stand in a completed pool finished with a reinforced polyvinyl chloride (PVC) membrane.

especially by minimizing labour. Once surface prep is complete, an average 6- x 12-m (20- x 40-ft) residential pool can often be completed in three to five days. Traditional replastering requires curing time, and tile renovations are even more labour-intensive, often involving removal, surface repair, installation, grouting, sealing, and additional curing—plus regular maintenance like acid washing or regrouting over time. Reinforced PVC membranes eliminate many of these time-consuming steps and reduce long-term upkeep for clients.

As demand for renovations continues to rise, this approach provides professionals with a streamlined way to extend the life of aging pools while delivering an updated, high-end finish.

What to look for

When sourcing reinforced PVC membranes in Canada or the U.S., professionals should evaluate more than availability. Product and specification standards vary by manufacturer, and not all membranes offer the same level of performance.

Look for:

- Robust formulations for long-term durability
- Internal fabric reinforcement for added strength
- Protective coatings on both the face and back
- Prompt technical support and proven references
- 80 mil (2 mm) PVC membrane extra thickness adds end-user confidence in product

These standards are especially important in renovation work, where surface conditions, geometry, or accessibility can present unforeseen challenges. Support from manufacturers who offer detailed drawings and responsive technical guidance can improve project success.

More control, more opportunity

As reinforced PVC membranes gain popularity in North America, more pool professionals are considering ICF construction to complement their offerings. Whether building smaller pools, introducing new pricing tiers, or improving scheduling flexibility, the ICF-PVC membrane combination delivers on all fronts.

With design flexibility, installation efficiency, and long-term performance, these systems enable builders to meet rising consumer expectations for high-quality, low-maintenance pools. For contractors looking to expand into renovations or optimize new builds, reinforced PVC membranes offer an opportunity to stay competitive, productive, and in demand. 🌊



Tony Jordan has more than 35 years of experience in the manufacturing, sales, and application of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) reinforced pool membranes for commercial and residential use. He is the business development manager at RENOLIT and can be reached at tony.jordan@renolit.com. For more information, visit www.renolit-alkorplan.com.

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The Invisible Equipment Revolution



How SaaS is Reshaping the Pool and Spa Industry

By Matt Burge

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POOL INSPECTOR APP
(POWERED BY FORMITIZE)

Equipment in the pool and spa industry has expanded beyond the physical into the digital. Software as a Service (SaaS) is reshaping how businesses operate with the potential to streamline business for inspectors and installers alike, whereby ensuring codes are safely met, standards are upheld and maintained, operators are correctly instructed and optimally efficient, and clients are ultimately safe. These tools now function as a new category of equipment—essential, though often unseen.

For many professionals in Canada's pool and spa market, SaaS is no longer a luxury. It is becoming the backbone of safer, more efficient, and more responsive business practices. With the right platform, pool companies can meet regulatory requirements, improve operational control, and enhance client communication—all from a mobile device.

Beyond pumps and filters: The rise of virtual equipment

While pumps, filters, valves, and vacuums remain the tools of the trade, a new category of “virtual equipment” has emerged. These are cloud-based platforms that live on phones and tablets, follow technicians into the field, and keep operations running even when the owner is offsite.

This quiet revolution is changing how the industry manages compliance obligations, improves client experience and relationships, and optimizes workflows. As a result, the definition of essential equipment is expanding to include the invisible tools that support visible outcomes.

What is virtual equipment?

Virtual equipment refers to the digital software infrastructure that supports physical work—

platforms that manage quoting, inspections, invoicing, and compliance reporting. When built specifically for the pool and spa industry, these platforms reflect the real-world challenges professionals face daily, from documentation and safety to time management and client communication.

Unlike general business software, aquatic industry-specific platforms—built around real-world challenges professionals face daily—are aligned with local code requirements and safety standards, which vary across Canada. These digital tools ensure that technicians follow consistent practices and that nothing is overlooked during inspections or installations that share the same foundational goals: safety, child protection, and risk mitigation.

Navigating Canadian codes and compliance

Canada does not have a unified national code for the pool and spa industry, but most provinces enforce safety principles through local and

provincial regulations. These include standards for climb-prevention structures, barrier height and integrity, gate hardware, drain covers, signage, and anti-entrapment systems. Proving compliance has traditionally required expert knowledge, manual documentation, and time.

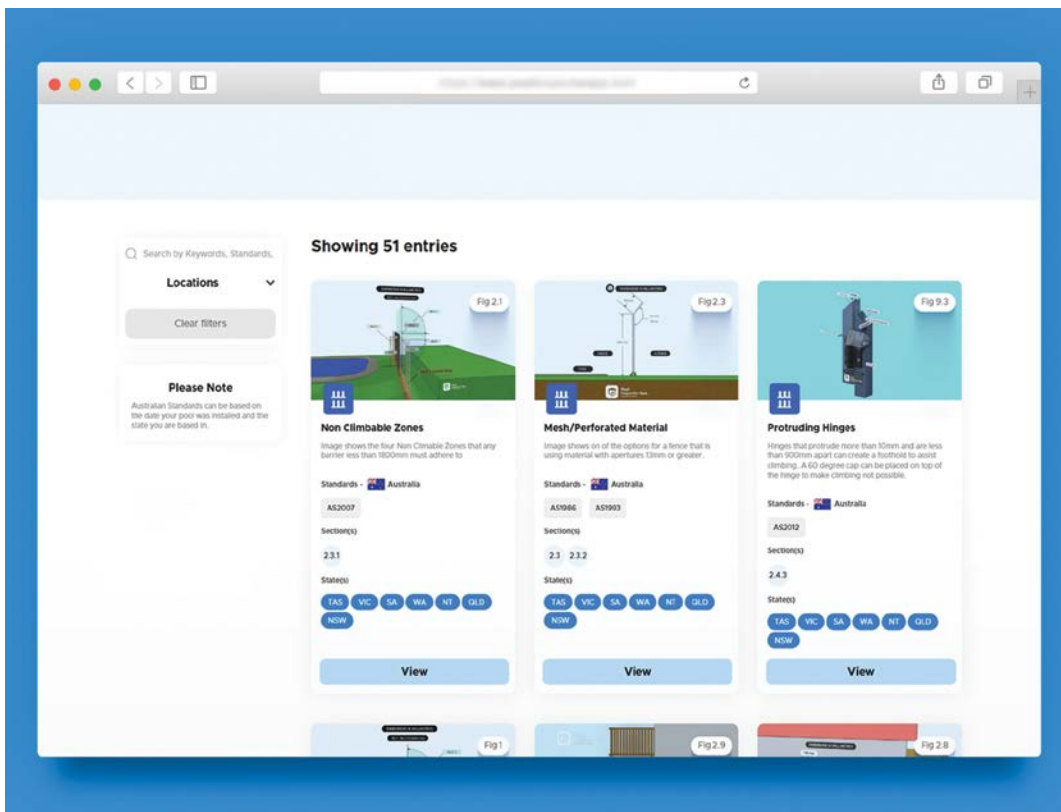
This is where SaaS earns its place in the toolbox by simplifying these processes. They offer templated forms that reflect jurisdictional codes and walk users through inspection and installation steps. Forms may include:

- Pool insurance assessment reports
- Pre-purchase condition reports
- Leak detection documentation
- Maintenance logs
- Contract variations
- Inspection checklists for fibreglass, vinyl, and concrete pools

Some platforms even timestamp and store photographic documentation, clearly recording site conditions and completed tasks.

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The advertisement features a background image of a modern pool area with a lounge chair. In the foreground, there are three pieces of equipment: a green chemical feeder labeled 'OXEO VP', a red chemical feeder labeled 'PHILEO VP', and a blue automation unit labeled 'TILD VP'. To the right, two smartphones display the 'vigipool' app interface. The app shows a menu with options like 'Vigipool account', 'Connected devices', 'My swimming pool', 'Share my pool', 'Configure', 'My devices', 'Sensors & calibration', and 'Maintenance units'. The right phone shows a dashboard with 'Key Largo' weather (25°C), 'Water' temperature (35°C), and controls for 'Light' and 'Heater' (39°C). The CCEI logo is in the top right corner, and the 'vigipool by CCEI' logo is in the bottom right corner.



A screenshot of a software platform's visual library displays diagrams and inspection reference materials for field use.

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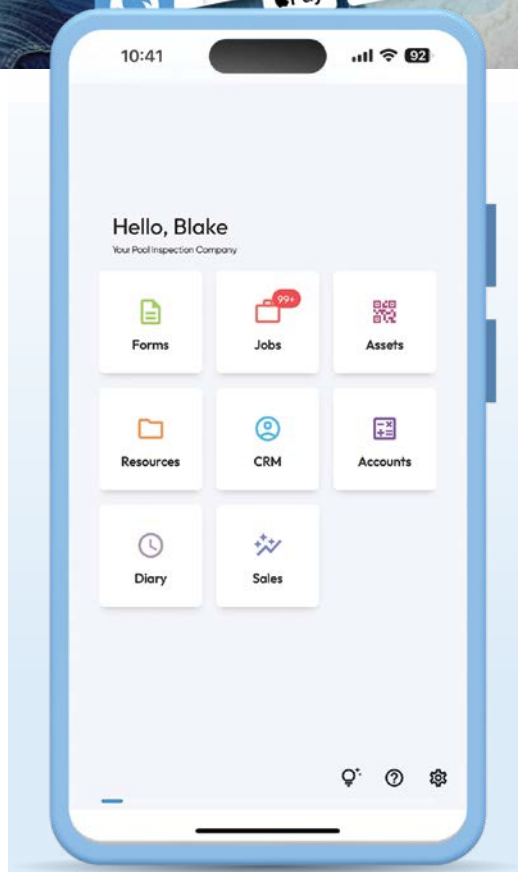
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Top: Annotated images and inspection visuals help explain safety deficiencies to clients and improve communication.

Bottom: A mobile interface displays a digital dashboard with tools for reporting, quoting, invoicing, and inspection checklists.



into educational tools. There is no ambiguity when it is laid out visually.

This shift is significant. It makes inspection reports not just a regulatory record, but an educational tool,

allowing clients to see the “why” behind the “what.” Clients who understand the risks behind a failed inspection are more likely to act quickly and comply fully, reducing disputes and improving safety outcomes.

Safety beyond compliance

Behind every code and checklist is a civic responsibility. Pool and spa professionals play a critical role in protecting the public from the dangers of water. In 2020, Canadian data showed that most pool-related drowning incidents occurred in private residential settings, with children aged one to nine representing more than 40 per cent of the victims.¹

Further, recent reports by the Lifesaving Society indicate that in documented cases where a drowning occurred and fence data were available, three out of five pools had either no fence or one that did not meet code.² Non-compliant barriers continue to be a primary contributing factor in preventable tragedies.

Safety standards save lives but serve no purpose when incorrectly adhered to (or completely absent). Digital tools can compensate for shortcomings in personal knowledge and ensure greater thoroughness, documentation, and ultimately higher levels of safety for the community.

Streamlining field operations

Traditionally, inspections were followed by hours of administrative tasks: typing up findings, completing reports, generating and emailing invoices, and chasing payments. SaaS platforms complete these tasks during a single, on-site visit.

With built-in forms and reporting tools, pool and spa professionals can finalize and send reports, issue quotes, schedule follow-ups, and even collect payment on the spot before leaving the client's property. These features compress timelines, reduce administrative hours, and improve client responsiveness; this is especially valuable for small teams managing high volumes of work.

Reliable, centralized records

In an industry where safety is a priority, accountability is everything. Accurate documentation is vital for liability protection, insurance claims, and long-term client service. In the past, records were stored in filing cabinets or scattered across digital folders. SaaS solutions centralize this data in the cloud, keeping



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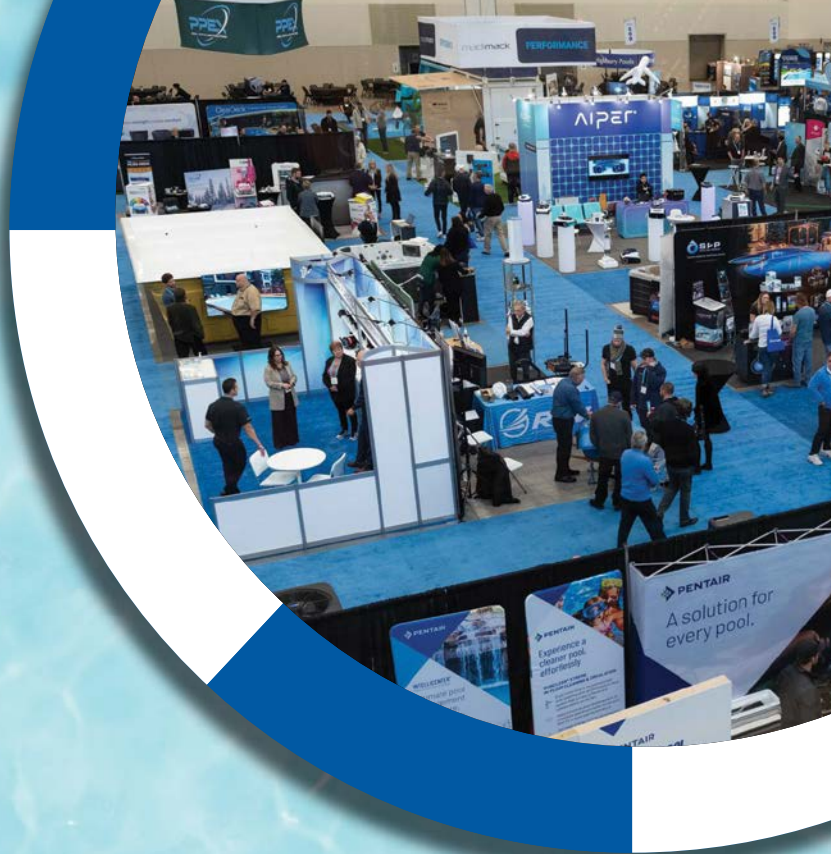
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Printed safety reports generated from inspection software provide standardized compliance and documentation of client records.

every report secure, searchable, and organized by date, client, or property. Whether a report dates from last week or last year, it remains easily accessible whenever needed.

This level of accessibility supports audits, simplifies staff transitions, and ensures continuity of service even as companies grow or restructure.

Digital tools for scalable growth

For expanding businesses, SaaS platforms offer operational advantages. Administrators can track technician productivity, flag recurring issues, and monitor compliance trends. Team handoffs become smoother, and real-time collaboration between office and field staff becomes possible.

Technology also helps level the playing field. New companies can adopt standardized workflows from day one, and experienced firms can streamline legacy systems to remain competitive.

The changing skillset

As software becomes part of the essential toolkit, the definition of a successful technician or inspector changes. While hands-on skills remain vital, business acumen and tech literacy are becoming equally important.

This evolution does not diminish technical training—it elevates it. SaaS platforms free up mental bandwidth by automating repetitive tasks and offering digital support, guiding users through complex regulatory steps. This allows professionals to focus on client relationships, problem-solving, and delivering high-quality work rather than chasing paperwork.

Looking ahead: SaaS integration and the industry's future

Looking forward, the integration of SaaS into the pool and spa industry is only set to expand. The demand for digital documentation and efficient workflows is only expected to grow. Municipalities, insurers, and customers are all driving the shift toward real-time communication and transparent service records.

Businesses that adopt SaaS early will be better positioned to meet these expectations and scale sustainably. Those who resist may be disadvantaged in an increasingly digital market.

Conclusion: Software as equipment

In today's industry, software is no longer just a back-office tool. It is part of the core equipment mix—alongside pumps, heaters, and filtration systems.

SaaS platforms support regulatory compliance, improve client communication, and strengthen operational efficiency for pool and spa professionals. Their value lies not in what they replace, but in what they enable: faster decisions, better records, safer installations and inspections, and a more resilient business. The equipment may be invisible—but its impact is clear. 🌊



Matt Burge is the CEO of Pool Inspector App (Powered by Formitize), a global software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform designed to streamline compliance, safety, and operations for field-based industries. With more than a decade of experience developing digital solutions for safety-critical sectors, he is passionate about simplifying the complex and helping businesses thrive through smarter technology. Email Burge at info@poolinspectorapp.com.

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Winterizing Fibreglass Pools

Best Practices Pool Pros Need to Know

By Cristian Shirilla

PHOTO © RIVER POOLS

Industry professionals familiar with closing concrete or vinyl liner pools already understand the fundamentals of winterization. However, fibreglass pools require a different approach. While fibreglass pools, when manufactured, installed, and maintained correctly, will last for many decades, ignoring these differences can lead to surface damage, warranty issues, or expensive springtime problems for clients.

How concrete and vinyl closures differ

Concrete and vinyl pools are typically winterized by lowering the water level below the return lines, adjusting calcium hardness, and using spring-loaded covers designed for safety and weight

distribution under snow loads. While spring-loaded covers can be used for fibreglass pools, lowering the water level can lead to structural damage.

Automatic covers can be used as winter covers on any pool type; however, the water level in the pool must be maintained to carry the cover and any snow load that may accumulate. Any standing water should be removed immediately to prevent damage to the cover, tracks, or coping. For this article, the author is specifically referencing safety covers. These cover types are most commonly used when closing/winterizing all pool types.

Water level and groundwater management

Best practice: Lower the water only to the bottom of the skimmer—never below for winterization purposes.



Rationale: Lowering the water below the skimmer can expose the shell to hydrostatic pressure. This may cause inward bulging of the pool walls, which can lead to leaks caused by plumbing settlement, or heaving of the pool floor, which can cause structural issues with the pool shell.

A technician checks sanitizer levels using a handheld test kit prior to closing a fiberglass pool.

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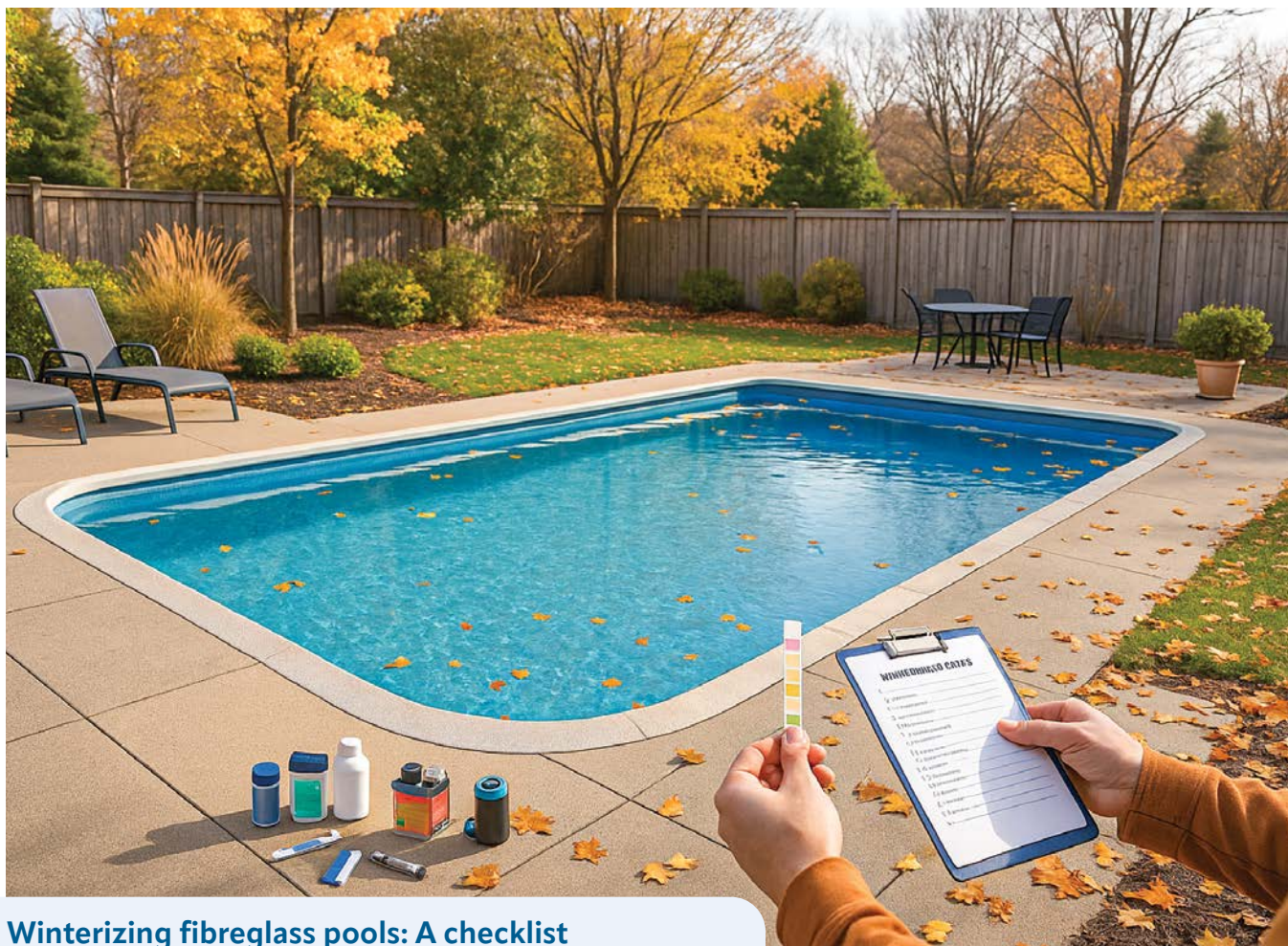
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Winterizing fiberglass pools: A checklist

- Lower water only to the bottom of the skimmer
- Never fully drain the pool
- Maintain pH at 7.2 to 7.4 ppm and alkalinity at 80 to 120 ppm
- Keep calcium hardness below 120 ppm
- Use liquid chlorine or non-chlorine shock only if chlorine is low; avoid calcium hypochlorite
- Apply a chelating agent before closing
- Monitor Langelier Saturation Index (LSI), but prioritize staying within chemical ranges
- Explain fiberglass-specific care procedures to the client 🦋

Test kits and winterizing supplies are staged beside a fiberglass pool in preparation for closing.

IMAGE CREATED USING
OPENAI'S DALL-E/CHATGPT

All inground pools are vulnerable to damage caused by hydrostatic pressure when groundwater rises above the waterline. Fiberglass pools should have a well point that monitors and removes groundwater around the outside of the pool shell when necessary. To reduce risk, a temporary or permanent pump can be installed in areas with high water tables or during wetter seasons.

Checking the well point at the time of closing is never a bad idea. It takes seconds to perform this task and is completed by simply lifting the lid of the

well point, which is usually located about 0.3 m (1 ft) from the deep end, and assessing the level of any water in the pipe.

Although not a bad idea for service pros to perform this check during the winterization process, it is more important for homeowners to monitor the water level in the well point while the pool is closed, especially during wet periods or in cases of high water tables.

Incorrect water level management is a leading cause of winter-related fiberglass pool failures. When water is lowered too much, outward wall pressure decreases, which can lead to bulging. This deformation can shift plumbing, cause leaks, and result in complete structural failure. Repair costs can range from tens of thousands of dollars, highlighting the importance of proper winterization techniques.

Water chemistry and surface protection

Winterization practices for concrete pools often involve using calcium hypochlorite, regardless of current



Left: A technician explains fiberglass-specific water balance parameters during winterization to help protect the pool's gel coat from staining and scaling.

Right: A service professional records water test results and closing procedures poolside during winterization.

IMAGES CREATED USING OPENAI'S DALL·E/CHATGPT

chlorine levels, to superchlorinate before closing. While this method is generally safe for concrete surfaces, it can add excess calcium to fiberglass pools, increasing the risk of gel coat scaling and staining.

Common practices versus fiberglass-specific guidelines

Concrete pools: Use calcium hypochlorite for pre-closure shocking, raise calcium levels, and lower water below returns.

Fiberglass pools: If chlorine is already between one and three parts per million (ppm), no additional chlorine is needed; avoid calcium hypochlorite. Maintain pH between 7.2 and 7.4, total alkalinity (TA) at 80 to 120 ppm, and calcium hardness below 120 ppm. Use a chelating agent before closing, and focus on chemical balance rather than chasing a specific Langelier Saturation Index (LSI) value.

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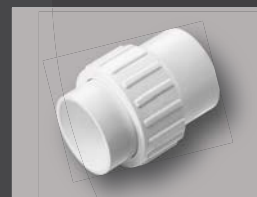
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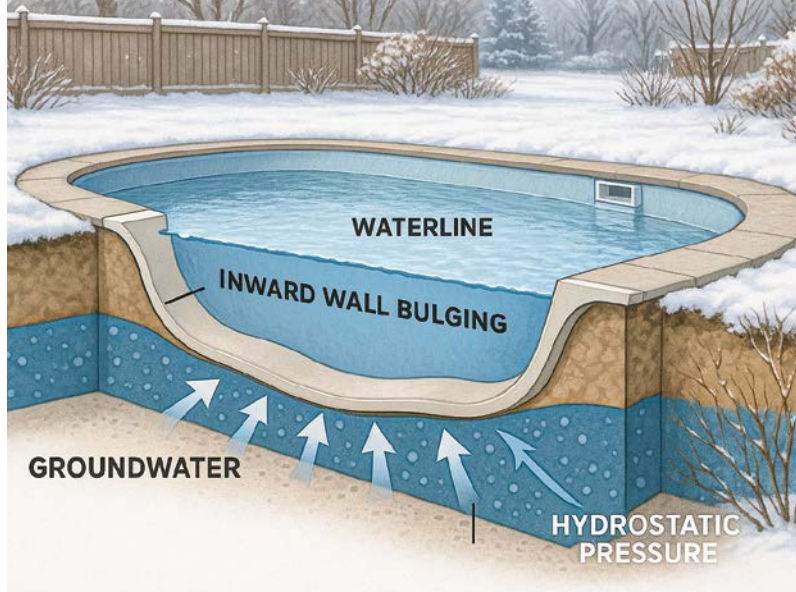


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Why these adjustments matter

Concrete pools tolerate higher pH levels and need calcium supplementation to protect the Portland cement found in the finish surface. In contrast, the gel coat used for fiberglass surface can be damaged if chlorine, calcium, and pH go above the recommended ranges. This combination can cause scaling, staining, and rough surfaces—often requiring intensive polishing, professional cleaning, or resurfacing.

Maintaining proper chemical balance during pool closure helps protect the fiberglass gel coat, reduces the risk of staining, and avoids unnecessary shock treatments and chemical costs when sanitizer levels are already within range.

The underrated role of chelating agents

Chelating agents, usually used for stain and scale control, are often overlooked in fiberglass pool maintenance. These agents bind with dissolved metals and minerals—including calcium, iron, and copper—and keep them suspended in solution, preventing surface staining and scale formation during the off-season.

When calcium levels in a fiberglass pool exceed recommended limits, the water may release excess minerals, under certain conditions, onto the pool's surface. This can lead to deposits that bind to or damage the gel coat. The use of chelating agents is particularly important for fiberglass pools in winter, when chemical stability can vary.

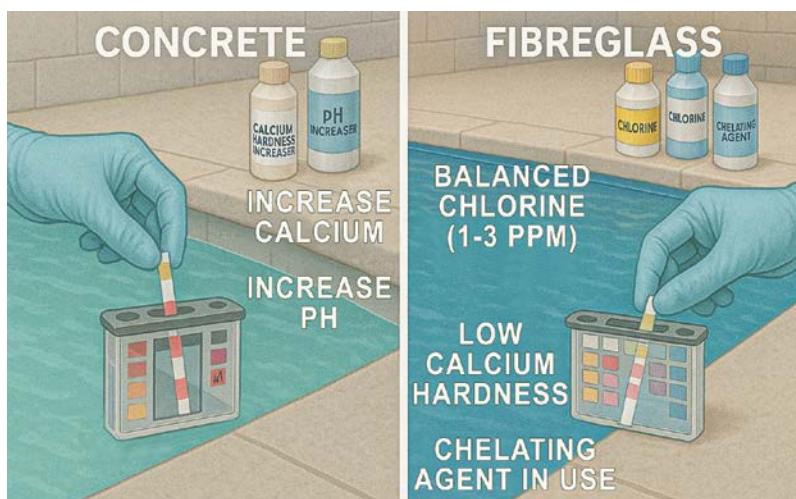
Client communication and education

Informing clients about the unique needs of fiberglass pools helps set clear expectations. Emphasize that additional chlorine is not needed when water chemistry is within proper range, and that calcium hypochlorite can cause damage. Clarifying these points builds trust and supports long-term client satisfaction while safeguarding pool warranties.

Anticipated outcomes

When fiberglass-specific winterization protocols are followed, professionals can expect:

- Strong structural integrity with a lower risk of damage.
- Quicker and easier spring openings.
- Little to no scaling or discoloration.



Top: A cross-section diagram shows a fiberglass pool experiencing inward wall bulging due to hydrostatic pressure from surrounding groundwater.

Middle: A closed fiberglass pool is covered with a safety cover and features a labelled well point near the deep end.

Bottom: A side-by-side comparison displays chemical balance recommendations for concrete and fiberglass pools at the time of winterization.

IMAGES CREATED USING OPENAI'S DALL-E/CHATGPT

- Increased client confidence in the quality of service provided.

Final considerations

Proper winterization helps protect the client's investment in their fiberglass pool and the service provider's reputation. Understanding and applying fiberglass-specific best practices help prevent costly damage and support a smooth seasonal transition. 🌊



Cristian Shirilla is the marketing manager at River Pools, a recognized authority on fiberglass pools. Since 2017, he has managed the creation of hundreds of educational articles and videos focused on fiberglass pool manufacturing, installation, and maintenance. He maintains a content library designed to help homeowners and pool professionals make informed decisions about fiberglass pool care and planning.



A technician explains winterizing products and procedures specific to fiberglass pools.

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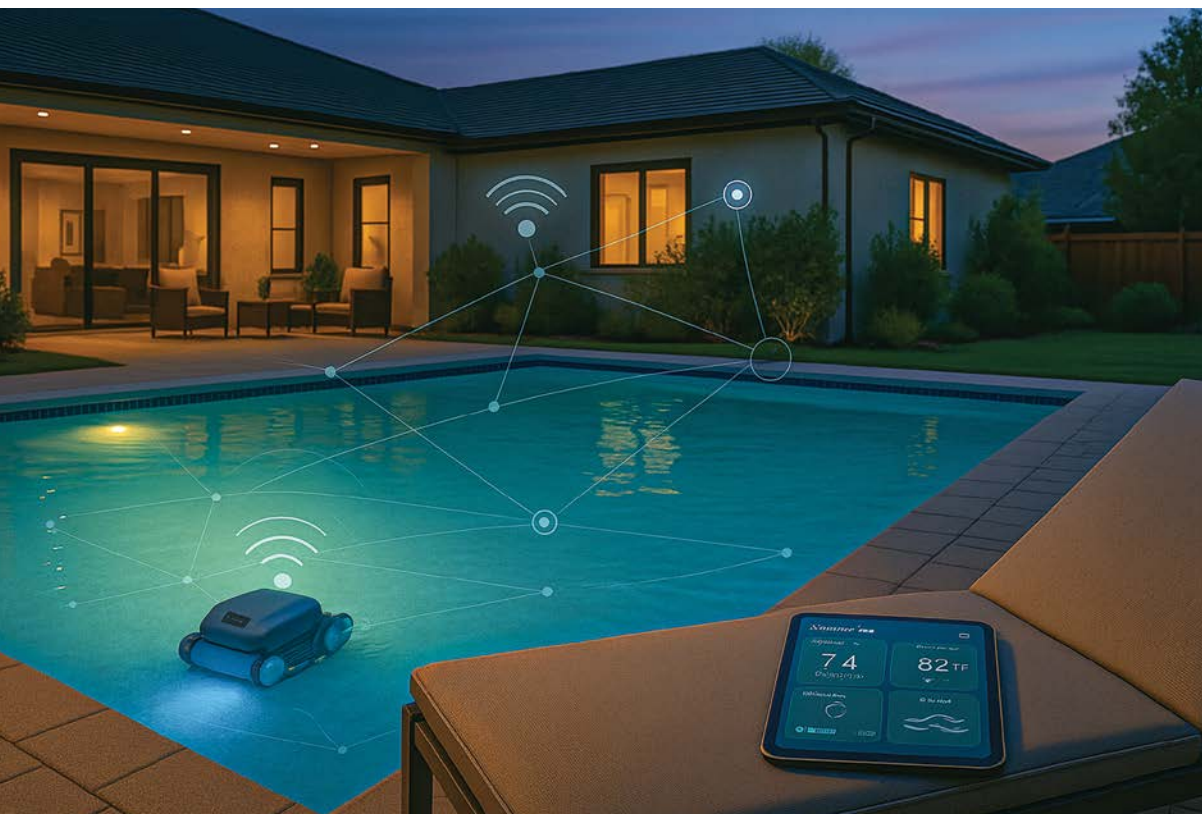
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Digitizing the Deep End

By Farheen Sikandar

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The AI Pool Revolution

Artificial intelligence (AI) is making waves in the pool and spa industry. Once reserved for cutting-edge tech sectors, it is now surfacing in everything from robotic cleaners and smart water monitoring to safety systems and customer service. As manufacturers push the boundaries of automation, AI is evolving from a luxury feature to a practical tool for everyday pool management. As the technology matures, it promises to not only enhance user experience but also reduce operational costs, improve safety, and extend the life of pool systems.

Smarter system controls

Perhaps the most evident use of AI in the pool sector is currently in mobile apps. Internet of Things (IoT) controls integrating AI can enable smart scheduling, remote control, and system optimization. These systems can also be designed to easily pair with Alexa, Google Assistant, Apple controls, and other

third-party platforms. Their algorithms can also be adjusted with AI to balance temperature, pump speed, and lighting for energy-efficient operations.

Automating water chemistry

AI processes data from sensors measuring pH, chlorine, temperature, oxidation-reduction potential (ORP), and other chemical levels. Machine-learning models can predict when chemicals are imbalanced and even automate dosing recommendations or actions.

For cleaning, AI can alert users when chlorine and sanitization levels are low, detect unstable water balance, or send an alert when it senses dirt or debris. It can also learn usage patterns (e.g. when the pool is used most) to auto-adjust filtration cycles and lighting.

Some companies use AI to maintain ideal salinity and reduce manual testing.



Predictive maintenance and cleaning

AI can be used in sensors as a predictive tool, detecting and analyzing issues and reporting them virtually in real time. It can be leveraged to detect patterns in flow rates, energy consumption, or noise/vibration levels, which can indicate clogged filters, pump failure, heater issues, or even air leaks in plumbing. These predictive analytics help service technicians preempt equipment failure and schedule timely maintenance.

Left: Smart control systems integrate artificial intelligence (AI) to automate pump speed, lighting, and temperature based on real-time inputs.

Right: Robotic pool cleaners use artificial intelligence (AI) to map the pool floor, adapt cleaning paths, and detect areas with high debris levels.

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In robotic cleaners in particular, AI can be integrated to map the pool layout with path optimization algorithms, adapt cleaning routes to debris levels, and detect obstacles or areas of high dirt concentration.

Next-gen safety monitoring

A popular product gaining traction is drowning detection cameras. These systems use AI computer vision to monitor swimmer posture, detect distress behaviours (e.g. sinking, struggling, lack of motion, irregular movement, submersion, etc.), and alert lifeguards or homeowners via wearable devices or smart apps.

Virtual assistance and support

Nowadays, AI chatbots can help homeowners and dealers troubleshoot or configure systems. They can also help prioritize service calls, personalize energy-saving settings, and identify usage pattern learning.

Smarter energy use

AI helps balance energy use by predicting weather conditions to adjust heating or filtration schedules, monitoring utility rates (where applicable) to run pumps during off-peak hours, and coordinating smart solar systems with pool heaters.



Top: Computer vision and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies monitor swimmer posture and movement patterns to enhance pool safety in real time.

Bottom: Artificial intelligence (AI) tools enhance pool equipment diagnostics by tracking flow, energy use, and performance trends to predict failures.

Examples

Diving into the initiatives pool companies have taken, here is how AI integration is in the works for the pool and spa sector:

- Fluidra—Investing in an AI-driven monitoring platform that “transforms standard pool cameras into intelligent lifeguards.” It provides real-time swimmer movements and analysis and can aid in preventing drowning risks.
- Pentair—Their new app leverages AI for water analytics and predictive diagnostics, making pool maintenance more convenient.
- Maytronics—Provide commercial-grade robots with AI-driven route optimization.
- Cameras such as Lynxight are used in commercial pools to provide real-time drowning detection without facial recognition; CamerEye focuses on the residential side.

While big names and startups are leading the AI revolution, others are still focused on IoT automation.

Barriers to broader adoption

Despite its potential, AI in the pool space faces several limitations. One is that pool environments vary widely (e.g. residential versus commercial, indoor versus outdoor, saltwater versus chlorine). Another is that AI models require large, diverse datasets to be effective, and many pool systems lack sufficient historical data for accurate predictions.

Another limitation is that many pool systems are proprietary and not interoperable. AI capabilities are often limited to brand-specific ecosystems, preventing seamless integration across different devices or platforms.

The cost factor is also important to consider when integrating AI. AI features such as vision-based drowning prevention or smart chemistry sensors are often costly, limiting adoption among average residential users. Advanced AI systems are more common in commercial settings where the return on investment (ROI) is clearer (e.g. water parks, hotels, municipal pools).

Moreover, AI tools often rely on continuous Wi-Fi or cellular connectivity to function optimally. In remote areas or with unstable internet, these systems may revert to manual mode or provide incomplete insights.

Looking ahead

AI in the pool industry is still emerging but not yet mainstream, especially in the residential segment. It is more advanced in cleaning, safety, and diagnostics than in construction or design. It can perform advanced functions such as learning user behaviour, for instance, when homeowners run pumps or heat spas. It can also adjust lighting, heating, and filtration schedules automatically, suggest energy-saving configurations based on



Lighting and heating systems respond to artificial intelligence (AI)-based scheduling, which adjusts settings based on usage patterns and energy efficiency goals.

usage, and even offer chatbot-style troubleshooting within apps.

While AI integration is poised for rapid evolution in the pool industry, it is still constrained by cost, data availability, and ecosystem fragmentation. 🦋

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From Freeze to Fire

By Terry Arko

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How to Prepare Pools for Climate-driven Off-season Threats

In the past, pool professionals could rely on the calendar to guide the swimming season—open by late spring, close by early fall. That rhythm has changed. Late-season wildfires, unexpected deep freezes, and catastrophic floods are becoming more frequent. Climate unpredictability has introduced a new reality: seasonal norms no longer apply. For pool professionals, adaptability is no longer a bonus but a requirement.

Traditional winterization—balancing water chemistry, lowering water levels, blowing out lines,

and storing equipment—remains a cornerstone in cold climates. In some cases, pools may be completely drained, but only if equipped with a hydrostatic relief valve to prevent the shell from floating due to groundwater pressure. Pools with vinyl liners or fiberglass shells should not be drained completely.

However, traditional methods are no longer sufficient. Warmer autumns and unexpected winter heat waves can increase water temperatures under pool covers, encouraging algae growth even in “closed” pools. This might require supplemental



chlorine treatments later in the season. On the other hand, spring openings could be delayed by lingering cold snaps. The main point: pool professionals need to stay alert and adaptable—calendar dates are no longer a reliable guide.

Managing floods and storms

The severity of hurricanes and flooding is rising. Coastal and inland pools are becoming common hazards, especially backyard pools. While draining a pool before a storm may seem like a precaution, it

carries serious risks. Rising groundwater can displace an empty pool, causing it to float or pop. Post-storm flooding can contaminate pools with raw sewage, chemical runoff, or debris. As a result, many water authorities might restrict pool draining after major events like flooding and wildfires.

Additionally, displaced wildlife such as deer, snakes, raccoons, skunks, and alligators (depending on the region) may enter flooded pools. Pool professionals should never handle these animals; instead, contact animal control.

Top: A residential pool is overtaken by floodwater, which may contain raw sewage, chemical runoff, or debris.

Bottom: A residential pool remains uncovered as snow accumulates, reflecting changing seasonal patterns and climate unpredictability.

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Top: A backyard pool is flooded during a storm, posing contamination and safety risks.

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Bottom: Pool equipment is frozen during a deep freeze event, which can cause pipes to burst and systems to fail.

IMAGE GENERATED USING
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Power outages following storms introduce further hazards. Before restarting flooded electrical equipment, a qualified electrician must inspect it. Certain pool chemicals, especially those containing calcium hypochlorite, can react dangerously with petroleum-based contaminants, potentially resulting in fires, explosions, or toxic gases.

When fire threatens the water

Smoke and ash threaten pool water and components in wildfire-prone regions. Airborne particulates, including arsenic, lead, and hexavalent chromium, can carry toxic residues. Melted polyvinyl chloride (PVC) piping and other infrastructure can leach benzene, a known carcinogen, and other contaminants into the pool water.

For some homeowners in wildfire zones, a fire suppression system that draws water directly from the swimming pool can provide critical protection.

In one notable case, a homeowner saved their property by using a portable pump and hose system to spray down their home and surrounding area as a wildfire approached. The system drained more than half of the pool's volume before the flames subsided, preventing total loss while neighbouring properties were destroyed. These setups can disperse tens of thousands of litres (thousands of gallons) within a few hours but require careful planning. Pools used for this purpose should be equipped with hydrostatic relief valves to prevent structural displacement during rapid water removal.

Service professionals should avoid areas where wildfires are still active. Conditions can change quickly, and smoke from burning infrastructure contains hazardous toxins. Additional hazards include downed power lines, blocked evacuation routes, and shifting fire lines.

Safety measures for pool technicians operating near recent wildfire zones should include:

- Respiratory masks
- Protective eyewear
- Gloves
- Bottled water
- Emergency flares
- Non-flammable protective blankets
- Battery-powered radios and lights

Deep freeze disasters

The 2021 historic freeze in Texas highlighted the consequences of inadequate winter preparedness. A major collapse of the energy infrastructure during an unprecedented weather event left millions without power in freezing conditions. Consequently, thousands of homes and pools were damaged as pipes burst and equipment froze, resulting in \$2 billion in damages. In colder regions, these risks are mitigated by established winterization practices. However, in warmer regions, where freeze events are rare and infrastructure is not designed for cold weather, sudden temperature drops—especially during power outages—can lead to significant and costly damage.

In a freeze-related power outage, pool professionals should follow these emergency steps:

- Shut off all electrical breakers to pool equipment
- Open filter air relief valves and all drain plugs
- Drain pumps, feeders, salt systems, and auto fills
- Blow out lines and add pool antifreeze if time allows

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Future trends: A province-by-province look at exciting new trends to assist with planning for the 2025 season and beyond.



A wildfire encroaches on a residential pool, exposing water and infrastructure to smoke and airborne particulates.

IMAGE GENERATED USING CHATGPT WITH DALL-E

When power is lost, the most important thing is to ensure all water is quickly removed from the pool equipment. Where freezing is anticipated, water should be drained below the skimmer, and pool antifreeze or air should be used to protect lines. Filters and other components can be disconnected and stored until the weather warms up again. Taking action before temperatures fall can save thousands in repair costs and prevent major headaches in the spring.

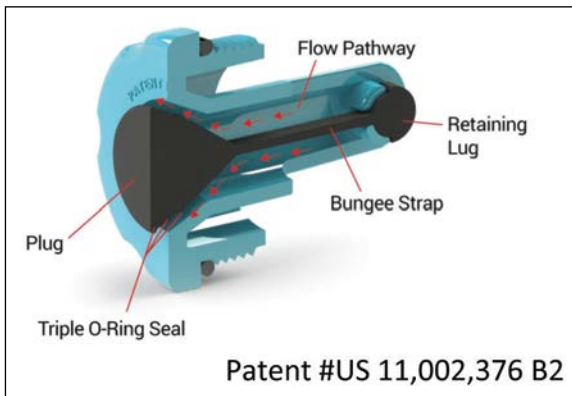
Always be prepared

Today's climate demands more from the pool industry. Whether facing heatwaves in fall, sudden freezes in spring, or extreme

weather events at any time of year, professionals must think beyond traditional timelines and protocols. By staying informed and adopting flexible strategies, pool professionals can safeguard their clients' investments—and their own businesses—regardless of the weather conditions. 🌊



Terry Arko is a product training and content manager for HASA Pool Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of pool and spa water treatment products in Saugus, Calif. He has more than 40 years of experience in the pool and spa/hot tub industry, working in service, repair, retail sales, chemical manufacturing, technical service, commercial sales, and product development. He has written over 100 published articles on water chemistry and has been an instructor of water chemistry courses for more than 25 years. Arko serves as a voting member on the Recreational Water & Air Quality Committee (RWAQC) board. He is a Commercial Pool Operator (CPO) course instructor, a Pool Chemistry Certified Residential course teacher for the Pool Chemistry Training Institute (PCTI), and a *Pool & Spa Marketing* Editorial Advisory Committee member. Arko can be reached at terryarko@hasapool.com.



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www.poolsidebycgt.com/poolside-by-cgt-dealer-day/



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www.capoindustries.com



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ca.Hayward.com



Taylor's test strips are engineered for accuracy

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www.taylorstechnologies.com



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—Jason Cramp

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