

Tips on preparing your pool for hurricane season

By Judson Clarkson

Pools by John Clarkson

This is a two-part article on how to prepare your pool for hurricane season. The second part will appear in the next edition of Sand Castles in October.

Many of you are likely busy preparing for your summer vacation, or perhaps you are back from vacation and are consumed with getting your kids ready for school. Before you know it, we will hear weather reports of a storm that is forming in the Atlantic and heading this way. After all, we are already close to two months into the 2018 hurricane season if you can believe it!

The last thing any homeowner wants to think about right now is a potential hurricane, especially after families in Northeast Florida have had a rough past couple of seasons and some are still dealing with damage caused by Irma. Nevertheless, it is better to make your plan and ask the questions now, while things are calm, before the storm is a couple days away from landfall.

For better or worse, many pool owners have become proficient in hurricane preparedness thanks to Irma and Matthew. But for those who need a little advice, we thought it would be beneficial to review a few tips regarding how to prepare your pool for a hurricane. We'll go into a few of these tips in this issue and then review the others in the following edition.

The challenge is each pool, deck space and yard are different. You may have commercial size deck drain or great natural change in elevation that assists with natural drainage, or you may have minimal deck drainage or drains that are clogged with dirt and don't allow for much drainage at all. Each situation is unique and must be viewed as such.

The first question pool builders are asked is, "Should I drain my pool or lower the water level at all?" The Florida Swimming Pool Association (FSPA) does not mince words when it comes to emptying your pool. They strongly advise for homeowners to not empty their pool.



Photos courtesy of Pools by John Clarkson

Joel Hartman, Jordan Clarkson, Judson Clarkson and John Clarkson from Pools by John Clarkson

The reason being, if water is removed from the pool, and the heavy rains from the storm raise the water table in your area, you may walk outside after the storm to find your pool floating in your yard. Because you removed the weight of the water, which was holding the pool shell down, the pressure from the water table under the pool becomes forceful enough to push the structure out of the ground causing all sorts of other problems.

The follow up question we get is, "Should I drain the water level inside the pool at all?" The answer varies greatly depending on your particular situation. If your surrounding deck has sufficient drainage and the water from your deck and house gutters properly drains into the yard, lowering the level in the pool may not be needed. If, however, you are concerned with the pool overflowing and the drainage not keeping up, you can lower the level of water in your pool, but you are opening yourself up to other risks.

The ESPA recommends to not lower the pool more than one foot for a typical pool with standard depths as you do not want to drain the pool too much in the chance the pool floats with ground saturation. The other issue with draining the pool below your waterline tile is you need to make



sure to shut off the valve and close off your skimmer. If water does not flow into your skimmer while the pump is running, your pump will run dry and burn up causing potentially serious issues. Other pool owners choose to drain their pool to the bottom of their waterline tile but leave it high enough so that water is still getting inside their skimmer to prevent any potential issues with the pump.

In the next edition of Sand Castles, we'll discuss what to do if you do decide to drain your pool, other preventative measures that should be taken and what should be done after the hurricane passes.

Judson Clarkson is the vice president of residential pools for Pools by John Clarkson. For more information, visit <http://www.pbjc.com>.