



ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM  
3190 Sassafras Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15201 - Phone: 412-350-4046



## Complying with a Health Department Notice Regarding Unused Swimming Pools and Water Features on Your Property, 2018

Stagnant water breeds flies and mosquitoes. Because they bite and spread disease, these insects are a nuisance and significant hazard to public health. The Allegheny County Health Department has received a complaint about the unused water feature on your property. If this is true, you must provide assurance that the pool or water feature is being maintained in an acceptable, pest-free condition.

In order to comply with Article 6, Houses and Community Environment, of the County Health Code, you must fulfill one (1) of the following requirements:

- 1) **Open and operate** the pool with a pump, filter and disinfectant.
- 2) **Dismantle** the pool completely and back fill the area to grade.
- 3) **Maintain the pool in a closed condition.** Fill the pool with as much water as possible to support a pool cover. Elevate the cover with large flotation pillows to minimize rainwater that collects on top. Firmly anchor the cover to the pool sides or deck. During the summer months, water that accumulates on the pool cover must either be drained off weekly or treated monthly with a pesticide to control mosquitoes. Information describing cover pumps and mosquito pesticides is provided on the second page of this document.  
***If this is the option you take, please provide proof that the pool is covered and is being treated (digital photos, pesticide receipts, etc.) In doing so, your case will be considered for closure.***

Proof of compliance can be sent by mail, fax or email. On any correspondence, please include your name, phone number, address, and the Service Request number (last 4 digits) from the top right corner of the Pre-Inspection Notice.

**If you do not comply, you may be required to explain your inaction before a local magistrate. Fines or liens may be levied against you & your property.** If you have any questions about what is required, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

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## How should I handle water that collects on top of my pool cover?

Any accumulation of stagnant water that persists for a week or so may serve as a breeding site for mosquitoes. During summer months, water that accumulates on top of covered pools should be drained after each rain event. Siphoning with a hose works, but an automatic “cover pump” does it best. A variety of sump pumps for pool covers retail for \$16.99 to \$59.99 and are available at most swimming pool outlets.

## If I can't eliminate stagnant water, what should I use to treat the water for mosquitoes?

**If possible, eliminate all sources of stagnant water on your property.** The next best option is to treat the water where mosquitoes breed with a larvicide available from hardware stores and online retailers. The most commonly used residential product is a biological pesticide made from a naturally occurring soil bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis*, also known as Bt or Bti. These products (e.g. Mosquito Dunks, Mosquito Bits, etc.) will kill mosquito larvae and are not harmful to other aquatic organisms, people, pets or wildlife. Bt products do not persist in the environment and must be reapplied monthly, as directed on the label.

Another effective mosquito larvicide applied to water is made from a synthetic insect hormone called Methoprene (e.g. Mosquito Torpedo, etc.). These products do not kill mosquito larvae quickly but rather stop the life cycle of the mosquito so that it never becomes a flying, biting adult. One advantage to Methoprene is that mosquito larvae stay in the food chain longer for other animals to eat. Like Bt, methoprene is safe and effective at controlling mosquitoes without harmful effects on mammals, birds, fish or other aquatic insects. When using pesticides, always read and follow the label.

If you have any questions about this information, please call the Housing and Community Environment Program at 412-350-4046.

*It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all label directions for any pesticide being used. No endorsement is intended for products mentioned, nor is criticism meant for products not mentioned. The author and the Allegheny County Health Department assume no liability resulting from the use of these recommendations.*

