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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 6, 2016

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Safe Swimming Pool Draining Tips Offered as Summer Closes

MSD encourages residents to drain pools in a safe, environmentally friendly way

LOUISVILLE – The Labor Day holiday weekend traditionally marks the closing of swimming pools. Many people begin to drain their pools to prepare for winter as the sun-drenched summer days come to a close. However, it's important for Louisville residents to be aware of how to properly drain their pools so they don't harm Louisville waterways or cause headaches for neighbors.

"When it comes to drains, people tend to think 'out of sight, out of mind,'" said MSD Chief of Operations Brian Bingham. "But the chlorine in swimming pools that protects humans from harmful bacteria goes right into the creeks, streams and rivers of the community and can kill some species of recently-hatched fish and make it hard for other aquatic life to breathe."

The average pool has a chlorine concentration that is 10 times higher than some aquatic life can withstand. When chlorinated water is drained into storm drains, streets or gutters, and heads to local streams, harmful byproducts are produced that are highly toxic and carcinogenic. That's why MSD experts recommends that a pool sit for at least 10 days after chemical treatment before draining any water. The recommendations apply to both above and in-ground pools.

Improper draining can also become a nuisance for residents and their neighbors.

"We often see problems with basements backing up or a neighbor's yard flooding when their neighbor's pool is drained at too fast of a rate or drained in a small yard, which overwhelms the system," said Bingham.

There are three ways in which MSD experts recommend draining a residential pool – draining to a grassy area such as your yard if the yard is large enough to absorb it, draining directly into the sanitary sewer system if a direct connection is available, or using a pump and hose to connect to a toilet, bathtub or floor drain on the property to drain into the sanitary sewer system. Water must be discharged slowly in all cases. Residents should never discharge water to the stormwater system, such as with catch basins or the street, because this water directly reaches a natural body of water and is not filtered.

MSD experts offer these other important guidelines for Louisville residents to follow as they drain their swimming pools this summer:

- Discharge water slowly, at no more than 30 gallons per minute, to prevent overwhelming public water quality treatment center assets, soil erosion, flooding, or damage to adjacent properties, including backups into homes and businesses.
- Do not drain your pool during or up to 48 hours after a rain event
- Drain just one pool at a time.
- The pool should sit at least 10 days after chemical treatment before draining any water.
- Test the pool water to ensure that it is essentially chlorine-free prior to draining (about 0.1 parts per million total chlorine). Bubbling, cascading, or other forms of aeration will help to remove chlorine from water.
- The pool's pH should be in a normal range of 6 to 8 prior to draining.
- Call MSD's Industrial Waste Department at 502-540-6917 with any pool draining questions.

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About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization's more than 600 employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro's sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in hundreds of infrastructure improvement projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.