



News

Classifieds

Marketplace

Services

Around Alaska

Specials

24-Hour News

Today's ads
Search ads
Place an ad

Transportation
Employment
Real Estate

Restaurants
Directory
Alaska stores

Visitors Guide
Wild City
Winter Guide

Iditarod
Photo Galleries
Editors' Picks

Go to...



Printer version



E-mail this story



Download story to PDA

- [Alaska](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Outdoors](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Perfect World](#)
- [Video Clips](#)
- [Legislature](#)
- [Mike Doogan](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [Voice of the Times](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Home](#)

ALASKA

APU sheds no tears as salt replaces chlorine

POOL: Safer system installed after September accident hurt swimmers.

By Paula Dobbyn
Anchorage Daily News

(Published: February 5, 2003)

Swimmers at Alaska Pacific University's pool are breathing easier these days now that salt has replaced the chemical filtration system.

After an accidental chlorine gas release seriously injured a maintenance worker and sent more than 30 children to the hospital last September, the Anchorage university invested close to \$20,000 on new technology that uses salt instead of chlorine to clean the pool water, said Marc Phillips, director of APU's Moseley Sports Center.

The salt-based system was installed late last month. The pool reopened to the public on Friday after city sanitation officials gave their approval.

"It's much easier on the skin and eyes," said Judy Hurlburt on Sunday, toweling off in the women's locker room after a late-afternoon swim.

Lifeguards also lauded the change.

"You used to come in and be overwhelmed with the smell of chlorine," said APU student Molly Debiak, a lifeguard. "They say it's easier on your bathing suit, too."



Melody Schneider, left, and Kim Morris swim laps at APU pool on Sunday. The pool reopened to the public on Friday after Anchorage sanitation officials gave their approval for a salt-based system to clean the pool water. *(Photo by Jim Lavrakas / Anchorage Daily News)*

[Click on photo to enlarge](#)

Search

in today's news

Search

- Previous days' news
- Advanced search
- Archives search

Features

Editors' Picks

Read adn.com's best recent stories.

Top Ten Stories

See which stories other readers are sending to

their friends.

Crossword

Play our interactive puzzle online.

ALASKA.com

Get information on travel, relocation and entertainment. The business directory allows you to locate stores and services statewide.

School News

Find your child's classroom in SchoolNews. Other school links: [State test scores](#), [Stock Market Game](#), [Back to School edition](#).

Community News

Check our free Web sites for non-profit groups.

Online Bachelor's & Master's Degrees
University of Phoenix ONLINE
 Accounting Business [More >>](#)

Rent DVD Here
Free Trial

MLM Rookie earns \$20,000 Per Month in only 7 months!
[More Details](#)

Save over \$25,000
Great Alaskan Tour Saver
 2003

The university considered switching from chlorine to salt a couple years ago, but the money never made it through the budget process, Phillips said. All that changed after Sept. 27, when a pool maintenance worker accidentally poured hydrochloric acid into a barrel that contained chlorine, setting off a chemical reaction that released a toxic cloud.

Roughly 60 people at the pool, including members of the Alaska Pacific Swim Club, were forced to evacuate, some of them vomiting and gasping. Dozens were taken to hospitals complaining of nose and throat irritation.

The salt system is a lot safer because it eliminates the handling of dangerous chemicals, Phillips said. Some 900 pounds of salt was added to the pool's 98,718 gallons of water. The salt circulates and passes through an electrolytic cell, which sends a current through the water. The current breaks the salt down into sodium hypochlorite, which eats bacteria and algae.

About three cups of salt are added daily to replace what evaporates, Phillips said.

"I haven't had anyone say they miss the chlorine."

Swimming at APU is not nearly as salty as a dip in the ocean. The pool water's salinity is comparable to that of human tears, said Timothy Petsch, president of TMI Salt Pure, the company that makes the system.

Although APU has the first salt-based pool in Anchorage, 17 aquatic facilities throughout Alaska use salt, Petsch said. All of the North Slope schools have salt-sanitized pools. The municipal pools in Juneau, Haines, Wrangell, Unalaska and Sand Point also function on salt, as does a private health club in Homer, he said.

Europe and Australia, in particular, have long eschewed chlorine in favor of salt, Petsch said.

"It's probably the healthiest alternative," he said.

It took a while for the city to be won over by the new system since it was the first of its kind in Anchorage, said Chris Tofteberg, the municipality's supervisor for food safety and sanitation. But in the end, the pool got its permit.

"I think it's neat," Tofteberg said. "It essentially recycles the salt."

Daily News reporter Paula Dobbyn can be reached at pdobbyn@adn.com or 907-257-4317.

[Daily News Jobs](#) | [Internships](#) | [ADN History](#) | [ADN Store](#) | [NIE Requests](#)



[McClatchy Company Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright © 2003 The Anchorage Daily News