

August Clearance Sale

Save on Patio Furniture — Swimming Pools & Supplies — Billiard Tables — Hot Tubs

Our goal is 100% customer satisfaction.

It is always our intention to have all advertised items readily available for sale. Occasionally, an advertised item may not be available because of sales above anticipated demand or circumstances beyond our control. Whenever reasonable and possible, rainchecks will be issued or a comparable value will be offered.

While we do our best to avoid printing errors, we do reserve the right to correct any inaccurate prices or descriptions at the point of purchase. All items are not necessarily sale items or mark-downs, but all represent significant values.

Warranty information is kept at the store for your inspection. It is our advice never to buy an item strictly on the basis of the warranty alone, but to consider the product's quality and reputation.

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Seasonal Specialty Stores

One Seasonal Square

120 Route 101 A

Amherst, NH 03031

Presort Standard
US Postage
PAID
Nashua NH
Permit No I

Pool Closing School

Please call and reserve early — we might fill up.

Above Ground, Tuesday September 4^h 7pm — 8:00pm

Inground, Wednesday, September 5^h 7pm-8:30pm

(603) 880-8471

Seasonal Specialty Stores® News, "Newsletter Lite" Volume 9, No.2 August Clearance Sale Edition- Sale **Ends September** 2nd 2001

Preventing Winter Damage: A Report on Last Winter's Destruction

by *Dennis DiPaolo*

The winter of 2000-2001 brought unbelievable devastation to swimming pools in a band running across the country, from Maine to Minnesota. The same storms that collapsed buildings around the Nashua area (Harcross Chemical, Marshalls and Pennichuck Junior High to name a few) also ripped liners and collapsed swimming pools and tool sheds. In the forty year history of the above ground pool industry, no one has ever seen anything like it.

According to insurance adjusters that I talked to this spring, we were very lucky. Hardly any of our pools were totally ruined, and we had ready access to the proper replacement parts for every pool we have ever sold. One adjuster told me of personally inspecting over 100 pools sold by another company that were completely trashed; and he knew of over 1000 by that same company in the same condition.

In most years, we will hear of one or two above ground pools damaged by winter ice. This is typical of our customer base of about 10,000 pool owners.

Ice damage is caused by a hole developing in a liner while there is a giant iceberg attached to it — often weighing 50,000 — 100,000 pounds. The immediate cause is generally an unusual freeze-thaw-wind combination or a ground heave accompanied by really bad luck on the part of the pool owner.

The liner tears, and often the wall bends about 8" from the bottom. If the pool cover was too small, the top rails and uprights get bent in by the cover. For a more detailed explanation pick up a copy of our "*Pool Tips™ on Ice Damage*" in the store, or log on to our web site: www.seasonalstores.com. Click the Pool Tips™ button on the left to see the subject directory.

What was unusual this winter was the shear weight

of the snow and ice. Early snowstorms last winter neither melted, evaporated, or blew away. They compressed under the weight of subsequent snowstorms to become something that looked like carbonated ice. What looked like three feet of snow was often two feet of snow and a foot of ice. That's the same weight as fourteen feet of snow. If there was the slightest loss of water under the iceberg, the pool didn't have a chance. This year, even inground pools lost walls and liners to the ice.

All of the above ground pool manufacturers have been talking to each other all spring and summer, sharing information and ideas. I've had several long conversations with the owner and the technical director at Sharkline. Helping people out this spring cost Jeanne and I a lot of money that we really didn't have. Assuming that you currently close your pool properly now (which does put you in a small minority), the only other things you could do are too dangerous for us to tell you. So what do we do?

First, the normal things: check your liner throughout the fall, to make sure that it's not leaking. If your above ground winter plug and winter plate leak, fix the leak or drain the pool below the return and leave it open. If you do not use a plug and plate make sure that the return, which you have left open to deliberately leak, never gets plugged up with snow or ice. Yes, you are trying to prevent a leak, but we'd rather have a slow leak than a big one when the ice plug melts. For way more detail, see our "*Pool Tips™ Mon Winterization*" at the store or on the web (see above for details). Most important, use a pool cover that's at least four to six feet bigger than the pool. Keep it on loose, with all I excess fabric on the water. The snow does not know how big your cover is, and it does not snow more on a big cover than a small cover. A big cover just doesn't break your pool as

easily as a small cover.

Over half the damages that we saw this year were not ice damage. They were caused by the pool owner using a cover that was too small to be put on according to the directions. Why? Because you probably read directions (you prove that by reading this) but no one else does. To be super-sure, come in and talk to us, or come to pool closing school. The schedule is in the store and elsewhere in this newsletter. If there is enough interest, we **may** add additional dates.

Now, here's the dangerous part. Should you pump off the cover? Shovel it off? Tent it up so all the snow falls off? We're afraid to say. Pumping and shoveling (or raking off the snow) reduces the total weight of the iceberg, and weight on the cover. But what if you disturb the iceberg and cause the damage that you're trying to prevent? What if you get up on the pool to shovel it, fall through the cover and the ice, and drown? Even worse, what if you are only brain damaged and someone has to support you the rest of your life? Trust me, our insurance company has thought of that. While it might make sense to some people to do these, they are a real bad gamble.

Pumping the cover is a good idea, but only in November and April, and only if you are positive there is no ice in the pool. Tenting the cover doesn't work. If it does, then building inspectors must be real jerks for making houses have wooden roofs with beams or trusses, instead of using pool covers and beach balls.

You may have heard that we gave away free and discounted pools, parts and chemicals this year to people who couldn't collect on their insurance. It will probably add up to over \$150,000. When we made the decision on how to handle this; we knew that there would be a lot of money involved, but there was no way to predict how much. We have been doing the same thing for twelve years, but it was maybe a wall or a liner every couple of years. This year was very different.

Please do not think that, because we always have been this generous, that we always will be. Certainly we will never be as bad as those people who put the sign in the window: "Do not even talk to us about ice damage." We will always be very helpful. However a woman came in to the store this summer to buy a pool because "You have that program where you'll give me a free pool if anything ever goes wrong with it". That is not the deal. Storms, earthquakes, fires and floods should be an insurance problem: not the owner of your pool store's problem.

A quick bit of related advice: call your insurance agent and find out just what kind of coverage you have on your pool. Most people with winter damage were furious to find out (too late) what was in the fine print. An example: is your pool considered personal property like your sofa or a structure like a tool shed? Your insurance company probably calls it personal property even though your town made you get a building permit and follow the setback for structures. Your sofa probably isn't covered for ice damage either!