

**WAT-G-051**

**EASR Guidance**: **Permit Activity: Discharge of hot tub or swimming pool effluent where the volume is more than 10m3 per day**

Version 1.0, August 2025

Contents

[Purpose 2](#_Toc193875684)

[What activity does this guidance apply to? 2](#_Toc193875685)

[Understanding the activity 2](#_Toc193875686)

[Understanding and minimising risks to the water environment 3](#_Toc193875687)

[Risks to the water environment 3](#_Toc193875688)

[Location 3](#_Toc193875689)

[Discharge to soakaway or land 4](#_Toc193875690)

[Discharge to surface water 4](#_Toc193875691)

[Chemicals 4](#_Toc193875692)

[Glossary 5](#_Toc193875693)

[Disclaimer 5](#_Toc193875694)

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# Purpose

This document provides information and guidance for anyone discharging effluent from a swimming pool or a hot tub which requires a permit under The Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations (EASR).

This guidance does not cover any other permissions that may be required.

# What activity does this guidance apply to?

This guidance applies to the discharge of more than 10 cubic metres (m3) per day of swimming pool or hot tub effluent.

# Understanding the activity

Swimming pool or hot tub effluent is wastewater from a swimming pool or a hot tub. A hot tubincludes spas and tubs with whirlpool devices.

Effluents from swimming pools are either generated from intermittent backwash water from cleaning of filters which may happen every few weeks, or from draining the swimming pool, which happens much less often, generally less than once a year.

Hot tubs located on self-catering properties such as chalets or holiday cottages are often emptied on a weekly basis following the departure of the guests. Domestic hot tubs will generally be emptied less often.

This activity covers the discharge of more than 10 cubic metres (10,000 litres) per day. This is the total cumulative volume of effluent from swimming pools or hot tubs, discharging at one site. You can discharge both hot tub effluent and swimming pool effluent at the same site. A site includes a camping or caravan site or a collection of chalets, cottages or pods.

If the volume of effluent discharged is less than 10 cubic metres (m3) per day, an application for an EASR registration is required.

However, if you have a site with only one hot tub and you are discharging to land or [soakaway](#_Definitions), the discharge of hot tub effluent can be authorised by EASR water General Binding Rule (GBR) 35, as long as the GBR 35 rules are complied with. GBR 35 applies only to hot tub effluent and only for discharges from a single hot tub either onto land or into a [soakaway](#_Glossary). If you are discharging hot tub effluent to [surface water](#_Definitions), then you need to apply for a registration.

# Understanding and minimising risks to the water environment

## Risks to the water environment

Swimming pool and hot tub effluent is normally hot and contains disinfectants, such as chlorine or bromine, and cleaning agents.

Disinfectants such as chlorine or bromine are very toxic to aquatic life. Warm effluents can increase water temperatures in watercourses which can result in lower oxygen levels and harm fish life.

### Location

Where possible, you must discharge swimming pool or hot tub effluent to the public sewer. You should contact Scottish Water regarding connections to the public sewer. You will need to justify if you can’t connect to the public sewer due to distance etc. We will check your proximity to the public sewer.

If you cannot discharge to the public sewer, you should discharge effluent onto land or into a [soakaway](#_Definitions). You will need to justify if you can’t discharge to land or soakaway.

Discharge to surface water should be avoided. If you discharge to surface water such as a watercourse via a partial soakaway, you must dechlorinate or debrominate, as required, prior to discharge. This is because of the risks to aquatic life from the effluent. You will need to justify why you need to discharge to surface water and we may not grant a permit for such a discharge.

You should not discharge effluent into a septic tank, a sewage treatment plant or any associated soakaway.

Any discharge point must not be located within 50m of a water supply used for human consumption.

For sites where there are a number of hot tub discharges, it is recommended that the discharges are not to a single point, as this poses a greater risk to soil and groundwater.

You must ensure that the pH of the effluent is between 6 to 9.

### Discharge to soakaway or land

You must locate the soakaway or the area where effluent is discharged to land more than 10m away from any surface water. The effluent should infiltrate into the ground without running off.

If you are discharging to soakaway, you should ensure that the water table is at least 1m below the base of the soakaway. If this is not possible, then as a minimum you must ensure that the water table is below the bottom of the soakaway to avoid a direct discharge to groundwater.

### Discharge to surface water

If you need to discharge to surface water, we will undertake a risk assessment to determine whether this is acceptable. You must discharge via a [partial soakaway](#_Definitions) with a high level overflow. The partial soakaway must have a minimum area of 10m2 multiplied by the total number of hot tubs or swimming pools. You must allow effluent to cool to less than 20oC before discharging.

### Chemicals

In addition to complying with the conditions of your permit, you should follow best practice by minimising use of chemicals to disinfect the water. Toxic chemicals should be removed prior to discharge.

If you have chlorine or bromine in the effluent, it is essential to dechlorinate or debrominate effluent prior to discharge by leaving the effluent to stand in a vented storage pool or separate holding tank for at least 5 days or until no chlorine or bromine is detectable. If this is not possible, chemicals can be added to dechlorinate or debrominate the effluent.

You should produce a method statement setting out how you intend to remove chlorine or bromine and you should test the effluent prior to disposal to ensure there is no chlorine or bromine in the discharge.

SEPA discourages the use of polyhexamethylene biguanide (PHMB), often just called biguanide, due to its toxicity.

Before applying for a permit, you are advised to discuss your proposal with our Water Permitting team. We can be reached by emailing waterpermitting@sepa.org.uk.

# Glossary

A full list of terms is available in the main Glossary.

**Groundwater** means water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil.

**Partial soakaway** means a soakaway with an overflow to surface water.

**Soakaway** means a type of infiltration system for the treatment and dispersion of effluent into the ground.

# Disclaimer

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