

POOLS

And How To Deal With Them During and After Debris Removal.

The Army Corp of Engineers has variously said:

1. A fence will be put around the pool for safety during Debris removal and nothing else will be done.
2. Debris Removal will include draining the pool and the water will be used to wet down the ash during removal.
3. Debris Removal will include draining the pool and the water will NOT be used to wet down the ash during removal. (The guys who told me this actually laughed at the notion)
4. Call the 877 number and all they would say is it's on a case by case basis whether they do nothing, drain the pool or remove the pool completely.

Science and Anecdotes.

An empty swimming pool can pop, or float out of the ground. This is due to possible hydrostatic pressure from unknown underground water. Think of your swimming pool as a “boat” in the ground, and it will float out of ground if there is underground water pressure.

From: [Do Not Drain your Pool and Leave it Empty - Blue Water Pools, Mountain View, CA](#)

This leaves two options after a pool is drained, fill the pool or drill holes in the bottom to relieve the pressure.

REESE & Associates, a Geotechnical Engineering firm in Santa Rosa, advised that the water table is between 3 and 4 feet in the winter, depending on the rain fall. In addition if the pool is drained onto the soil near the pool that will add to the hydrostatic pressure.

DRILLING

The REESE recommended Johnson Pool and Spa as a very reputable firm to drill holes in the pool. Johnson Pool and Spa had previously posted:

Gunite swimming pools are durable structures that hold up very well during a fire. Often times they become a safe haven for people trying to survive such an event. More than likely your pool structure has not been compromised by the fires, although the pool equipment and surfaces will most likely need to be replaced. We can assist in valuing the damage for your insurance adjuster.

During the cleanup process of your property the pool should be drained and cleaned. Holes should be drilled through the floor to relieve any hydrostatic pressure that could lift the pool out of the ground. Once the draining and cleanup are complete, we can drill the necessary holes through the floor of the pool. A temporary chain link fence can be placed around the pool to prevent anyone from falling in after the cleanup process.

REFILLING

[Mellissa Edney](#) posted on Facebook (posted here with permission):

Yes, we have a pool, and our lot is cleared and FEMA drained it. We're also footing the bill to have it cleaned by Pool Tech - Brian is our contact. They came out today, cleaned it, power washed it, drained it and sucked up the sand that was clogging the drain, and now are refilling it. It's a big process, but our pool is salvageable and if left empty, the pool could lift from the foundation and the plaster could crack, resulting in 10's of thousands of dollars in repair/replacement costs. So many things to think about, so many unexpected costs to fork over. It's a lot. But I'm feeling better knowing our pool will be ok!

They're giving us a total cost breakdown tomorrow I think, but no less than \$2400 right now. \$1600 just for water (.08/gal) and \$500 to clean it, plus \$300+ for labor. FEMA did put a fence around the pool and so has Pool Tech (theirs is an actual chain link fence) We opted not to use the pool service we had been using because we felt they were not being forthcoming or honest about the work involved. Brian, Pool Tech, has a family member who lost their home in Coffey Park, so I feel he really resonates with us. Call him. Great guy.

Oh, and we'll need a temporary pump installed after we are able to get PG&E back on. But in the meantime, they'll come over and maintain the water and keep it all chemically clean.

The last anecdote to share is about FEMA and fencing:

my lot was cleaned and I drove up in person to see what they had done as they were cleaning it. They left our (inadequate) temporary fence around the pool up and a higher cement wall surrounding part of the pool.

I asked the construction Foreman why was a permanent fence not placed, as that is what was promised when they called me (I asked) and he said they were waiting for an Army Corp engineer to determine if they should remove additional cement around the pool - as they did not want to compromise its integrity. I asked him to ensure a permanent fence went up, he said they would. He also said they drained the pool. I asked him for the "engineer" to contact me. No one did. I called last Friday and spoke with Army Corp with no luck.