

Keep your pump 'humming' and happy

By Tara Marion

"You can normally tell if a pump is not up to par just by listening to it," said Rick Curtis, manager of Kalamazoo Electric Motor, 658 E. Vine.

An irregular noise is the No. 1 sign that a pool or spa pump needs repair. "A squealing noise is probably the most common," said Jeff Bishop, manager of Locey Swim Pool, 6625 Lovers Lane.

A rumbling sound also indicates that a pump needs repair. "When a pump runs, it should have a humming sound instead of a rumbling sound," Curtis said. If a pump is discovered as having a problem, it requires immediate repair. "If people use it while it's getting progressively noisier, the bearing could blow up, and you'd have to replace the motor," Curtis explained.

Curtis added that problems are usually discovered through sound, although a noticeable amount of water under the pump also indicates a problem: a leaking seal. "If the seal goes bad, there's a good chance it will ruin the bearings," he said.

Checking the pump basket for debris and dumping it on a daily basis acts as preventive maintenance for your pump. "That pump basket has to be clean so the water can flow through and recirculate through the rest of the pool," Curtis said.

Bishop added, "If you do notice that there's any decrease in the water flow, you really out to have it checked out by a service person or talk to somebody that can guide you through it."

Insects and grass clippings on the outside of the pump clog up the vents, which can cause it to run hot. "If you notice your pump is running hot, then it should be repaired," Curtis said. "If you can't get the air through, the cooling fan will not work accurately," he added. Keeping the outside of the pump clean can prevent it from overheating.

The function of the pump in a pool or spa is to circulate the water, which in turn, circulates the chemicals. "You've got to keep the water moving to prevent stagnant water," Curtis explained.

A spa, however, has a secondary pump. While the spa water pump circulates the water as it would in a pool, picking up debris and circulating chemicals, "there's also an air pump that throws the air and makes bubbles," Curtis said.

Bishop and Curtis agreed that pools and spas are unsanitary without a pump to circulate the chemicals. "It depends on how long the pump is down, but I wouldn't want to see it off for more than two or three days," Bishop said.

The size of a pool or spa determines how many hours the pump should run each day. "With a pool, the key is to get all the water pumped through the filter at least one time every day," Bishop said.

Spas require daily filtration as well. "In the case of a spa, I recommend running the pump anywhere from eight to 16 hours, depending on the size of the spa and the temperature," he added.

Again, to ensure optimal performance of your pool or spa pump, remember to do a visual inspection of the pump basket on a daily basis and be aware of the signs that indicate a problem.

"The symptoms indicating your pump is ready for repair could be noise, leaking or running hot," Curtis said. "That's what you really should go by."