

Money to Burn?



Not having a pool blanket is like having the heater on and leaving the window open

In this day and age, it's surprising to find that despite a widespread increase in 'environmental awareness' – not to mention and ever-increasing demand to tighten budgets and rein in costs – that there are still a large number of commercial pools that don't have a pool blanket to cover the pool when it's not in use.

Surprising to say the least.

Together with the significant reduction in evaporation that pool covers offer, not having a pool cover in place overnight when the pool isn't in use, is akin to having the heater on and leaving all the windows open!

In short, it's an absolute waste – both environmentally and financially.

Bernard Schenk, Commercial Sales Manager with leading commercial pool equipment specialists Elite Pool Covers, explained:

"While the number of aquatic facility operators installing pool covers is definitely on the increase, I still see many commercial aquatic centres, hospitals and other privately-owned facilities that aren't using pool covers."

"Worse still, I've seen a number of facilities where they have a pool cover, but the operators aren't using them because they just consider it to be 'extra work' for no benefit," he added.

Interestingly, together with the 'extra work' reasoning, some of the other reasons cited for not using a pool cover include: not enough space to store a blanket, not enough time available to deploy and retrieve it each day, health and safety concerns with its operation, cost of wages for the staff operating the pool blanket and, of course, not having enough funds available to purchase.

"Perhaps not surprisingly, the one constant that I have found on my travels, is that all of the privately-owned swimming schools have and use covers for their swimming pool," Bernard added.

"And the reason that doesn't surprise me is simple really. As private owners and operators, they have a vested interest reducing operating costs. They need to make a profit or they will have to shut the doors."

"Even if they don't own the building, they own the outgoings – including the energy bills, the cost of water lost to evaporation, even the additional damage that can be caused by excessive condensation."

It's a simple fact that very few aquatic centres are financially in the black at the end of each year. Indeed, in many instances it would be more viable for the council to close the centre. However, communities expect – not unreasonably – councils to provide recreational, sporting and community facilities, and there are proven health and social benefits associated with public pools, so they keep them open.

Why then so many aquatic facility owners and operators don't utilise pool covers remains a mystery.

SAVING ON EXPENDITURE A FALSE ECONOMY

The idea that a facility can reduce its costs by not spending the money on a pool blanket is truly one of 'false economy'.

According to Bernard, most aquatic centres could expect to fully recoup not only the capital cost of the cover, rollers and associated hardware, but also the dollar value of the additional labour required for daily operation 18 months or less through reduced water evaporation, reduced energy costs and even reduced maintenance costs.

"Put simply, these covers are a 'no brainer' in terms of capital investment – both for indoor and outdoor pools," Bernard said.

"First and foremost, water evaporation is immediately reduced by the percentage that the covers are on the pool. If the pool is operational for 16 hours a day and covered for 8 hours a day, water evaporation is reduced by a third so you're immediately saving on water costs."

In addition, for indoor pools, this reduction in evaporation – which inevitably turns into condensation – can also deliver a significant reduction in maintenance costs.

"I recently visited a facility where all the window frames had to be replaced – at a total cost of over \$300,000 – due to the extensive corrosion caused by condensation," Bernard added. "And another customer of mine in WA told me they had calculated that even after the cost of the pool cover and all the other associated costs including labour, that they will save around \$1 million over the next 20 years because the interval between repainting would now be 8-10 years rather than the five-year interval before they had the pool cover. An outstanding result for an investment of under \$100k – especially given the blankets themselves have an estimated lifespan of between 10 – 15 years."

Then, of course, there is savings in energy and associated costs.

Regardless of the type of heating and energy source used – whether it's gas, electricity, co-generation or even geothermal – energy use is energy use. And it has a cost – both environmentally and financially.

"Heating an un covered pool during the hours that it's not in use is like having the



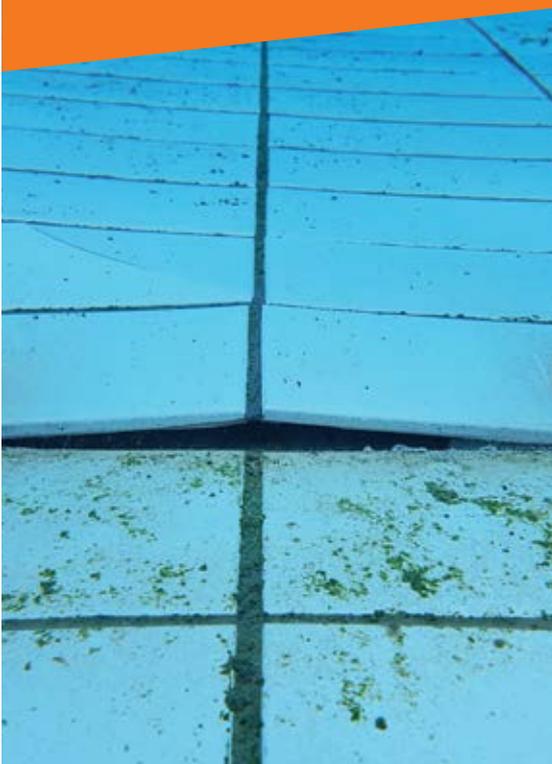
heater on an leaving the window open,” Bernard said.

“As with the evaporation issue, every hour that the blanket is on the pool is a reduction in the amount of energy required to maintain the optimum temperature. And the fact that the pool is generally covered at the coldest part of each day (e.g. – the middle of the night) the heating system doesn’t have to work anywhere near as hard to maintain the temperature.”

While these benefits apply to all heating systems, they are particularly beneficial for traditional gas or electric-powered heating systems. In fact, with energy costs being what they are – some pools can cost upwards of \$1000 per day to heat – reducing energy consumption for 8 hours per day over the estimated 10-15 lifespan of the pool blanket can, quite literally, deliver hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy cost savings.

For further information, please call Elite Pool Covers, T: 1300 136 696 or visit: www.poolcovers.com.au

CONCRETE SHRINKAGE AND ITS EFFECT ON CERAMIC TILING OF COMMERCIAL SWIMMING POOLS AND BUILDINGS GENERALLY. AN INDUSTRY ISSUE.



Over the past five years there has been an increasing occurrence of ceramic tile failures in commercial concrete swimming pools across Australia and New Zealand.

Following an extensive period of research, which is still currently ongoing, the consensus view amongst experts is that concrete shrinkage is a significant influence on these failures.

Concrete shrinkage is an innate property of all concrete structures and broadly refers to the loss of concrete volume as it dries (drying shrinkage) or as a result of binder hydration (autogenous shrinkage).

Read more about this issue in this months publication.

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