

SALT WATER POOLS TAKING OVER FROM CHLORINE BASED ONES – BY Tom Jackson

There was a time when even the clearest of blue swimming pools came at a hefty cost in chemicals, health and the environment. But not today, with 4/5 of all the new swimming pools going into Kenyan homes and institutions now being saltwater pools with lower running costs and none of the same side risks.

Saltwater systems are not chlorine-free: the difference is that they use chlorine generators to make the chlorine from salt, rather than adding concentrated chemicals. It's a shift that has enjoyed galloping technology in recent years, with 80 percent of all new installations now using a chlorine generator", according to Moses Kitheka, Sales Engineer at Davis & Shirliff. The company, which is the leading supplier of swimming pool equipment in East Africa, has seen a boom in people turning to salt as an alternative to traditional chlorine.

Chlorine pools are now firmly associated with sore, irritated eyes and itchy skin, switching to saltwater creates a more natural, comfortable swimming experience. It is not the same as swimming in the ocean, where salt content is around 35,000 parts per million (ppm). The optimal salt content for a saltwater pool is actually less than a tenth of that, at approximately the same salt content as the human body. But the production of chlorine through a generator prevents the production of the chloramines that result in irritated eyes and itchy skin.

The electrolysis process producing the chlorine burns off these chloramines, meaning the swim is no less sanitary, but more comfortable and natural.

Environmentally Safe

The lowered use of chemicals, as saltwater pools virtually clean themselves, also makes the pool more environmentally safe and relieves the owner of the burden of consistently checking chemical levels. The salt systems also naturally inhibit the growth of algae. This natural process saves on both time and money when it comes to maintaining the pool, usually the most difficult and costly aspect of owning a swimming pool.

However, the initial spend on a salt water pool is greater, with a 200,000 litre pool requiring a generator costing Sh190,000 and a small 100 cubic meters pool requiring a generator worth Sh100, 000, which also come with additional costs for installation. Yet the technology makes financial sense in the long-term, with pool owners covering the cost of the initial investment within a few years through savings on chemicals and maintenance staff. In general, the cost of maintaining a salt water pool is less than half that of looking after the chlorine equivalent.

"Salt is 10 times cheaper than chlorine," said Kitheka. "Handling salt also requires a lot less care than handling chlorine". With the generator producing chlorine whenever the pump is running, there is no for purchase, storing or handling of chemicals. There are also health benefits to the saltwater option. Pure chlorine pools create organochlorines with the ability to mimic human hormones. These can cause reduced fertility, abnormalities in the immune system and various cancers.

The same chloramines that cause discomfort to the eyes and skin have also been found to cause or worsen emphysema and asthma, meaning the saltwater option is more beneficial to those suffering from either illness. Moreover, where organochlorines and chloramines are a standard feature of chlorinated swimming of chlorinated swimming pools, in a salt water pool levels of chlorine never drop low enough for them to form.

As long as the pump is running, the generator will produce enough chlorine to keep a pool clean and comfortable without the hassle and negative repercussions of purchasing concentrates and swimming in heavy chlorine. It's a cocktail of bonuses that have now seen salt water move to market dominance, and look set to mark the fading out of the old, blue pools of chemical concentrates.

