

Colour-coded containers for pool chemicals

Overview

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) recognises that the use of colour-coded containers for pool chemicals is a common industry practise. However, it is **not** a regulatory requirement.

Traditionally in NSW:

- pool chlorine is packed in light blue 15 litre containers
- pool acid (hydrochloric acid) is stored in black 15 litre containers

However, recent supply shortages have led pool businesses in northern NSW to source chlorine from Queensland, where it is packed in black containers. This has resulted in handling risks in NSW markets due to potential confusion and improper segregation.

Regulatory considerations

While the NSW EPA is aware of this industry practice, there is no mandated standard or regulation stipulating specific container colours for pool chemicals.

SafeWork NSW has confirmed that no formal requirement exists for colour-coded packaging.

Regulatory involvement is limited, but strict handling systems remain essential to prevent cross-contamination of incompatible chemicals.

Safety risks

A re-packer who is unaware of the colour-coding practice may accidentally mix incompatible chemicals, leading to serious safety hazards.

Chlorine gas exposure can happen if chlorine and acid are improperly packed together.

The gas that's released is highly toxic, posing significant risks to workers and the environment.

Industry recommendations

To minimise risks, industry members should:

- clearly label all chemical containers, regardless of colour
- put strict handling protocols in place to prevent accidental mixing
- report concerns related to unsafe transport practices to Environment Line at 131 555.

