



Advanced Start-Up & Maintenance for Salt Water Pools

## Why is the salt level important in an ECG pool?

A minimum level of salt is necessary for the ECG to be able to form chlorine but there are also other important reasons why the proper salt level is critical. The ECG passes an electrical current through the water between the plates to cause the chemical reaction that forms chlorine from the inactive salt form. Water without adequate salt levels is not good at carrying electrical current and thus if there is less salt, more and more electrical current must be applied just to get the water to carry that current between the plates. Residential style ECG's are made to work efficiently by requiring a relatively low amount of electrical current but a minimum level of about 3,000 PPM of salt. Allowing salt levels to fall below this minimum will result in excessive current being drawn through the components of the ECG and will shorten the usable life of the ruthenium coating on the plates. Most manufacturers have now built in devices that will turn the ECG off when salt levels are too low and will give the owner some type of indication that salt is needed before it will begin operating again. Most ECG's can handle salt levels up to 5,000 PPM without difficulty although most recommend from 3,500 to 4,200 as the best levels. This is partly because above 4,200, some people can begin to taste the salt and for some this is considered undesirable. As a salt pool owner you can choose what levels you want to run your pool at but the lower the salt level you choose, the more frequently you will need to test to make certain you don't drop too low. Also, too low of salt levels will reduce the beneficial effects of a salt pool on the skin and eyes.

There are several ways to test the salt level in your pool including dip and read test strips; chemical reagent style tests; and electrical salt meters. Whichever method you choose, the strips should be kept clean and dry until used; chemical reagents should be kept in a cool and dry environment; and if a meter is used, it should be kept clean and should be regularly calibrated using a calibration solution. For many homeowners, they choose to use a simple method such as strips at home every couple of weeks to monitor their salt levels. They then take a water sample every few months to their professional pool dealer to have their salt level checked on a properly calibrated meter. In this way, they rarely find themselves with undesired salt levels in their pools and the dealer testing also helps them to keep their pool water in a balanced condition.

