Pool Leaks - ‘Help! My Pool’s Leaking!!’

We get dozens of calls like that every year. Leaks are not *uncommon* but there is quite a lot you can do to check it out for yourself without incurring an unnecessary call-out fee. Specialist leak-detection companies are expensive, so the more you can do for yourself the better.

The commonest leak is from the Rotary Valve gasket. Check for a trickle of water whilst the pump is running. Undo the screw-in sight glass jar on the Rotary Valve or simply check the far end of the waste pipe where it meets the drains. A steady drip from a worn out valve gasket can cost you a lot of water in a week. It’s usually much cheaper in the long run to replace the valve.

A hot summer day in Spain, coupled with a breeze across the surface of the pool, can easily evaporate 25mm of water a day so you need to make sure that your reduced water level is not due to evaporation. Half-fill a plastic or rubber bucket with pool water, float it in the pool and tie it - to prevent it from tipping and spilling. Mark the waterline on the INSIDE of the bucket. Mark the pool wall or steps at the waterline also and leave the pool unused for a day or two. Next check the water levels. If both levels have gone down by the same amount the loss is simply due to evaporation. (However, there *is* something you can do about that – see below. If the pool level has gone down MORE than the bucket you have a leak. This method works for both indoor and outdoor pools, and it doesn't matter if it rains. It does matter, though, if your dog drinks the water in the bucket.

If you still think you have a leak you should carry out further testing.

Measure the water loss with the pump/filter running for 24 hours. Measure the water loss with the pump off for 24 hours. If the leak is faster when the pump is running the leak is on the pressure side of the circulation system – i.e. between the pump and the return jets. If the leak gets worse when the pump is off, it is probable that the leak is somewhere on the suction side of the system – i.e. between the skimmers/bottom drain/vacuum socket and the pump. If there is no change in the rate of leakage it's more likely that the leak is somewhere in the pool shell.

If you think you have a leak on the pressure side of the circulation system, and you have a vinyl liner, check that water is not getting behind the liner at the return-inlet fittings. If the gasket is damaged, water can sometimes get past and behind the liner.

If the tests indicate that there may be a leak on the pipe-work, now is the time to get your local pool dealer in to pressure test the system, dig up your patio and replace the defective parts.

If you think that the leak is somewhere on the shell, whether it is a vinyl liner or a concrete pool, it is often best to simply turn off the circulation system, and let the water level keep falling until it stops. When the water stops falling, - the leak must be level with the water line. If the water level cuts across a fitting or an underwater light unit, - that fitting is immediately your main suspect. If the pool has a vinyl liner, then you will need to carefully check the liner all along the final water line to check for tiny holes in the liner.

Incidentally there is now a ‘Radweld’ for pools. It’s not cheap, at almost 60 Euros a litre, but it does work for small to medium leaks. As mentioned above there is a solution to excess evaporation of pool-water - fit a pool-cover! You will also benefit from a longer swimming season and a cleaner pool – and a pool that needs less of those expensive chemicals to keep it sanitised.