

Harsh Winter to Delay Season With Thaw, Repairs

By Stephanie Mills Pool companies are bringing a healthy dose of mental preparation to their plans for spring.

From the Midwest to the Northeast, this winter was exceptionally cold and snowy, and all that white stuff has caused some problems for the area's pools.

Calls have already started coming in to Rosebrook Pools from homeowners who can see their pool covers being weighed down under snow and ice. That's causing snapped straps or anchors coming out.

"You've got exposure to the interior of the pool to the elements," said Jamie Ori, co-owner of Rosebrook Pools, a *Pool & Spa News* Top Builder in suburban Chicago. That means more repairs to pools when openings commence. Popped and cracked tiles, plaster staining and possibly hairline plaster cracks are all expected.

Winter pool covers straining aren't limited to the Midwest. All the regions that received heavy snowfall are reporting customers who already can see that covers need repairs or replacement.

"Out here, we've had almost 50 inches of snow," said Jerry Guerin, manager of logistics and field operations at J. Tortorella Pools. The Southampton, N.Y.-based *Pool & Spa News* Top Builder offers winter service routes, which about half of its nearly 600 customers use.

"Those people on winter service are really ahead of the game," Guerin said. "We haven't had any really major problems with the guys on winter service, except for maybe a cover coming undone because of the weight of the snow."

But for customers not having their pools serviced this winter, Guerin guessed up to 10 percent of those pools may have damage such as popped tiles and equipment areas that have suffered harm.

Much of the spring maintenance Michael Giannamore expects to do will be

inspecting winter covers. It's a service that his firm, Aqua Pool & Patio, a *Pool & Spa News* Top Builder in East Windsor, Conn., doesn't take lightly. "It's pushed down pretty far," he said of his own pool cover, which is stretched under the snow's weight. Aqua will bring customers' covers to its facility and clean, package and send them to the manufacturer for inspection and repair.

Covers aren't the only casualties of the snow's weight. "We've had a couple of calls for snow sliding off the roof and smashing the equipment," Giannamore said. That

will account for a few pump and filter repairs, which Aqua already plans to do.

The unusually harsh winter also means a longer thaw and a pool opening season that starts in May instead of the usual mid-April. The season also may be delayed by expected repairs. "Very likely, there could be mechanical issues," Ori said. "The weight of the snow could damage the equipment. All the extra snow ... and the fact that there has been snow on this equipment consistently for months has added moisture getting into the equipment, possibly rust." ■



Thaw out: Waiting for spring to inspect the damage that ice and snow have done to his pool cover (below) is something Michael Giannamore has in common with his customers. His company, Aqua Pool & Patio in East Windsor, Conn., will send the covers to the manufacturer for inspection and repair.