



A tiny tear can create big trouble. Check out this how-to guide for fixing some of the most common package pool problems.

# Good as New

**By Bob Dumas** The sun's ultraviolet light can wreak havoc on vinyl. The corners and bottom of a pool's vertical wall also are vulnerable to deterioration, as are the areas around the cutouts for return lines and skimmers. In addition, sanitizers and chemicals can inflict heavy damage.

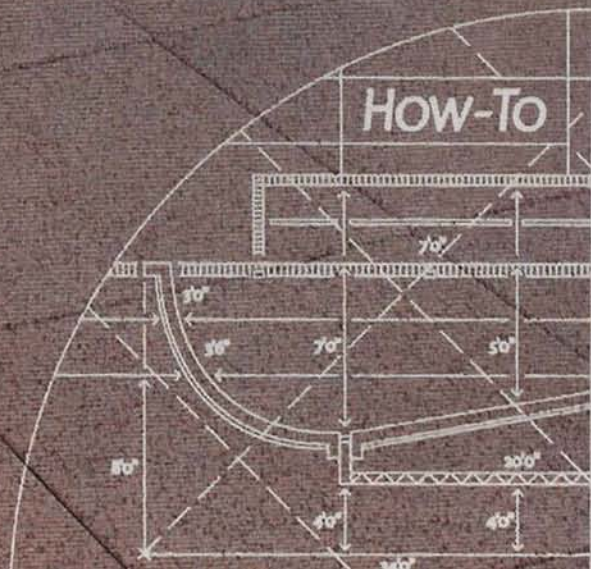
Such abuse can result in leaks and ultimately require that the entire liner be replaced. However, savvy service technicians can be proactive if they're well-versed in the art of vinyl patching and other forms of package pool repair.

Ocean Blue Pools of San Jose, Calif., specializes in package pools. Owned by Bob Barci and his son, James, the company has been in business for 27 years and teaches classes on liner replacement and repairs.

In this step-by-step pictorial, Ocean Blue Pools will show you how to repair two common problems: rips and tears, and "smileys."



## How-To



## RIPS AND TEARS

If pool water is kept in balance and protected from the sun, the vinyl will remain in good condition. Yet despite the best of care from the service tech and pool owner, vinyl liners are, by nature, vulnerable to rips and tears.

Most liner manufacturers offer repair kits that include patches and glue. But if you prefer, you can use extra strips of vinyl and your own jar of glue.

It will be difficult to locate an exact liner pattern match for a damaged pool, especially if it's several years old. Bob Barci recommends finding a patch that's as close to the pattern as possible, or use a clear piece of material. Check with your local warehouse or distributor to make sure you're using the proper glue. Only use products that are deemed safe in vinyl applications.

Before beginning the repair, there is one vital factor to consider: the site of the rip. Is it reachable from the deck, such as in the shallow end of a pool or hot tub? If it is, then making the repair by hand will be easy.

If it's in the deep end, you may need to get into the pool or use a telescoping pole to set it in place. Another option is to subcontract an underwater repair specialist, though this can be expensive.



PHOTOS BY BOB DUMAS & OCEAN BLUE POOLS

**1** Use a sharp knife or razor to remove a patch big enough to completely cover the tear.

Take some glue that is approved for vinyl-liner repairs and spread it thoroughly on the underside of the patch.

**2**



**3a**

If the tear is reachable from the deck, you can place the patch over the damaged area by hand. Do it quickly because the glue doesn't take long to dry — even under water. Note: Smooth over the edges around the tear with fine sandpaper.





# 3b

If the rip is in the deep end and you can't get into the water, Bob and James Barci have developed a clever method to finish the job. After gluing the patch, they drop it into the water and let it settle by the tear, guiding it with a pool brush.

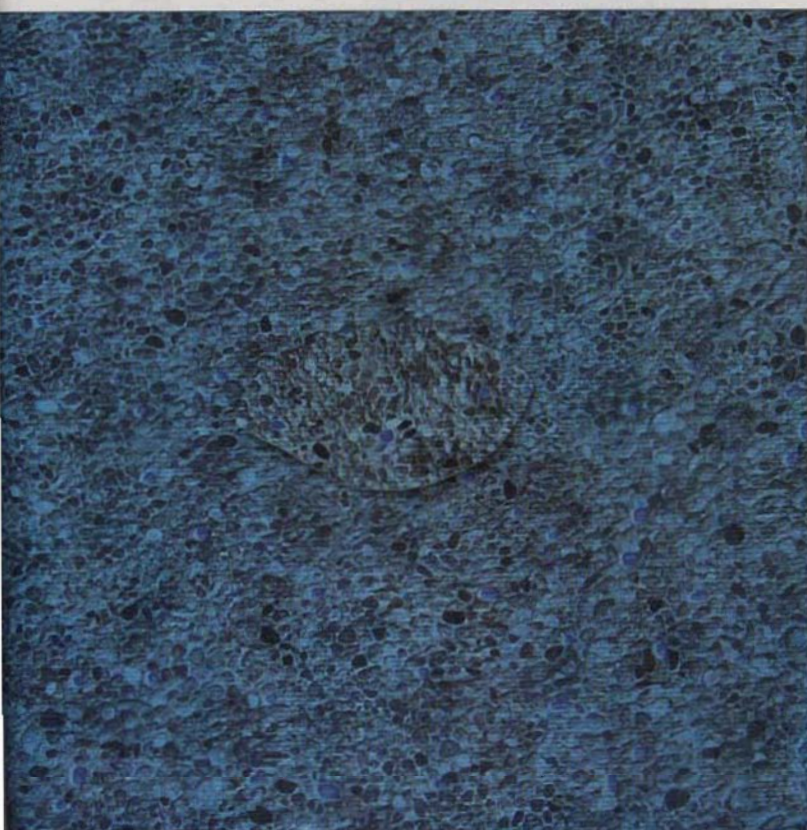
# 4

Once the patch is where it's needed, pressure is put on it by pushing down on the brush. This holds it in place until it's dry, and it also helps smooth out any wrinkles.



# 5

The patch is now in place and the leak has been repaired.



## THE SMILEY REPAIR

Occasionally, the track that holds the liner in place around the pool perimeter can develop a weak point where the liner bead sits in the groove. This can be caused by several factors, including the sun's heating of the plastic track, which causes it to expand. Air also gets trapped

behind the liner during the pool-filling process and then finds its way out via the top of the liner, popping it off the track.

When the track is weakened, the water weight can pull down on the liner and force a portion of it to come loose and sag. It gives the appearance of a grin or a smiley

face. But for a pool owner, smileys are no laughing matter.

Fortunately, it's a fairly easy problem to fix. Note: The Barcis warn techs to never drain the pool to make these repairs. With the water gone, the liner will reshape itself back into the roll from which it came.

**1** The weight of the water has caused a small part of the liner to sag. When the liner bead pops loose from the track, it resembles a grin.



**2** Carefully use a blow dryer on the liner section affected by the smiley, to heat up the vinyl and make it more pliable. If it's a warm day, this step may not be necessary.

**3** A strip of bead lock that's T-shaped and made from pliable rubber is slid by hand into the liner track to create more tension. It will secure the liner and make the smiley disappear. A wooden wedge can be used to roll the bead lock into place if necessary. On new pools, the bead lock will be tighter and more force may be required. Bob Barci uses a rubber mallet to do the job.



**4** With the liner now back in proper position in the track, it has been pulled taut and the smiley has vanished. ■

