

Watershed Protection Tips

Mobile Auto Detailing & Car Wash Events

How Do Mobile Auto Detailing and Car Wash Events Affect the Watershed?

Waste waters from mobile auto detailing and car wash events contain contaminants that can harm the watershed. These can include oil, chemicals, heavy metals, and cleaning products that can easily run into nearby storm drains. You are responsible for preventing this from happening.

Best Management Practices for Mobile Cleaning Services

- Do not use petroleum-based cleaning products.
- Use phosphate-free and biodegradable detergents. Be aware these products are still toxic; follow directions on label.
- If feasible, wash vehicle on a vegetated or gravel surface where wash water can soak into the ground and avoid accidental run-off.
- Use as little water as possible.
- Cover access to storm drains to prevent sediment, chemicals and cleaning agents from entering the storm drain system.
- Do not let wash water run off the site.
- Wash vehicles on a bermed tarpaulin or specially constructed mat that contains the pooled wash water.
- Options for wash water disposal:
 - With property owner permission, direct wash water to a vegetated area where it can soak into the ground.
 - Vacuum up or mop remaining wash water; dispose of it in a sanitary sewer such as a sink or bathtub.
 - Take wash water off site for proper disposal at your home or business.
- Contact your city (or county for unincorporated areas) planning or public works office for permitting requirements.

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What Is Our Watershed?

Our watershed is the total land area from which stormwater drains into streams, rivers or other bodies of water. The storm drain system is a vast network of gutters, pipes and open channels designed for flood control, which directs untreated stormwater away from our communities. It is both illegal and harmful to allow solid or liquid wastes, including organic materials of any kind, into the storm drain system.

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The Watershed Should
Only Shed Water

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Additional Considerations for Charity Car Wash Events

- Contact your city (or county for unincorporated areas) planning or public works office for permitting requirements.
- Find a commercial car wash to sponsor your event that uses a closed loop washing system, one that recycles its water.
- Ask a local car wash to donate part of the day's proceeds or see if they will allow you to market a special wash ticket to raise money for your event.
- Hold your car wash at an industrial or commercial site that has a designated equipment/vehicle wash area that connects to the sanitary sewer.
- Do not hold your event at service stations or parking lots that do not have the necessary connections to safely dispose of wash water.
- Have a soapless car wash event, using just water and soft chamois cloths.

For more information on preventing stormwater pollution call:

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