



Storm Water Pollution Prevention Requirement Sheet: Residential Car Washing

Many people think that when water flows into a storm drain it is treated, but the storm drain system and sewer system are not connected. Everything that enters storm drains flows *untreated* directly into our creeks, rivers, bays, beaches and ultimately the ocean. Storm water can contain pollutants which contaminate our beaches and harm fish and wildlife. You can help reduce pollution and improve water quality by using the following Best Management Practices (BMP's).

Most of us don't think of our car as a source of beach pollution-- but it is. Car washing is a pollution problem because metals and automotive fluids that are washed off with soapy water travel down the gutter, collecting more pollutants, then enter our storm water conveyance system and finally spill into our waterways and bays.

Washing of any vehicle (residential or commercial) that creates water that carries pollutants such as paint, oils, sediment, yard waste, construction debris, chemicals, hazardous wastes and other pollutants into the storm drain system is illegal.

Allowing pollutants to enter the storm water conveyance system is a violation of San Diego Municipal code §43.0304 and can incur fines up to \$1,000 per incident.

Residential/Non-Commercial Vehicles: The Municipal Code allows washing of residential vehicles at a place of residence for non-commercial purposes only. While washing your vehicle is allowed, washing-off pollutants from your vehicle such as paint, oils, sediment, and debris is illegal, so you must wash your personal vehicle without creating runoff. When washing at home, pollution can be minimized by washing the vehicle on the lawn or over a landscaped area to absorb the liquid and limit runoff from your property. If you cannot wash on a landscaped area, divert the water to a landscaped area to keep it from entering the gutter. Also limit runoff by using a bucket and rag to wash your car, and put a control nozzle on your hose.

Charity Washes: Charity Washes may be conducted as long as they are staged in a manner which avoids or minimizes the discharge of water and pollutants such as soap, fluids and sediment. Start by locating all storm drain inlets on, near or downstream of the wash site and sweeping up all sediment and debris in the area prior to washing the vehicles. On the day of the event, place sandbags or other blocking devices in front of the inlets to prevent wash water from entering the storm drain conveyance system. Any remaining standing wash water must be swept or wet-vacuumed and drained into a landscaped area or into the sanitary sewer system.

Illegal Washing Activities: Car dealerships, auto detailers, rental agencies and other automotive related businesses that wash vehicles for commercial purposes must prevent the dirty water from entering the storm water conveyance system. All washing activities for commercial purposes must be controlled, contained and captured. Failure to do so is illegal.

Things You Can Do To Help:

If you see an illegal discharge into the storm water conveyance system call the **Storm Water Hotline at (619) 235-1000**. You can also visit our website at www.thinkblue.org

**Adopt these behaviors and help clean up our beaches and bays.
Think Blue, San Diego.**