

Clean Water is Everyone's Business

Puget Sound
Starts Here

Best Management Practices for

Power Washing

(Mobile and Surface Cleaning)

Power washing is any activity that uses a pressure system, including steam cleaning, to clean vehicles, equipment, sidewalks, buildings, dumpsters, or other impervious surfaces. This can include:

- Sidewalks and plazas
- Parking areas, driveways, and drive-throughs
- Restaurant/food handling cleaning and storage areas
- Building exteriors, roofs, and decks
- Painted surfaces being cleaned to remove paint or graffiti
- Graffiti removal

What is the problem with power washing?

Did you know that storm drains are NOT connected to sanitary sewer systems or waste treatment plants? The primary purpose of storm drains is to carry rainwater away from developed areas to prevent flooding. Wash water from power washing activities may contain significant quantities of oil, grease, chemicals, dirt, and detergents that could end up in our streams, rivers, lakes, and marine waters.

Biodegradable Soaps

"Biodegradable" is a popular marketing term that can be misleading. Because a product is labeled as biodegradable doesn't mean that it is non-toxic. Some products are more toxic than others, but none are harmless to aquatic life. Soapy water entering the storm drain system can impact fish and other wildlife within hours.

The Solution: BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Best Management Practices (BMP's) are procedures that help to prevent pollutants from entering our storm drains. Each of us can do our part to keep stormwater clean.

- Prior to washing, block all storm drains with an impervious barrier such as gravel bags or berms, or seal storm drains with plugs or rubber mats. Make sure this practice does not flood the area or adversely affect vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- Never dispose of wash water into the street, storm drains, drainage ditches, or waterways.
- Wash vehicles and equipment on grassy or gravel areas so that the wash water can seep into the ground.
- Create a containment area with berms and tarps or take advantage of low ground to keep wash water contained.
- Check that the wash water is not leaking through and add more berms or barriers to contain the wash water.



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Use Dry Clean-Up Methods

- Instead of pressure washing, determine what alternative dry methods are available.
- Use mops, brooms, rags or wire brushes to clean pavement, buildings, and equipment as much as possible.
- Use vacuums or other machines to remove and collect loose debris before washing.

Just Enough for the Job!

- Minimize water use by using high pressure, low volume nozzles.
- Use the minimal amount of the least toxic detergents and degreasers you will need to complete the job. Try phosphate free detergents.
- Use a mop or rags to clean heavily soiled areas before pressure washing.

ONLY RAIN DOWN THE STORM DRAIN!

- Do not wash equipment or vehicles outdoors on saturated ground or on days when rain is probable.
- Pump or vacuum up all wash water in the contained area.
- Pump or pour the wastewater to landscaped areas that will not run off to a storm drain; or, discharge the wastewater to the sanitary sewer through an interior building drain, sink, or private sewer clean-out. Discharges to the sewer should not contain hazardous materials, grease, grit, or any material that could clog piping.
- Sediments and other solids remaining on the ground should be swept or vacuumed up immediately so they don't wash into the storm drain system during a rain event.



What goes in the storm drain ends up in our streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and marine waters. Remember, only rain down the drain!

Remember, it is against the law to discharge anything but rainwater into the storm drain system.

Numbers to call for more information on Best Management Practices or to report spills or an illicit discharge:

City of Anacortes – 293-1921

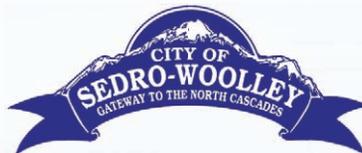
City of Burlington – 755-9715

City of Mount Vernon – 336-6204

City of Sedro-Woolley – 855-0771

Skagit County – 336-9400

Washington Department of Ecology – (425) 649-7000



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For information about other stormwater education programs and volunteer opportunities contact the Skagit Conservation District office at (360) 428-4313 or visit our website: www.skagitcd.org

Do your part to keep the Skagit waterways clean. You can make a difference!