

Vehicle Washing and Steam Cleaning

This activity applies to you if you wash or steam clean vehicles. It also applies to mobile operations and commercial car washes. The types of vehicles may include highway maintenance trucks, taxicabs, buses, rental cars, new and used autos on lots, government and company cars, construction equipment, fork lifts, golf carts, riding lawn mowers, and similar large vehicles. Wash water from cleaning activities can contribute toxic hydrocarbons and other organic compounds, oils and greases, nutrients, metals, and suspended solids to stormwater runoff. The soap used for washing is often a greater pollution threat than the substances washed off the vehicles. All soaps are harmful to aquatic organisms, including those labeled as "biodegradable", "non toxic", or "environmentally friendly".

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The following BMPs, or equivalent measures, methods, or practices, are required if you are engaged in vehicle washing and steam cleaning:

1

It is allowable to rinse down the body of a vehicle, including the bed of a truck, with just water without doing any wash water control BMPs. The washwater must be screened prior to discharge to the stormwater drainage system to trap particulates found in washwater. Turbid water may not be discharged directly into the stormwater drainage system.

If you wash with a mild (pH neutral) soap or detergent on an area that infiltrates water, such as gravel, grass, or loose soil, it is acceptable to let the wash water infiltrate as long as you only wash the body of vehicles. However, if your business is located in an area designated as a Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (CARA), infiltration may sometimes not be allowed. Check with the Water and Land Resources Division at 206-296-1900 or your local jurisdiction before infiltrating wash water.

If you wash on a paved area and use detergents or other cleansers, or if you wash/rinse the engine compartment or the underside of vehicles, you must choose ONE of the following options:

- (a) Designate and pave a wash area to wash all vehicles. Discharge

wash water from vehicle cleaning operations to a sanitary sewer, holding tank, or process treatment system, or process it through an enclosed recycling system.



See BMP Info Sheet 2 in Chapter 5 for information on disposal options.

The local sewer authority and the King County Wastewater Treatment Division Industrial Waste Section may have limits on the types and amounts of pollutants, such as oil and metals that can be discharged to a sanitary sewer. Absolutely no untreated wash water can enter storm drains.

OR

- (b) Designate and pave a wash area to use when washing all vehicles. Use a storm drain cover or other effective method to prevent all wash and rinse water from entering a storm drain or other storm drainage system component. All runoff from the activity must be collected for proper disposal to a sanitary sewer. A wet vacuum or pump can be used for this. There are several products commercially available that enable collection of runoff. This requirement also applies to mobile vehicle washing services.

OR

- (c) Take the vehicles to a commercial car wash or use a mobile washer who complies with (a) or (b) above.



Designated wash areas must be well marked with signs indicating where and how washing must be done.



Oil changes and other engine maintenance cannot be conducted in the designated washing area.

For more information or assistance in implementing these best management practices, contact the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Water and Land Resources Division at 206-296-1900.

Reader Note: The above requirements are the minimum required BMPs. If these BMPs fail to prevent discharges to the storm drainage system, you will be asked to take additional measures to correct the continued pollution discharges.