

A-13 Vehicle Washing and Steam Cleaning

This applies to all vehicle washing including mobile vehicle washing services. For exterior vessel washing refer to A-30 Ships/Boats/Watercraft Building, Maintenance, and Repair.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are required by King County Code 9.12. If the BMPs included here are not enough to prevent contamination of stormwater, you will be required to take additional measures.

Required BMPs:

- Commercial car washing must be done in a contained area where all water is collected and either recycled or discharged to the sanitary sewer.
- Occasional vehicle washing with a mild (pH neutral) soap or detergent on gravel, grass, or loose soil is allowed as long as all the water soaks into the ground and you only wash the exterior of the vehicle.
- If your business is located in an area designated as a Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (CARA), infiltration may not be allowed.
- The use of “environmentally friendly”, “nontoxic” or “biodegradable” soaps does NOT make it acceptable to discharge vehicle wash water to any storm drain system or surface waters. All soaps are harmful to aquatic organisms.
- Do not wash vehicles on paved areas or wash or rinse the engine compartment or the underside of vehicles, unless you do one of the following:
 - » Designate a wash area for all vehicles where the wash water is collected and discharged to the sanitary sewer or is processed through an enclosed recycling system;
 - » Use a portable collection system that captures all the wash water for proper disposal;
 - » Take the vehicles to a commercial car wash or use a mobile washer who collects the wash water for proper disposal; or
 - » Ensure that the paved area drains directly to grass, gravel or loose soil and there is no possibility of the wash water getting into the storm drain system;
- Do not conduct oil changes or other engine maintenance in the designated washing area.
- Rinsing the outside of a vehicle with water and without any soaps or detergents, is allowed as long as the water is filtered prior to discharge to the storm drain system.
- At multifamily properties it may be necessary to post signs at the designated wash areas, indicating where and how vehicle washing must be done.

Additional Information:

- Disposal Information Sheet
- Catch Basin Insert Information Sheet
- Ecology’s Vehicle and Equipment Washwater Discharges/ Best Management Practices Manual (<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/95056.html>)

For more information or assistance contact the King County Stormwater Services at 206-477-4811 and visit kingcounty.gov/stormwater.