

Seattle Public Utilities Guidance on Pressure Washing



To report water pollution, call (206) 684-7587

What's the Problem?

Most pressure washing activities are conducted outside. This often results in the discharge of wastewater to the storm drainage system, unless the equipment operator takes steps to collect and dispose of it legally. Discharge of pressure washing wastewater to the storm drainage system is prohibited because it contains pollutants from the cleaning compounds used and/or from the objects or surfaces being cleaned. Most of the time, the storm drainage system (including catch basins, ditches, etc) discharges directly to our lakes, rivers and creeks without treatment. Even cleaners labeled "biodegradable" and "non-toxic" may be harmful to aquatic life, especially after cleaning various surfaces (e.g. dumpster areas, parking lots, equipment and more) that contain oils, greases, chemicals, and other substances.

Who Says?

Seattle Municipal Code 22.800 (The Stormwater Code) prohibits the discharge of anything other than stormwater into the storm drainage system. This includes washwater generated from pressure washing activities. State and Federal laws also prohibit these discharges.

What should I do?

Plan ahead. Prior to beginning pressure washing activities, determine what collection method you will be using to capture the washwater and how you intend to properly dispose of the wastewater generated from each cleaning activity. Identify the specific location where you will be disposing wastewater (e.g. job-site sanitary drain). Depending on what you are washing, you may be required to treat the water. Call 206-263-3000 for information regarding what types of activities require pre-treatment. For other questions, including determining where your storm drains go, call the Resource Venture, a free service of Seattle Public Utilities at 206-343-8505.

Remember, only rain down the drain!

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