

Storm drains are engineered to gather and transport storm water (rain) to our local waterways.

Storm drain systems are not designed to remove pollutants; therefore, only unpolluted water should be discharged to a storm drain.

Outdoor car washing activities can harm the environment if proper disposal and cleanup procedures are not followed. By learning the correct techniques, power washing personnel can prevent debris from entering storm drains, thus helping to improve the water quality in our local waterways.



**STORMWATER
Management Program**
COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Only Rain Down the Drain!

**County Public Works
Storm Water Management Program
County Government Center
976 Osos St. Room 206
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408**

**Phone: 805-781-5256
To Report Spills: 805-781-5544
Website: www.yourstormwater.org**

Outdoor Car Washing Best Management Practices

Prevent Water Pollution



**STORMWATER
Management Program**
COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Review the techniques for car washing noted in this brochure that should be used to avoid polluting our streams, creeks, and ocean in San Luis Obispo County.

Best Management Practices

1. Wash vehicles on an area that absorbs water, such as gravel, grass, or loose soil. Some soapy water can filter through vegetation and soil before entering ground water or running off into a storm drain. This technique can be used only when using biodegradable, non-toxic cleaners to wash the exterior of the vehicle.

2. Wash only the car exterior.

Do not wash engines, undercarriages, truck cargo areas, or mounted equipment or tanks which may contain toxic materials.

3. If you can't work in an absorbent area, then contain the wash water.

Use a wash water containment mat, boom, or other device to contain the wash water. Once water is contained, it may be discharged to either the sanitary sewer or to a landscaped area if biodegradable, non-toxic cleaners were used.

4. Minimize water usage.

Use a spray gun with flow restriction to minimize water usage and runoff. Use hoses with nozzles that automatically turn off when left unattended

5. Use biodegradable, phosphate free water based cleaners only.

6. Store materials securely and label them clearly.

Use as few products as possible to reduce inventory, product incompatibility and disposal problems.

7. Have spill containment and absorbents on hand in case of product spills.



Tips for Fundraisers

1. Do not hold your car wash at a location that will discharge your wash water to the storm drain system.

This includes roads and parking lots.

2. Hold your car wash at a commercial site that has designated equipment and a vehicle wash area that is directly connected to the sanitary sewer.

Alternatively, find a commercial car wash that uses a closed loop washing system— one that recycles its water.

3. Rent a mobile washing system that can contain the water on site and then vacuum up any excess water.



It may not seem like improperly washing your car is contributing to water pollution that much, but collectively, it leads to serious water pollution problems in our local waterways.