



Community Development



Vehicle, Equipment, and Building Washing

Overview

Washwater from cleaning activities can contain oil and grease, metals, soaps, detergents, and other pollutants that can contaminate stormwater.

Per [Volume IV-2 of the Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington](#) (SWMMWW), non-residential project sites are considered pollutant sources when the final use of the site will include any of the following activities:

- Commercial cleaning of vehicles, aircraft, vessels, and other transportation
- Commercial cleaning of restaurant kitchens, carpets, industrial equipment, and large buildings with low- or high-pressure water or steam. This includes “charity” car washes at gas stations and commercial parking lots
- The cleaning can include hand washing, scrubbing, sanding, etc.

Sites of this nature are considered pollution generating sources and are required to implement source control best management practices (BMPs) per Kitsap County Code (KCC) [12.20.030](#).

Note that if the above activities occur on your site, **you are legally responsible for correcting deficiencies in accordance with KCC 12.20.030.**

What are Source Control BMPs?

Stormwater source control BMPs are tools and strategies to prevent stormwater pollution from occurring by addressing pollution at its “source”.

The Pollutant Control Approach (Indoor Washing)

This is the preferred approach to manage washwater.

For the pollutant control approach the area of cleaning activity must be covered and/or contained or conducted inside of a building to separate uncontaminated stormwater from the washwater sources. The washwater must be conveyed to a sanitary sewer after approval by the local sewer authority.

Temporary washwater storage is to be provided before proper disposal, or recycling. Under this preferred approach, no discharge to the ground, to a storm drain, or to surface water should occur.

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Outdoor Washing

In accordance with [Volume IV-2 of the SWMMWW](#), outdoor washing operations are to be conducted in a designated washing area with the following features:

- **A spill containment pad constructed in a paved area to prevent the run-on of stormwater from adjacent areas.**
 - The spill containment area is to be sloped to collect washwater in a containment pad drain system with perimeter drains, trench drains or catchment drains.
 - The containment pad is to be sized to extend out a minimum of four feet on all sides of the washed vehicles and/or equipment.
- **Washwater conveyed to a sump (like a grit separator) and then to a sanitary sewer (if allowed by the local Sewer Authority), or other appropriate wastewater treatment or recycle system.**
 - The containment sump must have a positive control outlet valve for spill control with live containment volume, and oil/water separation.
 - The minimum live storage volume is to be sized to contain the maximum expected daily washwater flow plus the sludge storage volume below the outlet pipe.
 - The outlet valve is to be shut during the washing cycle to collect the washwater in the sump. The valve should remain shut for at least two hours following the washing operation to allow the oil and solids to separate before discharging to a sanitary sewer.
- **A two-way valve for discharges from the containment pad.**
 - This valve should be normally switched to direct water to treatment, but may be switched to the drainage system after that pad is clean to handle stormwater runoff. The stormwater can then drain into the conveyance/discharge system outside of the wash pad (essentially bypassing the sanitary sewer or recycle system).
 - Signs are to be posted to inform people of the operation and purpose of the valve.
 - The concrete pad shall be cleaned thoroughly until there is no foam or visible sheen in the washwater prior to closing the inlet valve and allowing uncontaminated stormwater to overflow and drain off the pad.
- **Washwater from building structures is to be collected and conveyed to appropriate treatment such as a sanitary sewer system if it contains oils, soaps, or detergents.**
 - If the washwater does not contain oils, soaps, or detergents (in this case only a low pressure, clean, cold-water rinse is allowed) then it could drain to soils that have sufficient natural attenuation capacity for dust and sediment.
- **Surfaces are to be swept prior to cleaning/washing to remove excess sediment and other pollutants.**
- **If roof equipment or hood vents are cleaned, washwater or process water must not be discharged to the roof drains or drainage systems.**
- **All mobile cleaning equipment is to be labeled as follows: "Properly dispose of all wastewater. Do not discharge to an inlet/catch basin, ditch, stream, or on the ground."**

Washing Older Buildings - Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

Commercial structures (including industrial facilities and multi-story residential structures) that were constructed or renovated between 1950-1980 were commonly coated with Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCBs). Without proper precautions, PCBs from paint, caulk and other joint materials, sealants, roofing, and other items can be released into the environment and enter stormwater conveyances during building washing activities.

Commercial Structures that were constructed or renovated within this timeframe are to be assessed in accordance with How to Find and Address PCBs in Building Materials ([Ecology, 2022](#)) prior to building washdown. This applies when a building constructed or renovated between 1950-1980 is converted to a use that involves washing. Single-family residential buildings are exempt from PCB assessment.

Recommended Additional BMPs:

- Mark the wash area at gas stations, multifamily residences and any other business where non-employees wash vehicles.
- Operators may use a manually operated positive control valve for uncovered wash pads, but a pneumatic or electric valve system is preferable. The valve may be on a timer circuit and opened upon completion of a wash cycle. After draining the sump or separator, the timer would then close the valve.
- Minimize the use of water and detergents in washing operations when practicable.
- Use phosphate-free biodegradable detergents when practicable.
- Use the least hazardous cleaning products available.
- Consider recycling the washwater.

Exceptions:

- At gas stations (for charity car washes) or commercial parking lots, where it is not possible to discharge the washwater to a sanitary sewer, a temporary plug or a temporary sump pump can be used at the storm drain to collect the washwater for off-site disposal such as to a nearby sanitary sewer.
- New and used car dealerships may wash vehicles in the parking stalls if employees use a temporary plug system to collect the washwater for disposal as stated above, or an approved treatment system for the washwater is in place.

