

Pressure Washing



Wash It Down the Drain?

The storm drain on your curbside does more than guzzle gutter water. It leads directly to our natural water systems, including local creeks, ponds and streams. Unlike household drains that route to a treatment plant, storm drains travel underground and funnel untreated water into our waterways. When that water is tainted by pollutants it can seriously impact our natural water resources.



What's in Your Wash Water?

Wash water from pressure washing should be treated with care as it could contain any of the following harmful pollutants.

- Detergents—"biodegradable" does not mean non-toxic. All soaps in creeks can be toxic to aquatic life.
- Phosphates—are an ingredient of many detergents and act as a nutrient to algae. Excessive algae growth robs the water of oxygen and nutrients that aquatic life needs to survive.
- Debris—such as dirt and leaves can clog the storm drains.
- Paint chips—can not only clog storm drains but may contain lead in older homes.
- Vehicle Fluids—leakage from cars can make driveways dirty but oil, antifreeze and other fluids are toxic and should not be washed down the storm drains



Keep It Clean

There are many ways to keep polluted wash water out of the storm drain and ultimately our creeks.

- Walk around the area where you will be washing to identify all storm drain inlets before washing.
- If possible, find a location where wash water will not flow to storm drains.
- Wash cars and other objects in a grassy or gravel area as much as possible so that water can be absorbed into the ground, except after rain.
- Use absorbent materials, such as kitty litter, to soak up spills instead of washing with water.

- Sweep up debris and absorbent materials before and after power washing to avoid build up in the drain
- Block storm drain inlets with berms and tarps then collect the water for proper disposal.
- Place a tarp or cloth below painted surfaces to catch any paint chips that fall.
- Know if your home contains lead-based paint before power washing the exterior. Homes built as late as 1978 may contain lead-based paint.



- If collected wash water or debris contains any car fluids or lead-based paint, it must be disposed of at a hazardous waste facility, free of charge. Information about drop off is available at www.wpwma.com
- Other wash water should be poured down an interior building drain so that it can be treated before entering the creeks.
- A wet-dry vacuum is an easy way to transport collected wash water and debris to interior drains, vegetated areas or containers for removal.
- Using nozzles on hoses can increase washing performance as well as minimize water usage, which will decrease the amount of wash water to collect while keeping your water bill low.

Keep Yourself Safe

Pressure washers, like any piece of machinery, can cause serious injury to the user and bystanders if used improperly.

- Always read the instruction manual before operating a power washer.
- Never use a gas powered pressure washer in an enclosed space since this could cause carbon monoxide poisoning
- The high pressure spray can cause serious wounds that may appear minor.
- The strong spray can also throw objects that strike and injure people nearby.



- Wear eye protection, boots, gloves and long clothing to reduce injuries to yourself.
- Keep water flow away from power lines and outdoor electrical outlets.
- Only use approved cleaning agents for your power washer and the surface you are cleaning.



Did You Know?

Pressure washers can be 10-50 times more powerful than a garden hose.